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## Viewpoint: The Public Service Commission matters

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With all the attention surrounding the presidential race, little attention is on the statewide elections here in Georgia. Towards the top of the ballot will be yours truly. Here are a couple of reasons why the **Georgia Public Service Commission** matters.

As one of your Public Service Commissioners, I have spent the last five years crisscrossing Georgia. Meeting constituents, listening to concerns, discussing energy issues, speaking to civic clubs, advancing technology—things you would expect from an elected regulator. You can be



Tim Echols

proud that your state leads the nation in many ways, and the future is bright for Georgia—despite extensive federal regulations.

At the top of most people's list is cost: our rates are about 14 percent below the national average. Not bad considering we don't drill for gas or oil, and have no mines of coal or uranium. Chalk this up in part to having elected—not appointed—regulators. Nothing like being able to replace someone who is not doing their job. On top of that, having well-run electric and gas utilities who plan far into the future keep costs tracking with inflation or less.

Most recently, the PSC cut rates by \$4.60 for Georgia Power customers starting June 1. When you add that to the \$5 cut we did in December, ratepayers will enjoy an almost \$10 reduction per month in electricity. The icing on the cake is the merger deal between the Southern Company and Atlanta Gas Light Resources which resulted in an agreement by Georgia Power to freeze these rates for three years. Clearly, this is a good year for power company customers.

No doubt you have heard about Georgia's advancement in renewable energy too. Our Public Service Commission instructed Georgia Power to add solar to our energy mix back in 2013 and that order has catapulted Georgia to a top-five solar state in the nation. The PSC's forward-thinking action in adding solar to our grid resulted in Georgia having more clean energy jobs in the first quarter of 2015 than anywhere else in the nation.

The PSC has also authorized the construction of hundreds of miles of new natural gas pipelines. These needed supply lines allow more Georgia homeowners and businesses to receive clean, cheap natural gas. And with the announcement of the aforementioned merger of Southern Company and AGL, expect to see more cost savings from natural gas.

The Georgia Public Service Commission is a relatively unknown entity—but one that impacts every person in our state every day. Having commissioners who are proven and trusted makes the agency work for you. It is my goal to make sure that “public service” stays a part of the Public Service Commission.

I welcome your questions and comments at [techols@psc.state.ga.us](mailto:techols@psc.state.ga.us), on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Snapchat. You can also text me at 706-340-0773. I look forward to continuing in service for you and all Georgians.