

Opening Statement of Robert B. Weisenmiller, PhD
Senate Rules Committee Meeting
February 2, 2011

Mister Chairman and Committee members, I'm honored to have the opportunity to appear before you today. Since I have submitted these prepared remarks, I will only summarize them today. To begin, I would like to recognize some friends and family, some of who could not be here in person but who are, I hope, following this proceeding from afar. First my wife Cheryl, my parents, brother and sister are logged into the web cast, while our daughter Suzanne is here today with my very close friends and I thank all of them for their support.

Being appointed to the Energy Commission and made Chair by Governor Brown is a tremendous honor for me and the culmination of my life-long career in energy.

I hold the seat designated at the Energy Commission for the "scientist" Commissioner. I came to California in 1970, lured by the unique educational opportunities at the University of California, which certainly changed my life and helped prepare me for this day, and was awarded two advanced degrees from the University of California at Berkeley in 1977. First, I have a Ph.D. in Chemistry. I also received a Masters of Science in Energy & Resources with Dr. John Holdren as my thesis advisor. Dr. Holdren is now Assistant to President Obama for Science and Technology. I was among the first students to receive a degree in Energy & Resources, and I look forward to being joined by Carla Peterman who will be awarded a Ph.D. from this same Energy & Resources program this summer.

First, I should note this is my third time at the California Energy Commission. I entered public service at the California Energy Commission in 1977, shortly after its creation by the Warren-Alquist Act. I served first in a Commissioner's office but was later promoted to a senior management position, in charge of budgets and policy development. In terms of my track record of accomplishments at that time, I would point to the CEC's pioneering work in energy efficiency, renewables and cogeneration,

particularly my efforts to transform cogeneration from an engineering concept into thousands of MWs of power plants.

I left public service in 1982 to help translate public policy into a business and myself into a businessman. I was a co-founder of a small business that was both a developer of cogeneration facilities and also a provider of consulting services. In 1986, I co-founded MRW & Associates, a specialized energy consulting and financial service company serving the independent power industry. MRW developed a reputation as a premier center of excellence for consulting services in the California power and gas markets. We provided expert opinions as part of the due diligence for the project financing of dozens power and gas projects. I, not only sponsored extensive expert witness testimony, but was selected as an expert to assist the bankruptcy court in New York evaluate the value of the Calpine Corporation. Apart from the professional aspects of that work, I learned many lessons on how to recruit, train and retain staff, to meet a payroll, and to address human resource issues. I am proud to say that company we founded continues today.

I was lured back into public service by the unprecedented challenges of the recession of 2008 and the opportunities presented to California by the ARRA stimulus funding. Having shown the way in the 70s and 80s for a cleaner, more sustainable energy future, California is again in the forefront of the next great energy revolution. Despite the terrible economic straits we face, California is also the epicenter of new energy technology development and venture capital. We can be the recipient of large amounts of stimulus funding, which we can use to pay for development of our clean energy infrastructure and put our citizens back to work. In January 2010, I was appointed to the CEC by then Governor Schwarzenegger. Since that time I have had a laser-like focus on renewable power development, which in 2010 meant accelerating permitting for projects that were eligible for these ARRA cash grants and/or loan guarantees. Given the turmoil in the financial markets and also the innovative nature of some of the technologies, these incentives appeared to be a unique fleeting opportunity for California to provide jobs, economic development, and finally to reduce fossil fuel use (and thus greenhouse gas emissions). The CEC achieved timely decisions on 9 projects representing over 4 GWs.

My assignments were presiding member of the Electricity and Natural Gas Committee, eventually presiding member of the Siting Committee, being an associated member of two other Committees and working on over eight active siting projects, including four of the permitted ARRA projects.

If confirmed, my goals as a Commissioner are to help California address its challenged economic situation through the opportunities of energy efficiency and renewable energy development – both utility-scale and distributed generation. At the end of the next four years, I want the State to be on a clear trajectory towards both its renewable and combined heat and power goals. Finally, I look forward to working with Senator Padilla and other leaders in the Legislature in reviewing and reauthorizing the Public Goods Surcharge, including the funding for energy research. This program is vitally important, but it is time for a thorough review and evaluation. As Chair, I hope to look forward to not only developing a new generation of staff leadership at the CEC but also to work cooperatively with my colleagues at other state agencies with energy and resources responsibilities.

I would appreciate the opportunity to work with you, the Governor and the other policy makers in the state to secure our energy future. Senators, thank you for your consideration. I would be pleased to answer any questions.

Senate Rules Committee Vote on February 2, 2011(4-0):

Chair and Senate pro Tem Darrell Steinberg – Aye

Vice Chair Tom Harman – Aye

Senator Elaine K. Alquist – Aye

Senator Jean Fuller – Aye

Senator Kevin de Leon – Absent

Senate Floor Vote on February 3, 2011 (36-0):

Senator Kevin de Leon – Absent

Senator Carol Liu – Absent

Only 38 Senators were active during the vote.