
ILLINOIS ENERGY FORUM

VOLUME 27, ISSUE 12

DECEMBER, 2020

EPRI Invites Startups to Pitch Energy Innovations to Electric Power Utilities

The Electric Power Research Institute's (EPRI's) Incubatenergy Labs—a program that connects leading startup companies with electric power utilities from around the world—invites startup companies to apply for the opportunity to propose innovative solutions to the most challenging issues facing the electric power industry. Selected applicants will be invited to participate in the 2021 Incubatenergy Labs Demo Day Challenge.

Startups must apply online to pitch their proposal to a group of electric power utilities in March 2021. Startups that deliver successful pitches at this event will go on to work with EPRI and electric power utility experts to scope and execute a paid pilot research and demonstration project within the service area of a participating utility next summer. This collaborative approach increases the value of the projects for all participants by expanding the reach of the startups and providing valuable investment information for the utilities. Applications can be submitted until January 14, 2021 through an online portal [here](#).

"This program will connect promising startups with the electric power industry backing they need to put some momentum behind their innovations," said Erik Steeb, who leads the

NARUC Annual Meeting Highlights National Energy & Utility Priorities and Regulatory Leadership

The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners hosted its Annual Meeting and Education Conference in a virtual environment that saw a change in leadership, insights from federal regulators, discussions on critical issues and approval of resolutions across sectors.

Mississippi Commissioner Brandon Presley, who served as president since last November, set the tone for the meeting with his theme, *Bridging the Divide*—an attempt to highlight the serious deficits and chasms across all utility sectors, the prescience of which was shown by the pandemic. Presley noted in a farewell letter to fellow commissioners his appreciation for his colleagues and their collective mission.

"We each play a necessary role in delivering vital services to the people of this nation and I know that we, as NARUC members, are delivering like never before despite the pandemic and the

challenges of our time," he wrote. "Your states are stronger and better because of your service and NARUC is a better organization because you've joined us."

Under his leadership, Presley created an Emergency Preparedness, Recovery and Resiliency Task Force and a Broadband Expansion Task Force, along with helping to draw attention to issues of exorbitant calling rates for prison populations and the need for social change. He also helped make COVID-19 information available to regulators and others via an online resource site.

Connecting the Dots: A Three-Year Plan

The members elected a new slate of officers, as follows: Paul Kjellander (Idaho), President; Judith Jagdmann (Virginia), First Vice President and Michael Caron (Connecticut),

Inside This Issue

2 From The Staff

2 IEA Announces Leadership Transition

3 Energy News

4 Energy Association Activities

FROM THE STAFF

Thanks to everyone for your best wishes on my retirement. I wanted to take the occasion of our 322nd edition of the *Illinois Energy Forum* to tell our readers what a pleasure it has been to communicate with you on a monthly basis all these years. I will definitely miss all of you and wish only success for each and everyone. Happy Holidays and may the New Year be bright. IEF

(Continued from Page 1)—————

EPRI

Incubatenergy program. “And this program allows utilities to see for themselves how these innovations perform in a real-world environment without incurring the risk associated with deploying capital.”

The Incubatenergy Labs program offers startup companies the opportunity to demonstrate and scale their innovations in electrification, decarbonization, and grid modernization. For 2021, the program seeks solutions that address challenges associated with artificial intelligence, customer and community engagement, customer and community resilience, decarbonization and sustainability, the digital utility, electrification, and the workforce of the future. Startups with solutions that address other energy challenges will also be considered; they can submit applications in an ‘open’ category.

“Incubatenergy Labs is a terrific opportunity to use EPRI’s collaborative research model and apply it in a way that drives results faster than utilities normally can,” said Steve Kidwell,

Vice President of Corporate Planning at Ameren Corporation. “Incubatenergy Labs is a way for our industry to be more agile with innovation, and I encourage more utilities to join us for 2021,” he said. Ameren and the Ameren Accelerator will be in its third year as a foundational member and host utility in the program, and in its fifth year of running its own accelerator efforts. IEF

(Continued from Page 1)—————

NARUC

Second Vice President. During his installation remarks, Kjellander outlined his vision for the coming year. The multi-year theme, *Connecting the Dots: Innovative/Disruptive Technology and Regulation*, is focused on exploring the many different emerging technologies and innovations affecting electricity, natural gas, telecommunications and water/wastewater utilities.

In his remarks, Kjellander said the theme was developed collaboratively with Jagdmann and Caron, who will adopt it for their presumed terms as president, which is a break from the usual single-term, one-year theme.

“An opportunity to explore alternative and optional forms of regulation that might incent the implementation of new technology and practices can also emerge from this topic,” he said, and also acknowledged that the challenges presented by the pandemic has “given us all some new insights on how to better serve the members of NARUC.” IEF

IEA Announces Leadership Transition

The founding president of the Illinois Energy Association, Jim Monk, is retiring at the end of the year, and industry veteran Patrick Evans has been appointed his successor. The Association represents utility and energy companies on issues pending before the Illinois General Assembly, the Illinois Commerce Commission and other regulatory agencies.

“Illinois literally plays a vital role in helping power our nation and fuel our economy, and I am proud that”, said Monk. “For the past 27 years, our industry has worked together to advance policies that benefit the economy, environment, consumers, and workers. I am deeply appreciative of our members and their decades of support and the impact we have had, but it is time for me to hand the reins over to the next generation.”

