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NEWS RELEASE

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From the Office of Commissioner Tim Echols

Commissioner Tim Echols Speaks About Nuclear Waste

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SAVANNAH - Public Service Commissioner Tim Echols spoke to Utility and Industry officials tonight in Savannah at the Georgia Utilities Coordinating Council meeting at Hyatt Hotel on Bay Street.

Echols spoke about the importance of privatizing the nuclear waste management process and getting it out of government hands.

“We have in this country over 60,000 tons of high-level nuclear waste stored at more than 100 sites in 39 states, and the 104 commercial reactors produce about 2000 additional tons of additional used fuel each and every year,” said Echols. “The hottest waste is in the cooling pools, and then later it is moved to dry casks. That dry waste is what the federal government trash truck is supposed to pick up.”

Echols said that while he wished the government would take the waste to the partially completed Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada as promised, he is not holding his breath.

“It would take nine Yucca mountains by the turn of century to house all the waste we are producing,” he said. “Getting one Yucca has proved almost impossible, let alone nine.”

Echols said he favors a Heritage Foundation proposal that would allow utilities, nuclear technology companies and consumers to manage used nuclear fuel. That plan suggests that valuing used fuel against the cost of permanent burial is a calculation best done by the companies that provide fuel management services.

“Congress should repeal the penny per kilowatt-hour flat fee that Georgia rate-payers have been paying all these years,” said Echols. “The total paid in so far by exceeds \$1.2 billion—just for our state.”

Echols said the events in Japan are tragic, and we certainly don’t want to ever see it happen again. “Hopefully, this will energize our Congress to take nuclear waste management out of the hands of government bureaucrats,” he said.