

Powering New Mexico: *The Journey to Sustainable Energy*

November 4th-5th, NM State Capitol Room 307

Speaker Bios

Secretary Melanie Kenderdine, NM Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Division

Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham appointed Melanie A. Kenderdine as Cabinet Secretary of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) in May 2024.

Before joining EMNRD, Kenderdine was co-founder, Principal and Executive Vice President of the Energy Futures Initiative, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit dedicated to harnessing the power of technology and policy innovation to accelerate the clean energy transition.

Prior to co-founding the Energy Futures Initiative, Kenderdine held high-level positions at the U.S. Department of Energy in both the Obama and Clinton administrations.

In the Obama administration, Kenderdine helped create Mission Innovation, now a 26-country initiative that supports transformational clean energy research, development, and demonstration; North American grid integration and security; and the modernization of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve. Kenderdine's DOE Office led the management and analysis for the Quadrennial Energy Review, a multi-year, 22-agency roadmap for US energy policy.

During the Clinton administration, she was a primary architect of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve oil exchange of 2000, the creation of the Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve, and the return of the Naval Oil Shale Reserve No. 2 to the Ute tribe in Utah, the largest land transfer back to Native Americans in the lower 48 in over 100 years.

Dan Najjar, Partner, Virtue & Najjar

Dan Najjar is a graduate of the University of New Mexico and the Georgetown University Law Center. He was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico and has been practicing law in the state for the past forty years, with an emphasis on administrative and regulatory law and governmental relations. Throughout his career, Mr. Najjar has represented gas and electric investor-owned utilities both in New Mexico and at the federal level, municipal utilities and for the past twenty-two years rural electric distribution cooperatives. He is married and has four children.

Charise Swanson, CEO, New Mexico Rural Electric Cooperatives

Charise Swanson joined New Mexico Rural Electric Cooperatives as the CEO in November 2022. Prior to this position, she was the Vice President of Client Services at Hometown Connections, Inc. where she focused on assisting community owned utilities meet the ongoing and future challenges of the industry in every aspect of business. She has over 30 years of experience in leadership, business operations, technology, and compliance, with 19 years specific to cooperatives and public power. She also served as the Chief Risk and Compliance Officer at Lee County Electric Cooperative in North Fort Myers, FL and held the positions of Advanced Utilities Technology Manager and Compliance and Risk Mitigation Manager at Colorado Springs Utilities for 13 years. She has a Juris Master from FSU College of Law. She is a certified trainer in Totally Responsible Person (TRP), a training program that teaches individuals how to focus on optimism, personal responsibility, and collaboration.

Commissioner Ellison, Moderator, NMPRC

James Ellison was appointed to the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission in January 2023 by Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham. The New Mexico Senate confirmed him for this position in February 2023. He is serving a two-year term which concludes on December 31, 2024.

He worked at Sandia National Laboratories for over ten years, focusing on power systems analysis and planning, including energy storage and renewable energy integration. Prior to Sandia, he worked at AES Corporation, where he managed a power plant and a distribution company.

Adrian J. Rodriguez, President, Southwestern Public Service Company (SPS)/ Xcel Energy

Adrian J. Rodriguez is President of Southwestern Public Service Company (SPS). SPS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Xcel Energy Inc. that supplies retail electric utility services to over 400,000 customers in eastern New Mexico and West Texas, in addition to providing wholesale power and interstate transmission services, and is a member of the Southwest Power Pool.

Rodriguez joined Xcel Energy in 2022 from Puget Sound Energy, an electric and gas utility serving customers in western Washington, where he served as senior vice president of regulatory and strategy, overseeing clean energy strategy, regulatory and governmental affairs, new product development, and energy efficiency. He previously served as interim Chief Executive Officer and General Counsel of El Paso Electric Company (formerly NYSE: EE), an electric utility serving customers in far West Texas and southern New Mexico, and he was a member of its board of directors.

Rodriguez practiced law at Vinson & Elkins LLP in the firm's complex commercial litigation and energy regulatory practice groups and clerked for the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas. Prior to his legal career, Rodriguez provided policy analysis, political research and legislative research for state legislative offices, issue advocacy and political campaigns, and a Washington DC-based communications firm. Rodriguez earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with highest honors in economics and government from the University of Texas at Austin where he was a State of Texas recipient of the 1999 Truman Scholarship, a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University where he was the editor-in-chief of the Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy, and a juris doctorate from Columbia University where he was a managing editor of the Columbia Law Review. Rodriguez is licensed to practice law in Texas and New Mexico and serves as a council member of the American Bar Association's Infrastructure & Regulated Industries Section. He is also a Texas middle and high school football official.