“It is an honor to lead this group at this time of immense change within the industry, and with the support and engagement of our members, we will ensure that Illinois enacts policies that lead to the responsible and affordable production and delivery of electricity, natural gas, and water – the most essential needs of our society,” said Patrick Evans, incoming president of the Association. “We will build upon the great foundation Jim built and, in particular, I look forward to working with members in communities across the state to improve the diversity and inclusiveness of our industry’s employee base and supply chains.” IEF

Several Illinois Electric and Gas Utilities Commit to Greater Winter Protections for Residential Customers

Several Illinois utilities have announced that they voluntarily ceased disconnections for all residential customers through March 31, 2021. The voluntary moratorium on residential disconnections applies to customers of Ameren Illinois, ComEd, Liberty Utilities, Nicor, North Shore and Peoples Gas, providing greater protection to all residential customers than the statutory winter rules scheduled to take effect on December 1, 2020.

“Difficult times lie ahead in Illinois as we are experiencing a dangerous second wave of COVID-19 cases. The growing concerns of this virus have prompted the state’s largest gas and electric utilities to voluntarily stop disconnections for all residential customers immediately,” said Illinois Commerce Commission Chairman Carrie K. Zalewski. “We all must do as much as we can to stop the spread of COVID-19 and encourage each other to stay home and stay safe. I commend the utility companies who have stepped up to provide this needed protection for all of their residential customers.”

In a normal year, the winter rules do not apply to water utilities. This year, Aqua Illinois, Illinois American Water and Utility Services of Illinois have agreed to cease disconnections of participants in the State’s Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) and those who self-report to the utility that they are suffering financial or COVID-19 related hardship until March 31, 2021. For this protection, it is critical that LIHEAP and PIPP customers proactively contact their water utility to let them know about their status as participants in those programs. Likewise, all other water customers who are struggling with hardships during the pandemic must contact the water utility to self-report that hardship status in order to avoid disconnection.

Stipulated agreements reached between the utilities, consumer advocate groups and the ICC have also put into place bill payment assistance programs and extended deferred payment arrangements (DPAs) that vary by utility. Through December 26, 2020, residential customers can enter into longer DPAs with smaller down payments. To receive assistance benefits and to prevent disconnection, customers need to act quickly by calling the utility and verbalizing their hardship situation. [IEF](#)

Senate Votes to Confirm Christie, Clements to FERC

The United States Senate has confirmed the nominations of Mark Christie and Allison Clements to join the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, bringing the Commission to its full, five-member complement of Commissioners for the first time in nearly two years. The confirmation came on a voice vote.

Christie, Chairman of the Virginia State Corporation Commission, was confirmed to a term that ends in 2025. Clements, a policy consultant for The Energy Foundation, was confirmed to a term that ends in 2024. FERC Commissioners serve five-year, staggered terms.

Edison Electric Institute (EEI) President Tom Kuhn and EEI Executive Vice President Phil Moeller issued the following statements congratulating Mark Christie and Allison Clements on their Senate confirmations for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

“EEI and our member electric companies thank Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, and members of the Senate for confirming Mark Christie and Allison Clements as FERC commissioners,” said EEI President Tom Kuhn. “Both incoming Commissioners Christie and Clements bring valuable state and federal policy experience and expertise to FERC.”


“I have known and worked with both Mark Christie and Allison Clements for many years, and given their knowledge and experience, I know they will serve the nation well as our energy grid undergoes a major transition,” said EEI Executive Vice President Phil Moeller. “We congratulate and look forward to working with them and with the rest of the Commission on the many key issues impacting EEI member companies and our customers, including necessary reforms in wholesale electricity markets; enabling the development of the transmission infrastructure needed to deliver more clean energy to customers; and continuing to focus on reliability and energy grid security.” [IEF](#)

New Mexico State's Center for Public Utilities Offers "The Basics" Training

Register for the 4-day "The Basics" Practical Regulatory Training for the Natural Gas Local Distribution (LDC) Industry, Dec 7-8 & 10-11, 2020 live online via Zoom. There is no class held Wednesday, December 9th.


This course is specifically designed to capture the nuances of the Natural Gas LDC industry and includes the following topics and more!

- Industry Technology, Structure, and Regulation
- Revenue Requirements
- Class Cost-of-Service
- LDC Gas Procurement
- Rate Design
- Rate Case Procedures

For the program brochure and additional information visit the course webpage by [CLICKING HERE](#). 

IRPS Announces Series of Webinars

The Institute for Regulatory Policy Studies at Illinois State University has announced a series of monthly free webinars to begin on December 17, 2020. Other webinars will be held on January 14 and February 11, 2021. Each webinar will be from 12:00-1:30 Central Time.

Registration will be opening soon. Check the IRPS Website for updates. Registration is required, but is free of charge. 

Illinois Energy Forum is published monthly by the Illinois Energy Association, Springfield, Illinois. For questions or comments, please contact James Monk at 217-523-7348 or e-mail at jmonk@ilenergyassn.org.

For name or e-mail address changes, contact Erica Drake at 217-523-7348, fax at 217-523-0643, or e-mail at edrake@ilenergyassn.org.