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Florida Public Service Commission

Farewell Remarks of
Commissioner Ronald A. Brisé

Tuesday, December 12, 2017
9:30 a.m.

Joseph P. Cresse Hearing Room
Room 148 - Betty Easley Conference Center

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Good morning, everyone. If
3 you could, take your seats, please. Happy holidays
4 to everyone. And welcome to this agenda
5 conference, December 12th, 2017. Today is a very
6 special day.

7 And if you would like to join us in the
8 invocation, which will be given by Commissioner
9 Polmann, please stand and -- please stand. It will
10 be followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

11 (Pledge and invocation given.)

12 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you, Commissioner
13 Polmann. Nice prayer.

14 As I mentioned, today is a very special day.
15 As you all know, this is Commissioner Brisé's last
16 agenda conference. And I would like to take a --
17 several moments of personal privilege, along with
18 my fellow Commissioners, to reflect on the great
19 work Commissioner Brisé has done over the past
20 eight years here at the Florida Public Service
21 Commission.

22 He's been Chairman of the Commission. He's
23 been president of SEARUC. He's held numerous
24 leader- -- leadership positions at NARUC, serving
25 on the executive committee, the board of directors,

1 serving on the board of directors of USAC, being on
2 the Intergovernmental Advisory Committee at the FCC
3 and the federal-state joint board of the FCC -- I
4 could go on of all the positions Ron has held over
5 the past eight years.

6 Whether he's a Commissioner or Chairman or
7 serving in any of these capacities on behalf of the
8 state of Florida, he has done such an exemplary
9 job. It's -- I get a little emotional because he's
10 a good friend and we -- and he cares about all of
11 us here at the Commission. He cares about staff.
12 He cares about the work that we do. And he
13 always -- and he is the heart of this Commission.
14 And I had better stop because I don't want to cry
15 in public here.

16 Ron, you know how I feel about you. You're an
17 incredible Commissioner, but an even better human
18 being. And in your honor, we created a little
19 montage that we're going to play right behind me.

20 COMMISSIONER BRISÉ: Oh, no.

21 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Oh, yes.

22 (Video played.)

23 CHAIRMAN BROWN: I would like to open up the
24 floor to the other Commissioners now.

25 Commissioner Graham -- Chairman-Elect Graham.

1 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: Thank you, Madam Chair.

2 I -- I don't have words. We've gone through
3 so much. I remember the way this Commission was
4 before we got here. Actually, when we got here,
5 for the first six months or so, it was interesting,
6 to say the least.

7 And then Julie and Ed Balbis came along, and
8 we were like the four amigos. And we were -- we
9 were set to -- to fix things. And I -- I'm glad to
10 say that we actually did. I -- I -- one of the
11 tasks that we were given was to bring this back to
12 being a collegiate body. And without a doubt, we
13 did that.

14 I think you were key to that. You know, I --
15 I always laugh and I tell my aid, Jim, Ron is
16 always the -- the senior statesman, but yet, he's
17 ten years my junior. But you were -- you were that
18 calming influence.

19 You know, I -- we all have our strengths and
20 our weaknesses. And you've always been a -- a
21 mentor to me. You -- you understand the politics
22 of -- of Tallahassee, of Florida, extremely well.
23 Actually, with all your experience in NARUC, you
24 understand the -- the politics of -- of the U.S.

25 And you are -- you are that -- that doornail.

1 You -- you set us straight and on a pace -- on a
2 path. You're a brother to me. You're a roommate
3 to me. You've -- you know, you and I -- people to
4 go through the nominating process and the
5 reappointment process together -- there's a bond
6 there that -- that, unless you've done it, you just
7 don't know.

8 And it's just -- you know, every single day,
9 it's the horrors of, you know, what you've heard,
10 what's in the press, you know -- you know, who's
11 out to get you next. And it's just -- you know,
12 it's just -- it's one of those things. Julie went
13 through it with Ed.

14 I mean, it's just that -- no matter what
15 happens, that bond is always going to be there.

16 CHAIRMAN BROWN: And Jimmy.

17 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: And Jimmy.

18 And that bond is always, always going to
19 there. And we're going to miss you. We're going
20 to miss you a lot.

21 However, I have to say, the one thing I won't
22 miss, because with the add of Doc and Gary here, I
23 felt like the runt of the litter, with only being
24 six-foot tall. So, you know, now, the average
25 height comes down a little bit. And I feel a

1 little -- I feel a little more comfortable, but I
2 will miss you.