Matthew Reno PhD, Sandia National Laboratories

Matthew Reno PhD is a Distinguished Member of Technical Staff in the Electric Power Systems Research Department at Sandia National Laboratories. His research is at the intersection of electric grid data and artificial intelligence to improve the efficiency and resilience of critical energy infrastructures. This includes novel methods for integrating and controlling renewable energy for a cleaner grid. Matthew is also involved with the IEEE Power System Relaying Committee for developing guides and standards for protection and applications of artificial intelligence.

Jim DesJardins, Executive Director, REIA-NM

Jim was born and raised in Chicago and earned a B.S. in Marketing from the University of Illinois at Chicago. His professional career has included positions in the desktop computer industry, telecommunications, real estate and at a U.S. Embassy for the Department of State. Since 2008, he has resided in Albuquerque, NM working in a variety of positions in the solar industry. He is currently the Executive Director of the Renewable Energy Industries Association of New Mexico (REIA-NM) and in this capacity, he has worked on various initiatives at the NM state legislature and NM Public Regulation Commission. When he is not working, he enjoys running, cycling and hiking.

Sean Morash, Principal, Telos Energy

Sean Morash is a Principal at Telos Energy with experience across a range of topics, including power system modeling, transmission and distribution planning, and technology integration. He has worked on projects that combine the traditional disciplines of economics, engineering, technology, and policy, and he specializes in conveying complex electric sector themes to a range of stakeholder audiences.

Prior to joining Telos Energy, he worked for EnerNex in their Smart Grid Engineering team. While there, he worked on a variety of smart grid roadmap projects across the US and internationally. Over the last two years, he has led the Energy Systems Integration Group's Task Forces on Grid Planning for Vehicle and Building Electrification.

Zoe Lees, VP of Planning and Policy, Xcel Energy

Zoë Lees is the New Mexico and Texas Regional Vice President of Planning and Policy for Xcel Energy. Prior to this role, Ms. Lees practiced law in the utility regulatory field for a decade, most recently as a Principal Attorney representing Southwestern Public Service Company for Xcel Energy General Counsel. Ms. Lees's practice has given her a wide array of experience with the policy and legal issues confronting New Mexico as it enters a time of significant energy transition. Born and raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Ms. Lees graduated cum laude from Wheaton College in Massachusetts. After graduation Ms. Lees spent a year in Malaysia as Fulbright Scholar. Ms. Lees graduated cum laude from the University of New Mexico School of Law, where she was the Editor-in-Chief of the Natural Resources Journal and the recipient of the Albert E. Utton Natural Resources Award. Ms. Lees currently sits on the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, is on the Board of Trustees for the Foundation for Natural Resources and Energy Law, and is a member of the Leadership New Mexico Core Class of 2025.

John Kreienkamp, Hearing Examiner, NMPRC

John Kreienkamp is a Hearing Examiner with the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission. Prior to joining the PRC, he served as General Counsel at the New Mexico Office of the State Treasurer and as an Assistant Attorney General with the Open Government Division of the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General, where he served as public records counsel and conducted statewide trainings on New Mexico's sunshine laws. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of the State Bar of New Mexico's Public Law Section and has written several law review articles on the subject of public records laws. Mr. Kreienkamp holds a J.D. from Washington University in St. Louis and an M.Sc. in International Politics from Trinity College Dublin.

Nicholas Rossi, Attorney, NMPRC

Nicholas (Nick) Rossi is an Attorney in the Legal Division of the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission. Previously, Nick was the Attorney for the Pecos River Bureau and the Acequia Bureau in the Interstate Stream Commission within the Office of the State Engineer. Before the ISC, Nick was a Trial Attorney in the District Attorney's Office in Clovis and Portales, New Mexico. Nick's most unusual job was in Alaska where he was the General Manager and Program Director of KDLG Public Radio an NPR affiliate radio station in Dillingham, Alaska. Nick attended Vermont Law School earning his Juris Doctor with a certificate in Energy Law as well as a Masters of Environmental Law and Policy. Nick's undergraduate degree is a B.S. in computer science with a minor in mathematics from the University of Pittsburgh.

Nadia Powell, Director of Enterprise Advanced Analytics, El Paso Electric

Nadia Powell serves as the Director of Enterprise Advanced Analytics at El Paso Electric, where she drives the company's commitment to "Transforming the Energy Landscape" through the strategic use of analytics and business intelligence. Since joining El Paso Electric in 2009, Powell has held multiple key roles, including Senior Regulatory Case Manager and Director of Palo Verde Generating Station Management.

In her regulatory role, she led the preparation, response, and submission of cases to include: General Rate Cases, Fuel Reconciliation, Energy Efficiency initiatives, and Certificates of Convenience and Necessity (CCNs), and provided direct testimony in Abandonment filings.

Before her tenure at El Paso Electric, Powell was a Consumer Affairs Officer for the City of El Paso and a Regulatory Project Manager with Southern California Edison. She holds dual master's degrees in Economics with a Regulatory Concentration and an MBA from New Mexico State University, as well as a bachelor's degree in Industrial Technology from Colorado State University. Originally from Brussels, Belgium, Powell brings a global perspective to her work in the energy sector.

Chief Justice David K. Thomson

Chief Justice David K. Thomson took the oath of office on February 4, 2019, following his appointment to the New Mexico Supreme Court. He was sworn in as Chief Justice on April 17, 2024 serving a two-year term. In 2019, he founded a diversity clerkship program with the New Mexico State Bar Association and successfully launched an annual “Rule of Law Program” where schools and students in New Mexico are given the opportunity to view oral arguments in an effort to advance civics education. He was a trial court judge in the First Judicial Court before accepting appointment to the Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Thomson was born and raised in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He has an undergraduate degree in Economics and Government from Wesleyan University and received his juris doctorate from the University of Denver Sturm College of Law. Chief Justice Thomson began his career as a term law clerk for U.S. District Justice Bruce D. Black after which he joined the NM Attorney General's Office as a litigation attorney, eventually serving as Deputy Attorney General.

Chief Justice Thomson serves on the Executive Committee of the ABA Judicial Division Appellate Judges Conference and Appellate Judges Education Institute and is an AJC Delegate to the ABA House of Delegates. Justice Thomson authored the article Constitutional Long Haulers: The Undiagnosed Long-Term Impact of Judicial Review on Emergency Public Health Orders, appearing in the ABA Judge's Journal. Chief Justice Thomson is a member of the American Law Institute and is focusing on constitutional torts.

Erin Lecocq, Appellate Specialist, NMPRC

Erin taught high school French before deciding to go to law school, and came to the law later in life. When her daughter was only 7 weeks old, Erin attended the part-time evening program at Seattle University School of Law, graduating cum laude in 2015. She then worked as a public family defender for parents in the child welfare system in Seattle. Erin and her family relocated to New Mexico in 2019, and worked in the civil litigation division at the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General. There, she handled several appellate matters, and developed her passion for appellate work. She joined the PRC in May of 2023, and is excited to be handling the appellate matters for this wonderful agency. In her spare time, she enjoys baking along with the Great British Baking Show, playing with her children, and traveling.

Cholla Khoury, Chief of Staff, NMPRC

Cholla has served as Chief of Staff at the PRC since February 2023. She began serving New Mexico in 2010 when she joined the Office of the New Mexico Attorney General, where she practiced various aspects of civil law. Her roles included providing general counsel to boards and commissions, handling administrative prosecutions, writ defense, complex litigation, and civil appeals. As the State's Utility Consumer Advocate, she led a team of attorneys representing small businesses and consumer interests before the Commission.

Cholla Khoury, Chief of Staff, NMPRC continued...

Cholla's legal experience spans every level of the state and federal judicial system, including original action litigation before the Supreme Court of the United States.

A proud graduate of Moriarty High School in Moriarty, NM, she earned her JD from Drake Law School in Des Moines, IA. When not working to make New Mexico a better place to live, work, and raise a family, Cholla enjoys playing sports like soccer and golf and appreciates New Mexico's pristine outdoors through activities like fishing and camping.

Gideon Elliot, NMAG

Gideon Elliot is the Utilities Bureau Chief for the New Mexico Department of Justice, where he has served since 2018. As a subject matter expert on utility-related law, Gideon conducts detailed research and analysis on issues impacting residential and small business consumers. His expertise informs the Attorney General's positions in proceedings before the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission, ensuring that consumer interests are represented in regulatory decisions. Gideon's work focuses on advocating for fair utility practices, transparent rate-setting, and equitable access to essential services, making him a valuable resource within the Department and a trusted advocate for New Mexico's consumers."

