



Speaker Biographies

Clean Energy Project Development in NC, VA, SC, & GA

February 6, 2018 | 9:00am – 5:00pm | City Club, Raleigh, NC



Christopher J. Ayers has served as Executive Director of the North Carolina Utilities Commission Public Staff since July 1, 2013. Prior to that, Chris served as a law clerk to the Honorable Linda McGee with the North Carolina Court of Appeals from 2002 to 2003 and in worked in private practice with Hunton & Williams LLP from 2003 until 2009. Christopher joined the law firm of Poyner Spruill LLP in Raleigh in 2009 where he practiced law until 2013. Christopher's primary areas of practice were utilities regulation, environmental, zoning and land use and administrative law. He served a term on the Environmental Management Commission from 2011 until 2013. Christopher currently serves as an officer for the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates.



Brett Breitschwerdt is a partner with the law firm of McGuireWoods and represents energy clients before the North Carolina Utilities Commission and other state agencies. Brett's energy experience includes representing electric, natural gas, and water utility clients before the North Carolina Utilities Commission. Brett is also licensed to practice in Ohio, and has represented clients in rate cases and other proceedings before the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. Brett also assists in representing the firm's electric utility clients in proceedings before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.



Patrick Buffkin is a Staff Attorney at the North Carolina Utilities Commission. Patrick's work includes advising the Commission in matters related to the regulation of electric public utilities, renewable energy, and distributed resources. Prior to joining the Commission's staff, Patrick represented NC's electric cooperatives before the North Carolina General Assembly and State agencies, and advised the cooperatives in legal and policy matters. Patrick began his career as a lobbyist working for former NC Senator Zeb Alley.



Thad Culley is the Regional Director at Vote Solar. Prior to beginning this role in December 2017, Thad was the sole North Carolina-based partner with the law firm Keyes & Fox LLP. Keyes & Fox serves clients on a variety of energy regulatory issues around the country, including customer-scale and utility-scale distributed generation. In his seven years of practicing law with the firm, Thad represented clients on a variety of regulatory matters—including net metering and interconnection dockets, general rate cases, and avoid cost proceedings—across more than a dozen states. In his new role at Vote Solar, Thad is working to support and develop policies in North and South Carolina that advance Vote Solar's mission of bringing solar into the mainstream.



Kim Duffley joined the North Carolina Utilities Commission in November 2011 as a staff attorney. She provides a range of advice, mainly in the area of electricity, and is the lead attorney on federal issues, which includes preparing filings with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and monitoring RTO markets. Kim is involved in the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners and is currently Vice Chair of the Staff Subcommittee on Electricity. Prior to joining the Commission, Kim was an assistant attorney general in the Environmental Division of the North Carolina Attorney General's Office. Kim is a Board Certified Specialist in Utilities Law.



Todd Glass is a partner at Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati in San Francisco, CA, where he leads a market-leading energy and infrastructure practice focused on the representation of energy companies, project developers, and investors in the energy sector in North America, Asia, and Europe. Todd has extensive experience with the development, purchase, and sale of renewable and thermal generation projects; structuring, negotiation, and implementation of energy transactions and financings; and state and federal regulation of the energy industry.



Matt Gooch is an Assistant Attorney General for the Commonwealth of Virginia. He serves as outside counsel to the Department of Environmental Quality's Air and Renewable Energy Division and to the Air Pollution Control Board. He clerked for Justice William C. Mims on the Virginia Supreme Court.



Tyson Grinstead is the Director for Public Policy at Sunrun, the largest dedicated rooftop solar company in America. Tyson joined Sunrun in 2015 and covers policy for the 12 southeastern states. Tyson joined Sunrun after serving as Political Director for U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham, the South Carolina Republican Party's Victory 2014 campaign, and for Congressman Tom Rice's 2012 primary election campaign.



