



Karen M. Kemerait

Partner

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Former Chair of the North Carolina Utilities Commission, Karen is a committed advocate and creative problem solver. She focuses her practice in the areas of energy, utilities, water and wastewater, and administrative law.

Karen has represented numerous independent power producers, solar and renewable energy companies, privately owned and municipal water and wastewater companies, natural gas companies, and telecommunications companies in regulatory matters as well as in the permitting, purchase, sale, and construction of facilities.

She has also regularly represented solar developers, telecommunications companies, and various project developers before state governmental agencies, permitting officials, and local zoning boards, as well as in appeals in state and federal courts. She has appeared before boards of commissioners and city and town councils to obtain rezonings, special use and conditional permits, ordinance interpretations, and variances.

In her role on the North Carolina Utilities Commission, Karen served in a variety of key influential federal and state utilities organizations, including:

- State representative to the Federal-State Collaborative with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.
- Board member of the Organization of PJM States, Inc. (OPSI).
- Chair of OPSI's Governance Committee.
- Member of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC).
- Member of NARUC's Critical Infrastructure Committee, Water Committee, and International Committee.
- Member of the American Water Works Association.

Karen's background enables her to advise clients on their business in relation to state and federal policy contexts and how they can achieve their objectives within the regulatory framework in which they operate.

Services

- Energy Regulation & Compliance
- Renewable Energy & Project Development
- Energy & Natural Resources
- Infrastructure & Development
- Zoning & Land Use
- Real Estate

Before Fox Rothschild

Karen rejoined Fox Rothschild after serving as both Chair of the North Carolina Utilities Commission and a Commissioner with the Commission. She was previously a partner at Smith Moore Leatherwood LLP, which combined with Fox Rothschild in 2018. She began her legal career as a law clerk at the North Carolina Court of Appeals.

Beyond Fox Rothschild

Karen has three grown sons and has been involved with their school and sporting activities throughout their lives. She is a competitive runner and a former cyclist and triathlete. She has qualified for and run the Boston and Chicago Marathons on multiple occasions and was the captain of the cross country and track teams when in college.

Karen is an active member of the Raleigh community. She was selected by Governor Roy Cooper to serve on the North Carolina Utilities Commission. Karen also served as a chairperson on the Raleigh Board of Adjustment and was on the Board of Directors of the Raleigh Area Masters Swim Team and the Capital Area Cycling Club.

Karen was on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina League of Conservation Voters, and she is a past Vice Chair, Board member, and Chair of the Water Committee of WakeUP Wake County, a nonpartisan nonprofit organization that advocates for appropriate planning for growth and development and healthy, vibrant communities in Wake County. She volunteered her time for the Wake County Guardian ad Litem program as both a Guardian ad Litem and an attorney for many years.

Representative Matters

Renewable Energy and Energy

- Regulatory approvals in North Carolina and Virginia for new solar facilities.
- Preparation and negotiation of Asset Purchase Agreements for renewable energy facilities.
- Regulatory proceedings before the North Carolina Utilities Commission for solar facilities and natural gas facilities.
- Proceedings for new certificates of convenience and necessity and transfers of the certificates, rate case proceedings, interconnection and transmission proceedings, avoided cost proceedings, and proceedings for clean energy programs.

Water/Wastewater

- Regulatory approvals for new water and wastewater facilities and transfer of facilities to private companies and municipalities.
- Preparation and negotiation of Asset Purchase Agreements
- Rate case proceedings.

Telecommunications

- Permits for numerous wireless communications facilities and networks throughout the state.
- Appeals in state and appellate courts.

Land Use and Zoning

- Local government approvals for land development projects throughout the state, including rezonings, special use and conditional use permits, conditional rezonings and variances.
- Appeals in state and appellate courts.

Administrative

- Complaint proceedings and contested hearings before professional licensing boards and agencies.
- Complaint proceedings before the North Carolina Utilities Commission.

Bar Admissions

- North Carolina

Court Admissions

- U.S. District Court, Eastern District of North Carolina

Education

- Wake Forest University School of Law (J.D., 1991)
- Davidson College (B.A., 1988)
 - English

Memberships

- North Carolina Utilities Commission
- Chair, Board of Adjustment for the City of Raleigh
- North Carolina Bar Association
 - CLE Chairperson, Zoning, Planning, and Land Use Law Section
 - Women in the Profession Committee
 - Call4All
- Wake County Bar Association
- National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC)
 - Critical Infrastructure Committee, Water Committee, and International Committee.
- American Water Works Association

Honors & Awards

- Unanimously elected as Chair of the North Carolina Utilities Commission
- Appointed as state representative to the Federal-State Collaborative with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
- Appointed as board member of OPSI and as Chair of OPSI's Governance Committee
- North Carolina Pro Bono Honor Society (2021)
- Recognized by *Chambers USA* for Energy & Natural Resources - North Carolina (2021)
- Named to "The Best Lawyers in America" list for Land Use & Zoning Law in North Carolina by *Best Lawyers* (2019-2022)

News

January 14, 2026

North Carolina Utilities Commissioner Karen Kemerait Returns to Fox Rothschild

Events

April 30, 2026

Breaking Ground: A Legal and Regulatory Road Map for Data Center Development
Webinar

April 28, 2026

Large Load Impacts and Policy Approaches in North Carolina
McKimmon Center, NC State University

February 10, 2026

Unlocking the Value of SEEM: Identifying Improvements to Increase Utilization

The Westin

February 5, 2026

Navigating Nuclear Policy: State and Regional Strategies for Progress

Duke Energy's Kings Mountain Generation Support Facility

January 23, 2026

Duties Before the Tribunal

The Brown Hotel

January 23, 2026

Ethics in AI: Challenges and Considerations for Utility Regulation

The Brown Hotel

November 12, 2025

Blazing Trails: Policy and Technology Innovation in Wildfire Resilience and Response

Sheraton Grand Seattle Hotel

November 12, 2025

Permitting Critical Energy Infrastructure: The Role of States and the Stakes of Reform

Sheraton Grand Seattle Hotel

November 2025

The Southeast Renewables Policy and Regulatory Landscape—Meeting the Challenge of Explosive Demand Growth and Controlling Customer Costs

Westin Buckhead Hotel

June 1, 2025

Denmark's Energy Landscape from a State Regulatory Perspective

Anaheim Marriott

October 2023, 2024 and 2025

Top of the Docket, North Carolina Utility Commissioners' Q&A

Appalachian State University

2023 and 2024

View From the Bench

Hilton Raleigh North Hills

Publications

March 10, 2026

Duke Energy Hails \$1 Billion in Savings With Merger of Two Carolina Utilities