Kyle Tisdell, Senior Attorney, Western Environmental Law Center

Kyle has worked at Western Environmental Law Center since 2011, serving as a senior attorney and the Climate & Energy Program director. His work centers on the nexus of public lands and fossil fuel development, with the aim of aligning federal decision-making with the demands of climate science, bringing a managed end to fossil fuel exploitation, and ensuring a just transition for Indigenous and frontline communities that have endured generations of harms from fossil fuels. Kyle has prevailed in dozens of cases in federal court, setting new precedent on the government's obligation to consider the cumulative impacts of climate change and the harms to people and communities in its fossil fuel decisions, and frequently engages state and the federal governments on climate and environmental justice policies. Kyle received a B.A. in international relations from Michigan State University and earned his law degree from Vermont Law School, where he was editor-in-chief of the Vermont Journal of Environmental Law.

Mayane Chavez Barudin, Founder & Executive Director, Sovereign Energy

Mayane is dedicated to fostering economic prosperity and environmental justice for her community and Indigenous peoples by championing an inclusive clean energy transition. As the Founder and Executive Director of Sovereign Energy, a Native-led nonprofit, she focuses on centering Tribal energy sovereignty and amplifying Indigenous voices within the renewable energy sector. Her passion for a just energy transition was sparked during her tenure with the United Nations Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (SPFII). Through her work with her Pueblo and Tribal Nations, Mayane recognized the transformative potential of energy sovereignty for the socioeconomic well-being of Indigenous communities. This commitment was notably demonstrated in the successful passage of New Mexico's 2021 Community Solar Act, where she spearheaded the consultation process with Tribal Nations, securing strong support from Tribal leadership and opening the solar market to Tribes.

Mayane brings a wealth of experience from both the private energy sector and various nonprofit organizations. Her professional background includes expertise in legislative campaign strategy, regulatory intervention, clean energy project development and finance, coalition building, and stakeholder engagement. She holds a Master of Science in Environmental Change and Management from the University of Oxford and a Bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado, Boulder. Currently, Mayane serves on the New Mexico State Land Trusts Advisory Board, the New Mexico Renewable Energy Transmission Authority, the Tribal Advisory Council for the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission, the New Mexico Sustainable Economy Advisory Council, the Clean Energy States Alliance, the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project, and NM Native Vote.

Commissioner Aguilera, Moderator, NMPRC

Commissioner Gabriel Aguilera joined the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission in January 2023, following over 15 years of experience at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Commissioner Aguilera's expertise focuses on electric transmission, interconnection, and Western U.S. electric issues.

Rikki Seguin, Executive Director, Interwest Energy Alliance

Rikki Seguin is the Executive Director of the Interwest Energy Alliance, a regional trade association representing utility-scale wind, solar, storage, and transmission companies. Rikki joined Interwest as the Executive Director in April 2019, overseeing the organization's six-state strategic agenda, managing Interwest's team of policy and technical experts, and building political power for the renewable energy industry. With a long history working as a coalition-builder, Rikki works to develop consensus positions across the industry and within Interwest's diverse membership.

Prior to joining Interwest, Rikki oversaw the development and implementation of a regional policy agenda to support the responsible development of renewable energy across the Pacific Northwest. Rikki also worked as a community organizer in New Mexico, California, Texas, and Oregon, focusing on clean energy and climate campaigns. Rikki has worked to develop and pass numerous renewable energy policies related to utility resource procurement, land use and siting, tax treatment, transmission line development, and community solar. Rikki holds degrees in Physics and Astronomy from the University of Florida.

Rikki is based in Albuquerque, NM.

Kelsey Martinez, PNM

Kelsey Martinez is the Director of Regional Markets and Transmission Strategy and is currently serving in the role of Chief of Staff. Kelsey concentrates on Western energy markets and RTO evolution. Previously, Kelsey was the System Operations Manager at PNM for five years, with an additional five years of system operator experience in both the BA and the transmission functions. Kelsey has an educational background in Energy Management and physics.

David Springe, Executive Director, NASUCA

David Springe is the Executive Director of the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA). NASUCA's 61 member offices represent the interests of utility consumers in 45 states, the District of Columbia, Barbados, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica.

Prior to assuming his duties at NASUCA in 2015, Mr. Springe served for thirteen years as Consumer Counsel for the Kansas Citizens' Utility Ratepayer Board (CURB), the statutory advocate for residential and small commercial utility customers in proceedings before the Kansas Corporation Commission, Kansas courts, and the Kansas legislature. Mr. Springe spent nine years as an economist and expert witness for both CURB and the Kansas Corporation Commission before taking over as Consumer Counsel at CURB. While at CURB Mr. Springe was active in NASUCA, serving as President from 2007-2009, and he continues to represent consumer interests on numerous advisory boards, task forces and working groups.