Blan Holman is a Managing Attorney in the Southern Environmental Law Center's Charleston Office, where he concentrates on energy issues. He helped draft South Carolina's 2014 solar bill and has litigated and negotiated that law's implementation before the S.C. Public Service Commission.



Eric Hurlocker has spent 25 years practicing in the areas of energy law, commercial energy project financing, and renewable and retail energy corporate matters. His law practice is closely aligned with renewable energy development companies in addition to companies employing renewable energy. He recently concluded a second term on the Board of Directors for the Maryland-DC-Virginia Solar Energy Industries Association, and represents the Association and other energy industry firms in solar development projects and in administrative matters before the Virginia State Corporation Commission. Hurlocker began working on energy-related client matters for a large Virginia-based international law firm. Later, Hurlocker went in-house at Dominion Virginia Power and, eventually, at PPL Corporation in Allentown, Pennsylvania. In 2012, he formed GreeneHurlocker, an energy law boutique firm, with expertise in energy regulation, rates, transactions, development, financing, litigation and distribution.



Karen Kemerait focuses her practice in the areas of utilities, zoning and land use, telecommunications, and administrative law. Karen represents numerous privately-owned and municipal water and wastewater companies, natural gas companies, and telecommunications companies in regulatory matters before the North Carolina Utilities Commission and in the purchase, sale, and construction of facilities. She also regularly represents telecommunications clients before state governmental agencies, permitting officials, and local zoning boards throughout North Carolina, as well as in appeals in state and federal courts. Karen began her legal career as a law clerk at the North Carolina Court of Appeals.



Jim Kerr is executive vice president, general counsel and chief compliance officer for Atlanta-based Southern Company, one of America's largest energy providers. Kerr leads the Office of the General Counsel, which includes the company's legal, corporate governance, audit and compliance functions. He also co-chairs Southern Company's internal business assurance council and serves in other risk management roles. Before joining Southern Company, Kerr was a partner at McGuireWoods LLP and senior advisor at McGuireWoods Consulting LLC. Kerr was a member of the North Carolina Utilities Commission, which regulates the rates and services of all public utilities in the state, for eight years. He served as president of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners from 2007 to 2008 and president of the Southeastern Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners from 2002 to 2003.



Lisa Moerner is director-Corporate Public Policy, Dominion Energy, Inc. She is responsible for the management and direction of employee groups involved in developing public policy positions for the company and its business units in the areas of environment, restructuring, safety, project siting, renewable energy, fuel sources and other energy issues. She is also responsible for annual research and development of company positions on key issues which could be used for legislative purposes. Lisa joined Dominion Energy in 2000 and assumed her current post in 2016. Lisa previously worked for the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, Columbia Gas Transmission Corporation, the United States Senate and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Lee Peterson is a licensed attorney in the state of Georgia and a Senior Tax Manager for CohnReznick's National Renewable Energy Practice and National Tax Departments. Lee has been a critical tax advisor in over 10 billion dollars of renewable energy projects within the U.S. and its' territories, involving wind, solar, biomass, landfill gas, fuel cells and other technologies. His clients include the U.S. Department of Energy, Fortune 100 companies, state and local governments, tax exempt organizations and renewable energy project developers and manufacturers.



Katherine Ross is a Partner at Partner at Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein LLP. She has assisted in the development of renewable energy generation in NC, SC and GA, routinely advising clients on land use, zoning, and economic development matters. Katherine has been involved in single project and portfolio transactions, representing sponsors/developers, construction lenders, permanent lenders, equity investors, tax equity investors, and back-leverage debt for renewable energy projects in the southeast. She also routinely advises clients on compliance matters and in negotiations with state agencies and FERC.



Steven Shparber is Of Counsel at Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP and based in Washington, DC, where he is a member of the Firm's Energy & Utilities Industry group. He counsels clients on domestic and international projects and corporate financings, as well as federal and state regulatory issues. Before joining Nelson Mullins, Steven was in-house counsel at PJM Interconnection, LLC, where he advised PJM's leadership and subject matter experts on a wide variety of issues related to PJM's markets, operations, and planning functions.



