

DOE selects energy consultant to write controversial grid report

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S&P Global
Market Intelligence

SNL Extra

Wednesday, May 31, 2017 6:03 PM ET

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Independent energy consultant Alison Silverstein has been selected for a prominent role with respect to a controversial electric grid reliability study being conducted by the U.S. Department of Energy. Silverstein will be writing the final report on the study being led by economist Travis Fisher, a DOE official confirmed May 31.

Energy Secretary Rick Perry in an April 14 [memo](#) to his chief of staff gave the DOE 60 days to study critical long-term grid reliability issues, citing an increasing number of coal, natural gas, nuclear and hydroelectric power plant retirements and maintaining that baseload power is critical to the electric grid functioning properly. Perry also ordered that "regulatory burdens" and federal subsidies for renewable energy be examined.

The call for the study caused an outcry among Democratic and some Republican lawmakers, as well as energy-related business groups and associations. On May 1, several renewable energy-focused trade groups [called](#) on Perry to conduct the study using a transparent and open process that considers input from all stakeholders.

A group of Democratic lawmakers on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee also reached out to Perry in a letter dated the same day, stating their support for renewable energy and maintaining that it improves resiliency and grid reliability. Further, the lawmakers criticized Fisher's appointment, noting that he is a "former official with the Koch Brothers' funded Institute for Energy Research who has written and spoken extensively against renewable energy technologies."

Silverstein has held a variety of roles in the energy industry, including some related to renewable energy. According to the website for nonprofit advocacy group American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, Silverstein currently serves as secretary for its board of directors and works as an independent consultant in areas such as system reliability, energy efficiency, renewable energy development and the smart grid.

Additionally, Silverstein worked at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission from 2001 through 2004 as senior adviser to Chairman Pat Wood, III, where she served as the agency's lead on power grid reliability, infrastructure security and cyber-security issues.