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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Public Interest Groups Unite to Form Duke Energy Watchdog

'People's Commission' Will Hold Largest U.S. Utility Accountable on Climate, Environmental, Economic and Social Justice

INDIANAPOLIS – A coalition of public interest, social justice, watchdog and environmental groups are joining forces to hold Duke Energy, the largest investor-owned U.S. electric utility, accountable for its policies, which impact almost 8 million Americans in six states – and by extension, impede the nation's progress toward a clean energy future.

The coalition will work to improve Duke Energy's greenhouse gas emission reductions, transition from fossil fuels to renewables, ratepayer affordability and equity, coal ash cleanup and health impacts, influence spending and more. The announcement of the new coalition comes on the same day Duke Energy holds its [annual shareholder](#) meeting.

The Duke Energy Accountability Coalition is a project of Appalachian Voices, Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana, the Energy and Policy Institute, Environmental Working Group, Friends of the Earth, NC WARN, Ohio Citizen Action and the League of Women Voters of South Carolina. *(For statement from CAC Indiana, please see page 3).*

The coalition will spotlight work by environmental and consumer advocates, energy experts and frontline communities in states where Duke Energy operates as a monopoly utility. It will provide fact checks on key documents released by Duke, such as its federal [Securities and Exchange Commission filings](#), annual [Sustainability Reports](#) and [Integrated Resource Plans](#).

The coalition has also created the Duke Energy People's Commission to shine a light on concerns shared by Duke's 7.8 million customers in the Carolinas, Florida, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. The People's Commission will be an independent watchdog, acting solely in the

public interest and free from the political and economic influence Duke wields with regulators, lawmakers and other elected officials.

The People's Commission will hold hearings, webinars and other forums featuring experts and advocates who will examine Duke's environmental record, its investments in solar and wind power, and its actions that adversely impact ratepayers, particularly low-income customers and communities of color. These forums will be formatted as hearings at which experts and the general public can give testimony that will be relayed to Duke Energy by the People's Commission.

The founding members of the People's Commission include:

- Donna Chavis, North Carolina-based senior fossil fuels campaigner for Friends of the Earth.
- Kerwin Olson, executive director of Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana.
- The Rev. Rodney S. Sadler, Jr., Ph.D., director of the Center for Social Justice and Reconciliation at Union Presbyterian Seminary in North Carolina.
- Holley Ulbrich, co-president of the South Carolina League of Women Voters.

Representatives from Florida, Ohio and Kentucky will be named soon.

The People's Commission's first hearing, to be held later this year, will focus on how Duke's policies negatively affect low-income ratepayers.

Last week, Duke Energy released a new climate report presenting pathways to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, confirming that it plans to rely on fossil gas, offsets and unproven carbon capture technology, while discounting the feasibility of energy storage and renewable energy on flawed grounds. In a point-by-point response, a post by the Energy and Policy Institute said: "This pathway solidifies Duke's position far behind peer utilities who have committed to full decarbonization. Duke's pathway also fails to adequately model cost or climate considerations, and details policy and compensation efforts at odds with realizing a clean electric grid."

Duke is currently seeking to significantly raise rates in its home state of North Carolina and in Indiana. In Indiana, Duke is seeking a rate increase of \$400 million, one of the largest in state history, even though the state's consumer counselor has urged a rate decrease of more than \$100 million.

In North Carolina, regulators have ordered Duke to clean up coal ash contamination at six power plants. Cleanup of the sites could cost as much as \$10 billion, and Duke says it will pass those costs on to its customers, even as a legal battle is underway over regulators' decision to make customers pay for past coal ash cleanup.

Across Duke’s territory, its coal ash dumps and coal and natural gas plants – and their toxic emissions – are mostly located near low-income communities and communities of color, putting them at disproportionate risk of being exposed to and harmed by the utility’s pollution.

Duke wields its considerable political clout in all its territories, including the Carolinas and Indiana. Millions of dollars from its ratepayers go to campaign contributions, donations to curry favor with civic organizations and other public entities, and greenwashing through public relations and advertising campaigns.

This is the first time that public interest groups and experts have joined together from across all six states in Duke Energy’s service area to hold the utility behemoth accountable everywhere it operates.

To follow and engage with the Duke Energy Accountability Coalition and its People’s Commission, connect via [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

Statements From Citizens Action Coalition, Indiana Member of the Duke Energy Accountability Coalition

Kerwin Olson, executive director, Citizens Action Coalition of Indiana:

“As a result of Duke Energy’s almost exclusive reliance on coal for decades in Indiana, which continues today, the health and pocketbooks of Hoosiers have suffered long enough. It is long past time to hold them accountable for their extraordinary greed and their indifference to both the climate crisis and the financial well-being of their customers, most notably low- and fixed-income households. CAC looks forward to collaborating with our partners on the Duke Energy Accountability Coalition to shed light on the sordid business practices of Public Energy Enemy No. 1, and work collectively to protect customers, public health, and our planet.”

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