Heather Smith serves as a deputy general counsel at Duke Energy, focusing on utility regulatory matters in the Carolinas as part of the state regulatory team. She has represented and counseled utilities in a dozen rate cases across three states and has extensive experience in a wide range of other utility legal matters.



Ben Snowden is a clean energy and environmental lawyer. His energy practice focuses on representing companies developing or acquiring energy projects, in particular PURPA qualifying facilities. He has helped these companies to negotiate power purchase agreements with utilities and other offtakers, address interconnection issues, and resolve regulatory disputes before state utilities commissions and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.



Peter Stein is a staff attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center, based in SELC's Chapel Hill, NC office. Peter works as part of SELC's Solar Initiative, which was launched to help the Southeast reap the many benefits of solar power by removing legal and policy barriers to affordable, clean solar energy in Virginia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama. Peter's practice focuses on clean energy litigation and policy advocacy in the Southeast. Before working at SELC, Peter worked in private practice in Portland, Oregon. Peter is licensed to practice law in Oregon and North Carolina.



Stephanie Stuckey served as a public defender after law school and then went into private practice before being elected to the Georgia General Assembly in 1999. Stephanie served as a State Representative from DeKalb County for 14 years, during which time she represented parts of Atlanta, Decatur, and unincorporated DeKalb County and served on the Judiciary and Natural Resources Committees. She then went on to serve as Executive Director of GreenLaw, an Atlanta-based public interest law firm dedicated to giving Georgia's environment its day in court. In 2015, she was appointed to be Director of Sustainability for the City of Atlanta. In November 2016, Stephanie was named the Chief Resilience Officer for Atlanta, working in conjunction with the Rockefeller Foundation's "10 Resilient Cities."



Gray Styers has over twenty-seven years of experience representing energy companies. He leads the Energy and Utilities Law Industry Practice at Smith Moore Leatherwood in Raleigh, North Carolina. Gray is a Utilities Law Specialist as recognized by, and meeting the criteria of, the North Carolina State Bar Board of Legal Specialization. Gray represents numerous energy, telecommunications, and project development clients before state government agencies, permitting officials, and local zoning boards as well as in appeals to both state and federal courts.



Colin Tarrant focuses his practice on business and commercial litigation, real estate development, and land use. Colin represents energy and utility companies, developers, builders, property owners, and local governments in land use, permitting, and municipal law matters. He regularly appears in State and Federal Court, as well as before City Councils, Planning Commissions, and Boards of Adjustment related to site plans, subdivisions, annexations, text amendments, code interpretations, rezonings, and special use permits. Colin is an alternate-member of the New Hanover County Board of Adjustment, a member of the Greater Wilmington Chamber of Commerce Board, and Chair of the Executive Board of Wilmington Downtown, Inc. (WDI), which focuses on economic development issues in Wilmington's downtown

Scott Thomasson focuses on opening solar markets in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. He also manages Vote Solar's national work on community solar and other new and innovative solar policy models. He brings over a decade of energy policy and legal experience to the role. In 2013, he was lead counsel for a Georgia solar developer in its successful campaign to encourage the Georgia Public Service Commission to authorize over 500 MW of new solar projects. During his years in the United States Senate, Scott served as legislative counsel to the late Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va.) and as professional staff for the Senate Appropriations Committee. A native of Atlanta, he now resides in Washington, D.C.



Beth Trahos is a partner in Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough LLP's Raleigh office where she focuses her practice on commercial real estate development, land use, government regulation, and wealth transfer planning. She frequently appears before city councils, planning commissions, and boards of adjustment representing clients seeking or opposing rezonings, special and conditional use permits, subdivisions, annexations, variances, text amendments, and code interpretations in North Carolina and Virginia. Beth has been involved in the solar boom in the southeast and has assisted in the land use permitting of more than 200 utility-scale solar farms representing more than a gigawatt of new energy production for the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia.