

FUTURE ISSUES

Established in 1879 as the Georgia Railroad Commission, in 1922 the Legislature changed the name to the Public Service Commission to reflect the changing nature of technology and utility regulation.

The Commission works to ensure that Georgians continue to have an adequate and reliable supply of electricity well into the future by requiring the state's investor-owned electric utilities to implement Integrated Resource Plans every three years. Georgia's electric investor owned utilities are currently constructing two new nuclear reactors that will be in service by 2020. Since 2013, the Commission has expanded the use of solar energy after careful consideration of the effect on consumer rates.

Natural gas sales changed from a regulated to a competitive environment in 1998 following passage of natural deregulation in 1997. Several natural gas marketers compete for customers while the largest investor owned gas utility has shifted to a regulated pipeline distribution company only. One natural gas utility remains subject to full Commission regulation for its rates and services. The General Assembly later passed legislation that provides the Commission with the authority to ensure that gas marketers provide adequate customer service to their customers and to provide assistance for low-income consumers. The 2016 merger of Atlanta based AGL Resources with the Southern Company created the nation's second largest electric and natural gas utility.

The Commission has moved into the digital age by providing more web-enabled services such as on-line consumer complaint forms, gas bill calculators and docket research forms that provide vital consumer information.

As it has for more than 135 years, the PSC will continue to exercise its authority and influence to ensure that consumers receive safe, reliable and reasonably priced telecommunications, electric and natural gas services from financially viable and technically competent companies.

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HOW YOUR PSC OPERATES

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) regulates the rates charged and services provided by investor owned electric and natural gas utilities and most intrastate telecommunications companies operating in Georgia. The agency plays an important role in the Georgia economy by ensuring that consumers receive reliable utility services at reasonable rates while providing utilities with an opportunity to earn a reasonable return for investors. The Commission also monitors the operations of the certified natural gas marketers operating in Georgia's competitive natural gas commodity market.

Under Georgia's Telecommunications and Competition Development Act of 1995, the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 and the Georgia Natural Gas Competition and Deregulation Act of 1997, the PSC facilitates and manages the transition to open-market competition, assures reasonable access to services, monitors rates and service quality, and mediates disputes between competitors.

Requests for rate changes or other matters brought before the Commission are first reviewed by one of four standing committees: Administrative Affairs, Facilities Protection, Telecommunications and Energy. These committees provide a forum for deliberating issues under the PSC's jurisdiction and assure all parties an opportunity to comment.

In reaching a decision, the Commission considers the interest and input of residential, commercial and industrial customers. Most matters are scheduled for formal public hearing before the full Commission or a Hearing Officer. Sworn testimony is taken, witnesses are subject to cross-examination and evidence is introduced like a judicial proceeding. The PSC is authorized to conduct hearings, subpoena witnesses, inspect properties, books and records of all regulated companies, issue orders, hear appeals and, when necessary, initiate court proceedings to enforce its decisions, rules and regulations.

Matters pending before the Commission are generally decided during Administrative Sessions held on the first and third Tuesday of each month in the hearing room of the Commission's Atlanta office.

All PSC Administrative Sessions, Committee Meetings and Hearings are open to the public and available on the internet through the PSC web site. Any member of the public is invited to make a statement at Committee Meetings or participate as a witness at a public hearing. PSC hearings may be held throughout the state on issues of importance to consumers.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The PSC consists of five elected Commissioners and a professional staff of more than 80 employees.

The Commissioners are elected statewide for staggered, six-year terms and may succeed themselves in office. Commissioners elect one member to serve as Chairman for a two-year term who may serve a second two-year term. Commissioners are required to live in one of five districts but are elected by voters statewide.

The PSC is organized for budget purposes into three divisions (Administration, Utilities and Pipeline Safety/Facilities Protection) that carry out the day-to-day functions of the Commission.

The staff is headed by an Executive Director and consists of engineers, rate analysts; consumer services representatives, fiscal and personnel officers and support personnel. Other key staff members are experts on utilities and telecommunications.

PSC DIVISIONS

ADMINISTRATION

The Commission's Administration Division, headed by the Executive Director, is comprised of the Executive Secretary, Budget and Fiscal Office, Human Resource Office, Public Information/Legislative Liaison Office and the Office of Operational Support. The Administration Division assists the Commissioners in carrying out their duties and responsibilities and manages the Commission's staff functions.

UTILITIES

The Utilities Division is composed of the Electric, Natural Gas and Telecommunications Unit.

These units provide technical expertise, analyze information, prepare reports, and make recommendations concerning telecommunications, electric and natural gas utilities matters. Areas of expertise include rate-setting, utility system and telecommunications network planning and operations, accounting and finance, rule making, utility audits and monitoring natural gas marketers. It also presents alternative positions to the Commission in rate cases.

PIPELINE SAFETY/ UTILITIES FACILITY PROTECTION

This division enforces state and federal pipeline safety regulations, conducts safety inspections and conducts investigations of incidents involving pipelines and complaints involving violations of the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act. It has jurisdiction over safety operations for municipal owned natural gas systems.

PSC JURISDICTION

The Commission has jurisdiction over the following:

- Investor-owned electric power companies
- Investor-owned natural gas companies
- Underground facility protection and natural gas pipeline safety
- Telecommunications companies
- Credit card, calling card and Coin-operated telephones
- Automatic telephone dialing and announcing devices
- Telephone service observing equipment

The Commission does not have rate-setting authority over:

- Natural gas marketers
- Municipally owned gas and electric utilities
- Electric membership corporations (EMCs)
- Water/sewer services
- Cellular telephone companies
- Interstate long-distance companies
- Cable or satellite television industries.