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84114-2220

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For Immediate Release

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Gov. Herbert announces energy advisor and Office of Energy Development Executive Director Laura Nelson to retire

SALT LAKE CITY (Jan. 9, 2020) — Gov. Gary R. Herbert announced today that Laura Nelson, his energy advisor and executive director of the Governor's Office of Energy Development (OED) is retiring after more than five years of service in his administration, effective Jan. 9.

Previously, Nelson served as energy advisor to Utah's previous Gov. Jon M. Huntsman. She has also served as a technical advisor for the Utah Division of Public Utilities. She has served the state of Utah for over a decade. Throughout her term in her current role, Nelson was proactive in defining and supporting balanced and sustainable energy solutions, including providing congressional testimony, forging regional, national and international partnerships, and working across counties and cities to achieve lasting outcomes for citizens near and far.

"Dr. Nelson is truly an unparalleled leader. Her tireless dedication has proven critical in ensuring Utah's energy and minerals economy continues to thrive in the face of a rapidly evolving landscape," said Gov. Herbert. "I have greatly appreciated her industry expertise and ability to bring diverse stakeholders together to deliver wise policy, responsible development, and innovative solutions that can advance our economic and environmental success today and for generations to come."

Nelson's major accomplishments include providing planning leadership for Utah's energy future (*Utah's 10 Year Strategic Energy Plan, Utah's Energy Action Plan to 2020, etc.*),

preserving Utah's autonomy in the wake of regionalization, advancing a first-of-its-kind net-metering agreement for the solar industry, expanding alternative and Tier 3 fuels to improve connectivity and Utah's air quality, launching the nation's leading energy and minerals education platform, forging regional, national and international energy agreements, and providing an attractive technology and business environment for two indelible projects to be realized in rural Utah, including the \$140 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to establish a geothermal research laboratory in Milford, and a partnership between Mitsubishi Hitachi Power Systems Americas and Magnum Development to build the world's largest renewable energy storage project in Delta.

"It has been my privilege to work alongside Governor Herbert and help to realize the vision for powering an energy future for everyone through the production of affordable, reliable, sustainable and clean opportunities," said Dr. Nelson. "With outstanding state leadership through his administration and at the legislature, along with a talented technical team, we have been able to grow the Governor's Office of Energy Development into a premier policy model that is being mirrored by a dozen states nationwide today."

Nelson has also elevated Utah and OED with her leadership on several boards and committees. She has served as vice-chair and board member of National Association of State Energy Officials, chair of the Utah Energy Infrastructure board, chair to the Western Interstate Energy Board, co-chair of the NARUC-NASEO Task Force on Comprehensive Electricity Planning, and as a board member of the Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (among others).

Prior to joining Gov. Herbert's administration, Nelson served as the vice president of government and regulatory affairs for Potash Ridge Corp., the vice president of energy and environmental development at Red Leaf Resources, energy policy advisor to the Idaho Public Utilities Commission, and a technical consultant to the Utah Division of Public Utilities.

Rob Simmons, deputy director of OED, will serve as interim energy advisor and executive director of OED effective tomorrow, Jan. 10. Simmons comes to the position with extensive energy policy, development and technology experience, previously serving as associate director of the Energy Innovation Program of the Utah Science Technology and Research Initiative; and, vice president of the Oquirrh Institute, which was founded by Gov. Mike Leavitt.

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