3 (Laughter.)

4 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you.

5 Commissioner Polmann.

6 COMMISSIONER POLMANN: Well, as it's been
7 said, we -- we have few words, but we have great
8 feelings. And we've spent some time together.
9 I've learned so much. And you're a model to
10 follow. I'm so grateful for our time together.

11 And as was said, you're -- you're truly the
12 heart and you are the example of public service
13 that -- that we all hope to be. Really, we'll miss
14 your presence. Learned a lot from you, and
15 would -- would like to see you here in Tallahassee.
16 Would like to see you around the state.

17 Look forward to -- to seeing you continue to
18 be involved in utility work. Hopefully, we'll have
19 an opportunity to share experiences as we go
20 forward. So much appreciate your dedication.
21 And -- and thank you. Thank you.

22 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Commissioner Clark?

23 COMMISSIONER CLARK: Thank you.

24 Commissioner Brisé, I'm the -- still the new
25 guy. We've not known each other a long time, but

1 we had the privilege of meeting four months ago. I
2 have a tendency to characterize individuals
3 according to a unique thought process that I have.

4 And the first thought that came to my mind
5 when I met you was an old Latin proverb that says,
6 still waters run deep. And I think that just so
7 characterizes you. You are a -- a depth of
8 knowledge. And I have come to respect you.

9 You're leaving a great legacy in this state.
10 The respect that you have attained from not only
11 this body, but nationally, is extremely impressive.
12 And it is a great honor to call you my friend. And
13 I wish you the very best.

14 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you. And on behalf of
15 all of the -- the Commission here and the
16 Commissioners here, we would like to give you this
17 plaque for recognition. It's small, but it's
18 your -- it is -- it exemplifies the beauty that you
19 have served while you were here at the Commission.

20 And please join me in congratulating
21 Commissioner Ronald Brisé for his service.

22 (Applause from the audience.)

23 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Commissioner Brisé, the floor
24 is yours.

25 COMMISSIONER BRISÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair

1 and -- and colleagues. I am grateful to all of you
2 for your friendship and the fact that each one of
3 you has enhanced my life, not only professionally,
4 but personally, in so many ways.

5 And I have put together a couple of things I
6 want to say so I don't start rambling all over the
7 place, right, because today is an emotional day for
8 me as well. Some of you -- we've been in the
9 trenches for a long time. So, if you would,
10 indulge me for a few minutes as I go through my
11 thoughts here.

12 First of all, I want to express gratitude to
13 this nation and to this state for the fact that a
14 young boy that traveled by way of Haiti -- born in
15 Haiti, by way of Argentina, and then Honduras,
16 arriving to the shores of Florida as a seven-year-
17 old boy -- only in this country can a person with
18 that trajectory have the opportunity to serve in
19 the state Legislature and eventually here on the
20 Commission -- on the Commission. So, I am grateful
21 for the fact that this country is that type of a
22 country; that this story is possible.

23 I am grateful to my parents, Roland and Nicole
24 Brisé, for the fact that they decided to come to
25 this country. Yes, we had huge opportunities in

1 Haiti and Honduras and Argentina, but they thought,
2 for educational reasons, this was the best place
3 for their two children. So, I'm grateful to the
4 support that they continue to provide for me and
5 the values that they have instilled in me and my
6 sister.

7 I'm grateful to the people of the district --
8 the 108th District, for they gave me an opportunity
9 to serve as their proxy or their voice in the state
10 Legislature. So, they entrusted me with allowing
11 me to make decisions on their behalf.

12 And by extension, when I was appointed by two
13 governors, which I am grateful to Governor Crist
14 and Governor Scott. I am grateful to them -- both
15 of them for the fact that they believed that I
16 could serve in this capacity and, therefore, giving
17 me the proxy for every Floridian, recognizing that
18 every decision we make on this Commission affects
19 every individual across this state. It impacts how
20 we are perceived economically across the world by
21 the decisions that each one of us make and how we
22 arrive at that decision.

23 I am grateful to the nominating councils, as
24 we go through that process and been through that
25 process -- to the nominating councils for -- for

1 understanding my -- my philosophy and agreeing
2 to -- to move me forward; and then, to the Senate,
3 the various Senates that -- that confirmed me.

