

# FERC chairman plans summit in Kentucky on 'future of American energy'

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By Zack Hale and Esther Whieldon

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Chairman Neil Chatterjee is organizing a bipartisan event planned for this fall in his home state of Kentucky focused on "the future of American energy."

Scheduled for Oct. 21, the event will feature "a broad group of influencers" including energy executives, elected officials, academics, environmental and consumer advocates, and labor union representatives, according to a copy of an early invitation reviewed by S&P Global Market Intelligence. The gathering, described as a "wide-ranging energy dialogue," will be held in partnership with the University of Kentucky in Chatterjee's hometown of Lexington.

Chatterjee, who previously served as an aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., "obviously has a long-standing relationship with the university, and they were interested in partnering and hosting," a spokesperson said in an Aug. 12 email, adding that "the chairman liked the idea of getting outside of the 'D.C.' bubble to provide a different landscape and format for these important conversations."

The invitation states that "it's a pivotal time in the Bluegrass State and a historic moment as we continue to experience changes in our generation mix."

In 2018, about 75% of Kentucky's net electricity generation was coal-fired, the third-largest share of any state, after West Virginia and Wyoming, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The Kentucky Public Service Commission in February [ordered](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#news/article?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=49933836>) an extension of a program that gives [American Electric Power Co. Inc.](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#company/profile?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=4006321>) subsidiary [Kentucky Power Co.](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#company/profile?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=4057006>) flexibility needed to enter into special contracts with struggling coal companies and coal processing businesses. That same month, [PPL Corp.](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#company/profile?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=4057058>) subsidiary [Kentucky Utilities Co.](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#company/profile?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=4042397>) [shut](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#news/article?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=50931388>) two units totaling 275 MW at its [E.W. Brown](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#powerplant/powerplantprofile?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=2861>) coal plant in Mercer County, Ky., which had been operating since 1957 and 1963.

In November 2017, Chatterjee [told reporters](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#news/article?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=42670468>) he was working on an "interim" plan designed to keep at-risk coal and nuclear generators online while FERC further considered a [proposal](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#news/article?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=42128571>) from the U.S. Department of Energy that aimed to stave off the retirement of those resources. But in January 2018, he joined with the commission's four other members at that time in [unanimously rejecting](#) (</web/client?auth=inherit#news/article?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=43091425>) the DOE's proposal. In doing so, FERC initiated a new proceeding to evaluate the resilience of the bulk power system.

Chatterjee's office said it already confirmed more than 30 guests for the Oct. 21 summit. They include Tyson Slocum, energy director for the advocacy group Public Citizen; Jason Bordoff, founding director of Columbia University's Center for Global Energy Policy; Talina Mathews, a member of the Kentucky Public Service Commission; Kentucky Power President and CEO Brett Mattison; Solar Energy Industries Association President and CEO Abigail Ross Hopper; American Wind Energy Association CEO Tom Kiernan; and Joe Blount, president and CEO of [Colonial Pipeline Co. \(/web/client?auth=inherit#company/profile?KeyProductLinkType=2&id=4124808\)](#). Weekend activities include a kickoff reception hosted at the university president's residence and an event at the Keeneland Racetrack, according to the invitation.

"The University of Kentucky and our Center for Applied Energy Research are excited about the opportunity to serve as host for a bipartisan exploration and dialogue surrounding the country's energy issues and challenges," university spokesman Jay Blanton said in an Aug. 12 email. Blanton said the school is finalizing specific venues and added that all other information, including attendees and invitations, "will be determined by FERC."

A spokesperson for Commissioner Richard Glick said Glick's office received the same early invitation as was sent to other potential participants. A spokesperson for Commissioner Bernard McNamee was not immediately available for comment on Aug. 12.

*Molly Christian contributed to this article.*

*Article amended at 4:30 p.m. ET on Aug. 12, 2019, to include additional information from Commissioner Richard Glick's office.*

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S&P Global Market Intelligence, 55 Water Street, New York, NY  
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