

NMPRC 2026 Candidate Questionnaire

1. Briefly describe your experience with regulatory topics including utility rate setting, promulgating regulations, broadband regulation, and New Mexico's energy transition.

ANSWER:

As an elected legislator for over 11 years, I was in the legislature when the Energy Transition Act was enacted by the Legislature. I looked at the impacts from all sides, and I have always worked closely with the Navajo Nation President and Vice President's Office, the Navajo Nation Council with respect to oversight of NTUA in their energy transition work specifically regarding the closure of the Navajo Substation.

2. What is the "public interest" in the context of utility regulation?

ANSWER:

Utility law is guided by broad principles with the concept of public interest at its core. Public interest requires balancing the needs of utility customers with the financial health of the companies that provide essential services. Regulators must ensure that rates are fair and affordable for consumers while also allowing utilities to earn enough revenue to maintain infrastructure, invest in improvements, and provide reliable service. In short, the goal is to balance the interests of ratepayers and utility companies so that both are served over the long term for the most basic needs to acquire a quality life.

3. How much transparency should the Commission provide the public into their deliberations and the bases for their decisions?

ANSWER:

Serving as a committee Chair in the Legislature has afforded me the experience, to learn firsthand that public input is important because the Commission is accountable to the people. I support the Open Meetings Act and believe hearings should be open and accessible to the public whenever possible.

There are some situations, such as personnel matters or litigation, where the law allows closed meetings. In those cases, I will follow the law and ensure the Commission only discusses matters that must remain confidential.

The Commission has a role like a court, but it operates in a very public setting. I respect that transparency and I am committed to following the Open Meetings Act while ensuring the Commission does its work effectively.

4. New Mexico has 23 distinct sovereign Native American tribes within its borders. Please explain your familiarity with the State – Tribal relationship with an emphasis on how this relationship is applicable to utilities including power generation, right of ways and alternative energy?

ANSWER:

Along my career path I have worked in Washington D.C. with over 500 Native American Tribes and Pueblos throughout North America, gaining familiarity with the 23 tribes and pueblos in New Mexico and 21 neighboring tribes in Arizona. In each tribe and pueblo sovereign authority exists and requires government-to-government agreements via IGA's and MOUs to include all the above-mentioned utilities. Depending on jurisdiction, historical agreements and tribal leadership, public regulatory oversight is likely conducted by the state. It is incumbent to honor all relationships with sovereign tribes and pueblos. Tribal consultation involves complexity and a mixture of agreements that involve requirement and expectations of accountability on the part of all parties.

5. What is your definition of "just and reasonable" rates? Has this definition evolved through the years as the PRC and other commissions expanded the scope of their decisions to embrace more special interests?

ANSWER:

While traveling across our State realizing our diverse demographic and geographic communities, again, it comes down to balance. Rates should not be too high or too low. The Commission must carefully examine utility services and costs to ensure that customers pay fair and reasonable rates. A just and reasonable rate structure recognizes that some customers can pay more, while others may need assistance. It should also consider environmental impacts and social justice concerns. Large users should pay their fair share, while ratepayer protection remains a priority, especially for residential customers.

6. If a utility could justify a 20% increase in its rates, based on its projections of future costs and sales, but it would impose hardship on a certain segment of its customers, how would you reconcile this dilemma? What regulatory options would you consider?

ANSWER:

If a rate increase is justified, I would support phasing it in overtime to lessen the impact on customers. I would also support programs that help low-income families pay their utility bills. In my capacity of public service, I have referred individuals to programs such as the NM Health Care Authority's LIHEAP. The goal is to keep services reliable while protecting those who can least afford higher costs.

7. What is the role of intervenors in Commission adjudications, and do they add value to Commission decisions? If so, how?

ANSWER:

Public participation is incredibly important. Hearing from advocates, customers, businesses, and community groups alike helps the Commission understand different perspectives and concerns. It is important that all voices can be heard. This opportunity is the foundation provided to the Commission so there is a full understanding of the issues before it. That input affords commissioners to find the right balance and to make decisions that serve the public interest.

8. How will you balance implementation of legislative direction with independent regulatory judgments, and what steps will you take to avoid regulatory capture, manage stakeholder influence, and ensure decisions are grounded in evidence and the long-term interests of New Mexico customers.

