

March 9, 2021

Brenda Mallory
Chair
White House Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson PI NW
Washington, DC 20506
Via email

Re: Utility disconnection moratorium for Tennessee Valley Authority

Dear Ms. Mallory,

Please find attached petitions signed by over 21,500 people from Tennessee and beyond urging the Tennessee Valley Authority to institute a utility shutoff moratorium throughout its service area.

As the letters attached state, “Without electricity, people won’t be able to shelter in homes that are a safe temperature, support remote schooling for their kids, or refrigerate their medicines. It is a decision that literally has life-or-death consequences.”

For several months throughout the pandemic, advocates have urged TVA to institute such a moratorium, but to no avail. **We now call upon President Biden to act, by issuing an Executive Order directing TVA to keep people’s power on**-- the only responsible option during a pandemic. Please also find attached a memo outlining the President’s authority to issue an Executive Order to this effect.

Sincerely,
Tom Cormons
Executive Director
Appalachian Voices

Erich Pica
President
Friends of the Earth

Cc:
Gina McCarthy, White House National Security Advisor
Representative Peter DeFazio, Chair, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Senator Tom Carper, Chair, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
Representative Frank Pallone, Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Tennessee Congressional delegation

Attachments:

Executive Actions for Immediate COVID relief and economic recovery via the Tennessee Valley Authority, Appalachian Voices
Appalachian Voices petition
Appalachia Voices petition signatories
Friends of the Earth petition
Friends of the Earth petition signatories

Dear President Biden,

As a direct result of COVID-19, working families throughout the Tennessee Valley have suffered from job lay-offs, furloughs, reduced hours and reduced income, making it difficult or impossible to pay for essential utility services. Tennessee's 211 data shows that the number of calls for utility bill assistance since March 1, 2020 are 63% higher than the same period in 2019. While TVA has taken steps to support communities during the pandemic, including the introduction of a pandemic relief bill credit for Local Power Companies (LPCs), there has been no accompanying moratorium to ensure that our region's most vulnerable populations have electricity access.

President Biden can and should issue an Executive Order directing TVA to issue a moratorium on electricity shut-offs at all Local Power Companies.

The TVA Board of Directors is the primary regulator of the region's 153 LPCs and is empowered in section 10 of the TVA Act to "provide for such rules and regulations as...may be necessary or desirable for carrying out the purposes of [the] Act," purposes which include "advancing the social and economic welfare of the residents of the Tennessee Valley region." Indeed, that very justification was used by the TVA Board in 2014 to enact revisions to LPC Service Practice Standards and Rate Review Standards. TVA can mandate a shutoff moratorium at LPCs to protect struggling families during these unprecedented times.

In August of 2020, President Trump issued an Executive Order to prevent TVA from outsourcing more than 200, well-paying IT jobs to an outside company in the middle of the pandemic. Along with this Executive Order, Trump removed two TVA board members and threatened to continue removing directors until the demands in the Executive Order had been met.

According to TVA's federal mandate, TVA board members are nominated and can be removed by the President of the United States. The Executive Order strategy demonstrated successfully by Trump can be replicated by President-elect Biden to mandate that TVA issue a shut off moratorium for its distributor utilities.

No one should have to wonder whether or not they'll lose their home or access to basic services in the middle of winter just because they can't pay. Please protect all Tennesseans by issuing an Executive Order that bans on electricity shut offs in the Tennessee Valley.

Thank you.