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## Georgia Public Service Commission

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**For Immediate release**

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**From the Office of Commissioner Tim Echols**

### ***Commissioner Echols Supports Nuclear Waste Resolution Calls on Federal Government to Proceed with Yucca Mountain***

ATLANTA, February 16, 2011 – Newly elected Georgia Public Service Commissioner Tim Echols voted in support of a resolution by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) calling on the Federal Government to proceed with the Yucca Mountain project in order to provide a final resting place for “spent” nuclear fuel that our reactors produce.

“The Nuclear Regulatory Commission should be allowed to proceed in licensing Yucca Mountain, with or without the President’s support” said Echols. “The Department of Energy should meet its statutory and contractual obligations to safely dispose of spent nuclear fuel from our Georgia reactors, especially since they have already taken our money.”

Echols attended the recent winter meeting of the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC). He also met with five of Georgia’s Republican Congressmen and asked them to do all they could to make the nuclear waste fund proceeds available to the utilities in our state affected by the tariff.

Background:

President Obama in 2009 decided that building a nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain was “not workable.” This led to four direct actions—(1) the shutdown of Yucca Mountain; (2) the abolishment of the project office; (3) the request that the Yucca Mountain license application under review by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission be withdrawn – with prejudice; and (4) the formation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on America’s Nuclear Future.

The Nuclear Waste Policy Act in 1982 set the policy for the federal government to dispose of both commercial and government managed high-level radioactive waste. In 2002 Congress approved Yucca as the site subject to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) issuing a license. When the Department of Energy (DOE) asked to withdraw the license, NARUC and several parties sought to keep the license process going and sued DOE in federal court.

Meanwhile, the NRC’s Atomic Safety Licensing Board denied DOE’s withdrawal request last June. The full NRC has yet to uphold or deny the ruling. The Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit was initially willing to wait for the NRC to act, but has since initiated its own proceedings. The BRC, a well-qualified panel of technical and policy veterans, is expected to issue a draft report in

July, take public comments, and make its recommendations in January 2012. NARUC requested that the Secretary of Energy suspend the collection of the Nuclear Waste Fund fees during the BRC process, since the government collects about \$770 million in fees each year for the NWF, which currently holds approximately \$25 billion. [The amount in the Nuclear Waste Fund is actually government IOU's since Congress has borrowed the proceeds for other uses.] The Secretary denied the request and NARUC and the Nuclear Energy Institute sued. The Court of Appeals dismissed the case in December.

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