ANSWER:

First and foremost, the NM PRC has a duty to follow the direction mandated by the legislature. If a statute directs us to do something, we must follow the law. Commissioners are to be utility judges; personal ideology should not be an influence. In this duty the law is the governing directive therefore everyone and every issue related to regulatory judgments should be questioned and examined. We must listen to the evidence in order to decide on the outcomes based on statute specifically enacted for NM PRC. By myself standing alone as a member of my community I have my values and thoughts but, in this case, I must abide by the facts and the law when serving the public interest.

9. What can the Commission do to promote universal access to broadband?

ANSWER:

The major challenge to broadband access in rural areas is the high cost of building physical infrastructure to connect in a sparse population over difficult terrain and jurisdictions. Low population density, poor return on investment and lack of existing utilities all play a major role in successful access to broadband development. Areas of consideration would be to support grants affiliated to build networks and maintenance and to promote universal access to broadband while understanding the areas of networks development.

10. How should the PRC approach resource adequacy and reliability planning, including the role of firm resources, demand-side resources, and regional coordination to ensure reliable and affordable service?

ANSWER:

Working with regional initiatives such as utility assistance programs that are being formed out of the Western Power pool to draw on adequate services which would be a reliable regional transmission. Look at regional transmission with a larger pool of resources. Again, it is critical that consumers and providers be part of this discussion.

11. What is the role of the Commission in protecting existing customers from the high demands placed by data centers on the electric grid?

ANSWER:

Address the community concerns up front by educating as thoroughly as possible, about cost allocations, customer rates and benefits and concerns regarding water usage because water is crucial in our State. In some states data centers are paying customers back and are providing tax revenues. It is incumbent on Commissioners to protect customers by doing the right thing with rate issues on both sides of the desk.

12. What would be the major issues surrounding natural gas utilities in the future?

Should gas utilities invest today in new infrastructure that can become stranded before its expected end date, when many energy consumers are projected to switch from natural gas to electricity in the future?

ANSWER:

As a lifelong resident of New Mexico, the natural gas system should be maintained until research shows we have a sound and effective option. We have a responsibility to address the old and new infrastructure, with caution, to balance our assets around cleaner, cost and geographically concerned resources. The major issue is designing a safe, reliable, and equitable energy system that balances climate goals with economic realities, while resolving the gas – electrical trade off in community-by-community context.

13. How should the PRC evaluate and oversee utility proposals related to distributed resources, non-wires alternatives, and performance-based mechanisms so that customers receive the benefits of innovation and competition rather than bearing unnecessary cost or risk?

ANSWER:

Accountability is a strong factor. Embrace and reward utility innovation business models while providing balance for customers so that everybody wins. Innovation to perform utilities more efficiently and provide incentives for customers.

14. Per NMSA 1978 Section 62-19-5 please provide the following:

ANSWER:

- a. I earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business and Communications from Marymount University in Falls Church, Virginia. My academic background, combined with extensive legislative and leadership experience, has prepared me to evaluate complex policy, regulatory, and operational issues with a practical and balanced approach.

Please detail how your work experience meets this requirement, including noting the specific number of years in each relevant role.

ANSWER:

My tenure of professional experience begins with the Arizona Governor's Office in the area of Community Development for 10 years to the National Indian Education Association and National Indian Health Board in Washington, D.C. for 8 years and back to the Executive Branch of the Navajo Nation Government for 2 years and now presently in the State Legislature of New Mexico for 12 years and home base of Gallup at Rehoboth McKinley Christian Healthcare Services for 7 years. I have worked consistently at the national, state and tribal levels. This has involved being able to collaborate with all members of various communities and stakeholders.

Do you have a financial interest in a public utility in New Mexico or elsewhere?

ANSWER:

Possibly indirectly such as my retirement account with Smith & Barney, New Mexico PERA and/or the State of Arizona

Have you been employed by a commission-regulated entity at any time during the last two years?

ANSWER:

No

Do you agree that you will give your entire time to the business of the commission and will not pursue any other business or vocation or hold any other office for profit?

ANSWER:

Agree to hold office solely committed to the business of the commission.

The two sitting PRC Commissioners are registered to vote with the Democratic Party and Republican Party. The New Mexico Constitution requires that no more than two PRC Commissioners can be registered to vote with the same political party. Please state your registered party affiliation.

ANSWER:

Democrat

Please affirm this statement with your signature below:

I affirm that the above information is true and correct, and I have met the statutory and constitutional requirements, as described in questions 14 and 15 above.

D. Wonda Johnson Doreen W. Johnson [Signature]
Candidate Signature of Affirmation