Mr. Springe received his M.A. in Economics and Juris Doctor from the University of Kansas.

Pat O'Connell, Chair, NMPRC

Patrick O'Connell is Chair of the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (NMPRC), appointed to a six-year term starting on January 1, 2023. Patrick currently sits on SPP's Regional State Committee, WECC's Member Advisory Committee, the FERC-NARUC Current Issues Collaborative, and NARUC's Energy Resources and the Environment Committee. Prior to joining the NMPRC, Patrick worked for Western Resource Advocates, providing leadership to the Clean Energy Team. Before joining Western Resource Advocates, Patrick was a long-tenured employee at the Public Service Company of New Mexico, where he directed PNM's Integrated Resource Planning team, and led natural gas procurement planning efforts for New Mexico Gas Company. Patrick is a registered Professional Civil Engineer, graduated from the University of New Mexico and lives in Albuquerque.

Meredith Dixon, NM State Representative District 20

Meredith was elected as a New Mexico state representative for House District 20 (Albuquerque) in November 2020. At the beginning of her second term, she was appointed vice-chair of the House Appropriations and Finance Committee (HAFC). In addition to her position on HAFC she serves as a member of the House Energy, Environment, and Natural Resources Committee.

Meredith's primary areas of legislative focus include improving child-wellbeing, enhancing public safety, and diversifying New Mexico's economy. She sponsored legislation creating the New Mexico Opportunity Enterprise Fund, the Venture Capital Investment Fund, the New Mexico Match Fund as well as directed funding to the New Mexico Economic Development Department for clean energy technology and innovation.

In September 2023 she organized the first annual "Building an Advanced Energy Ecosystem in New Mexico" conference the second annual conference was held in Albuquerque, September 23-24, 2024.

Meredith received her BA in Global Policy Studies from Chatham College and an MA in International Political Economy from the University of Pittsburgh. She and her husband moved to Albuquerque in 2004. Her husband Kevin is an engineer at Sandia Labs and they have two teenage daughters.

Don Terry, President and CEO, PNM

Don Tarry is the President and Chief Executive Officer of PNM, New Mexico's largest electricity company. With nearly three decades of experience in the utility industry, Don spearheads PNM's strategic initiatives to enhance customer service, advance carbon-free energy, and improve operational performance.

Don joined the company in 1996 and has held various executive roles, including Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Vice President of Customer Service, and Chief Information Officer.

In addition to his professional achievements, Don is actively involved in the community, serving on the Board of Directors for both the Greater Albuquerque and New Mexico Chambers of Commerce, and as Chair for the Albuquerque Regional Economic Alliance.

Don was born and raised in Silver City, New Mexico, attended Silver City High School and holds a Bachelor of Accountancy from New Mexico State University, where he graduated with honors.

Nik Stoffel, Partner, Holland & Hart LLP

Nik specializes in guiding clients through complex regulatory challenges affecting public utilities and utility services, offering practical, business-focused solutions. His practice centers on the regulation of electric and gas utilities, oil and gas pipelines, electricity markets, and the intricacies of administrative law and litigation. Nik's clients include major energy consumers, industrial and commercial electricity customers, natural gas distribution companies, oil and gas pipelines, power project developers, independent power producers, and common carriers across the Mountain West. He has also represented investors and asset managers in utility-related transactions, including purchases and sales of utility assets.

Brian McMatch, Partner and Head, Nachawati Law Group

As partner and head of Nachawati Law Group's Public Entity Litigation division, Brian focuses his practice on representing governments in complex civil enforcement actions in the areas of consumer protection, data privacy, public nuisance, environmental harms, and more. Brian's team of lawyers and support staff work remotely from all over the country, successfully coordinating complex litigation projects across multiple offices, states, and time zones.

Previously, Brian worked for the New Mexico Office of the Attorney General, where he led litigation teams that were successful in recovering nearly \$1.2 billion in civil penalties, nuisance abatement, environmental restoration, consumer restitution, debt forgiveness, educational funding, and other remedies on behalf of the people of New Mexico. Brian is a twice-over honors graduate of the University of New Mexico, with an undergraduate degree in communication and journalism in 2006 and a J.D. in 2015.