4 I am grateful to each one of the members of
5 the PSC staff. I may not know every single one of
6 you by name, but I know that your job is important
7 to every person in this state. They may not know
8 what you do or understand what you do, and most of
9 them will never understand what you do, but I am
10 extremely grateful, not only on my personal behalf,
11 but on the behalf of every Floridian for what you
12 do, the hours that you put in.

13 You come in early and you leave late at night.
14 You travel across the state in the PSC mobiles
15 and -- and we are -- I am grateful for all the work
16 that you put in and the support that you provide to
17 each one of us.

18 I'm thankful for all the notes that I've
19 received from many of you, the notes and the calls
20 after the decision was made as to what was going to
21 happen with -- with me and the reappointment. And
22 it was so heartwarming to receive those notes and
23 calls expressing our gratitude -- our shared
24 gratitude for the ability to serve. So, thank you
25 for doing an often-thankless job.

1 I am thankful for and to my staff that I've
2 had, Ryan West and Melanie Shanks, when I first
3 came. I didn't know where the bathrooms were,
4 didn't know how to set up a briefing, didn't know
5 the cadence of a briefing. And they were so
6 instrumental in helping me understand how this
7 place works. And so, I'm grateful to them for --
8 for guiding me through those initial days.

9 I'm thankful to my current staff, Pamela, who
10 has been on my team for the last ten-plus years.
11 Pamela, as many of you know, worked on my team when
12 I served in the Florida House. And so, she keeps
13 the trains on the track, keeps everything on
14 schedule and under budget, often keeping me in
15 check. I'll run things by her as I'm thinking
16 through my decisions. And you know, she keeps me
17 thinking about the reality of how people might
18 understand what I'm thinking through.

19 So, I'm thankful to you for your willingness
20 to be on my team, not only in the Legislature, but
21 subsequently traveling here to the Commission. And
22 thank you for always going beyond the call of duty.
23 So, thank you.

24 To my friend since sixth grade, Baldwin
25 English. We have literally known each other for

1 that many years. Someone with a similar
2 temperament as me; he has much-greater attention to
3 detail. And he's probably ten times smarter than
4 me, but to me, he's probably the best adviser that
5 one could ask for. So, I hope that this experience
6 has served you well, and hopefully it will serve
7 you well in the future as well.

8 So, my wife and my daughter aren't here today
9 because my daughter has her Christmas program this
10 afternoon. So, as often, we divide and conquer in
11 our household; and so, my son is here.

12 And Ron, if you would, stand.

13 (Applause.)

14 COMMISSIONER BRISÉ: So, I've been blessed to
15 have JoAn Solomon as my love and life partner for
16 over 17 years. And I've never looked back with any
17 regret, but I'm pretty sure she has a few times
18 because -- but anyhow, she decided to stick with
19 me.

20 So, we've been blessed with two wonderful,
21 intelligent, kind, intrepid, and curious children.
22 When I got here, Ronald was four years old and
23 Lizzie was not born yet. And she's six now. And
24 so, time surely flies. It's unbelievable how
25 quickly time flies.

1 My hope for -- for you, Ronald and Lizzie, is
2 that your Papi -- and I want you to know that your
3 Papi is incredibly proud of you. And I love you to
4 the moon and back. And I want you to -- as you
5 grow, to learn to be a good decision-maker, be
6 compassionate, and love life. If you do those
7 things, you'll succeed at anything in the world.

8 And -- and I think that comes back to us here
9 at the Bench; that if we are thoughtful about what
10 we're doing, and we make quality decisions, and
11 we're compassionate as we go through this process
12 and recognize that there is a life outside of this,
13 and love life, we will be successful at doing this
14 job.

15 So, we've had some tough decisions to make,
16 very tough decisions to make. I would say that
17 90 percent of them, I think we look back and say,
18 we got it right, but there is that 10 percent that
19 we look back and say, well, maybe I would have done
20 that a little bit differently if I had an
21 opportunity to do it again.

22 But the thing that -- the things that stick
23 with me are the little things, like the time Lisa
24 got me the -- the blanket that said "Lizzie" for my
25 daughter; the dress that -- that Julie got for --

1 for Lizzie when she was born; the thoughts and the
2 times on the phone that Art and I have spent
3 together and the times we went to dinner -- on
4 multiple times, just -- just thinking through the
5 process in terms of nominating and -- and so forth;
6 our quest for -- for forward-moving within SEARUC
7 and NARUC, and how it became coined -- and how we
8 became coined as "Team Florida." Those are the
9 things that I'm going to take away with me.

