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From the Office of Commissioner Doug Everett
News Release

Commissioner Doug Everett Votes No on Rule Change in Minimum Balance for Natural Gas Late Fees

Atlanta, January 19, 2005 – Commissioner Doug Everett explains his no vote on the change which raises the minimum balance on which natural gas marketers can charge a late fee from \$10.00 to \$30.00. Everett explains, “I voted against this change as it rewards those who do not pay their bills on time and punishes those who do since they must pay for the amount of funds the marketers will lose by this change.” The change impacts the marketers by approximately \$10 million. The marketers have indicated that they will pass the loss on to other consumers.

Commissioner Everett says this issue began with a consumer who complained after being charged a \$10.00 late fee while owing less than a dollar. However, after the consumer contacted the marketer, they removed the fee because it was obvious the late fee should not have been charged. The Commission had approved a \$10.00 minimum balance in January 2004.

In 2004 the Commission received 104 complaints about late fee charges. Eventually, 13 consumers had the fee waived since the amount of the bill was so little or there had been an error. There were only three consumers who complained that owed less than \$30.00 while the average bill for those who had complained was almost \$105.00. The marketers can charge a late fee of \$10.00 or 1.5%, whichever is greater.

Commissioner Everett, an Albany native, is serving his first six-year term on the Commission having been elected in November 2002. He just completed his first term as Commission Chairman in 2004.

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