10 And I have learned so much from each one of
11 you. You know, Don and I have this quirky jokester
12 thing going on, even here at the Bench. And it is
13 amazing how, in such a short time, we get an
14 appreciation for someone -- for someone's soul
15 and someone's -- someone's integrity and the
16 intelligence that someone brings to the table.

17 I, too, am that way in terms of reading
18 someone in the first five or seven minutes. And
19 Gary, I can say that I see that you're a man of
20 faith, a man of integrity. And I am honored to
21 serve with you.

22 Don, I am honored to serve with you.

23 Julie and Art, we are family, because we've
24 been so much -- we've been through so much
25 together. And I am honored to serve with all of

1 you. Your friendship means the world to me. So,
2 thank you. Thank you. And thank you.

3 (Appause and discussion off the record.)

4 * * * * *

5 CHAIRMAN BROWN: All right. If there -- there
6 are -- any other matters by Commissioners? We
7 don't -- Commissioner Brisé.

8 COMMISSIONER BRISÉ: Thank you, Madam Chair.
9 And just taking advantage of the last opportunity
10 to be at this mic, you know, in my comments
11 earlier, I failed to mention, as I was going
12 through my notes -- and I want to thank OPC, J.R.
13 Kelly, and the whole team that he has for
14 consistent and effective advocacy on behalf of
15 customers. And thank you for your partnership in
16 this space. You know, you have a role. We have a
17 role. And that's what makes this whole process
18 make sense.

19 And all the other intervenors as well, for the
20 work that you do on behalf of -- of the customers
21 and clients that you represent, and to all of the
22 utilities for the work that you do as well. Come
23 rain, shine, heat, wind, and even in the last
24 couple of days, maybe a little bit of frost that's
25 out there -- thank you for -- for doing that work

1 effectively so that people don't have to really be
2 concerned about -- when they go to turn on the
3 light, turn on the water, or use gas, a concern
4 that it's not going to be there.

5 And so, thank you for doing that effectively
6 in a way that's -- that -- with our partnership,
7 that the rates are reasonable for them. As I
8 always say, you call them customers or constituents
9 or clients or ratepayers -- we all serve the same
10 people. We come from different angles, but we
11 serve the same people. And I hope that we maintain
12 this collaborative spirit to -- to do the peoples'
13 work. So, thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you. Thank you,
15 Commissioner Brisé. And you will be so missed. I
16 got very choked up talking about you earlier, but
17 I'm sure we'll see you in the future.

18 And I want to thank your wife JoAn -- and your
19 so, Ronald, Jr., for being here -- and Lizzie for
20 their support that they've shown you and for
21 lending you over these past eight years to us and
22 to the state of Florida. You've done just such a
23 stellar job.

24 There are a few other matters, I think,
25 Commissioner Graham?

1 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: I just want to make sure
2 I understand Commissioner Brisé, that he was
3 thanking all of the intervenors, he didn't mean Jon
4 Moyle, though, right?

5 COMMISSIONER BRISÉ: Absolutely.

6 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: I've got to pick on Jon
7 because Jon --

8 CHAIRMAN BROWN: We all pick on Jon because
9 we --

10 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: Jon -- Jon is fun-loving
11 and Jon can take it.

12 But I -- I do --

13 CHAIRMAN BROWN: I agree.

14 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: -- since I'm on the mic,
15 want to wish everybody Merry Christmas and Happy
16 Holidays and wish --

17 CHAIRMAN BROWN: And Happy Hanukkah.

18 COMMISSIONER GRAHAM: -- and -- and Happy
19 Hanukkah, and please travel safe.

20 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Thank you. And since we do
21 not have -- we are not having an internal affairs
22 later this month, I did want to recognize our
23 employee of the month, who is Suzanne Brownless. I
24 don't know if she's -- she's right over there.

25 Suzanne --

1 (Applause.)

2 CHAIRMAN BROWN: Well, well-deserved.

3 And if there are no other matters, this
4 meeting is adjourned. Thank you. Safe travels.

5 (Whereupon, proceedings concluded at 11:22
6 a.m.)

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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA)
COUNTY OF LEON)

I, ANDREA KOMARIDIS, Court Reporter, do hereby
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IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I
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I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative,
employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor
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attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I
financially interested in the action.

DATED THIS 21st day of December, 2017.



ANDREA KOMARIDIS
NOTARY PUBLIC
COMMISSION #GG060963
EXPIRES February 9, 2021