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### **NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER TIM ECHOLS**

#### **Commissioner Tim Echols Appointed as Vice-chair of Nuclear Waste Disposal Committee of National Utility Regulators Association**

April 21, 2017 – (ATLANTA) – The National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) has appointed Georgia Public Service Commissioner Tim Echols as Vice-chair of the Nuclear Issues-Waste Disposal Subcommittee. NARUC President Robert Powelson of Pennsylvania made the announcement this week.

"The wise disposition of nuclear waste continues to be one of the most important issues of our day," said Commissioner Echols. "If we don't come up with a solution soon, we'll need nine Yucca Mountain repositories by the end of the century, and that would be impossible to bring about."

Echols succeeds Georgia Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald as Vice-chair of the Nuclear Waste subcommittee. NARUC has also appointed Commissioner Echols to the Committee on Energy Resources and the Environment.

Founded in 1889, the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to representing the State public service commissions who regulate the utilities that provide essential services such as energy, telecommunications, power, water, and transportation. NARUC's members include all 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Commissioner Echols is in his second six-year term on the Commission, having been re-elected in November 2016. Echols and his wife, Windy, have been married 33 years and they have seven children. He lives in Jefferson, Georgia. His complete biography and photo are found on the Commission web site at <http://www.psc.state.ga.us/content.aspx?c=/commissioners/tim-echols/?tab=2>

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See the below editorial by Commissioner Echols in the April 7, 2017 Atlanta Business Chronicle.

**Atlanta Business Chronicle**  
**Energiewende, fracking and lower rates**  
**By Tim Echols**  
**April 7, 2017**

In 2013, I made my first trip to Germany to see what the “Energiewende” was all about. This German word means “Energy Transition,” and Germany has made considerable effort to persuade the world to phase out nuclear power and develop renewable energies.

Germany’s Energy Policy is a revolutionary, bold and new approach by anyone’s definition. When I came back from my first trip to Germany, I joined Georgia Public Service Commissioner Bubba McDonald in approving a uniquely Georgian version that ushers in our own energy transition — but much more affordable. Our renewable energy policy has made Georgia one of the fastest-growing solar states in the nation — without a subsidy and without a mandated RPS (Renewable Energy Portfolio). And now, after another trip to the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue to hear the latest from the German brain trust, I think we need to “stay the course” in Georgia. Here’s why.

First, we have something in the U.S. that Germany does not have: Cheap natural gas. This has made ALL the difference for America. Germany, hostage to Russian gas prices, has lignite coal and a vast nuclear fleet. However, after the Fukushima accident, political leaders from just about every political party in Germany felt it was time to end nuclear energy power generation in the country. They publically stated their exit strategy for nuclear and announced the closure of all reactors by 2022. The schedule for closure of the reactors forced Germany to expedite the Energiewende to meet electricity demand. Clearly, if they had an abundance of natural gas as we do, their transition would have been much easier. Natural gas used in power plants is half the CO2 of coal, and doesn’t contain the other pollutants we use scrubbers to eliminate. More importantly, the German people don’t view gas as negatively as they do nuclear and coal.

Second, we are diversifying our energy portfolio, and Germany is narrowing theirs. With widespread political opposition to nuclear energy and nuclear reactors closing, they are desperately looking for “effective” clean sources of power. Thanks to Tesla and research from German and Chinese companies, battery technology is almost prime-time. Massive utility scale battery arrays will allow Germany to store that extra energy they get when the wind is blowing and the sun is shining. Even in Georgia, we are experimenting with batteries, but Germany plans to deploy them in an even bigger way. Large scale battery farms and extensive energy upgrades in homes and businesses are the next giant step for Germany.

Finally, let’s not forget the impact of low rates. Georgia is 14 percent below the national average, and our bills are about one-third the price of a German power bill. Companies like BMW and BASF have moved certain manufacturing processes “offshore” to America because of the cheap energy prices. Both Georgia and South Carolina eliminated the sales tax on energy used in manufacturing to attract even more industry.

Life isn’t perfect in the Peach State, and there are still many things we can learn from our neighbors near and far. Our new-nuclear projects could end-up costing us far more than we had hoped — assuming we can even finish them after a Westinghouse Chapter 11 filing. Stay tuned as this situation is very fluid.

That said I would not trade positions with a German or French regulator for all the macarons in France. One thing I do agree on though: Energy solutions depend on national circumstances. Let’s keep moving Georgia forward.

*Tim Echols is elected to the Georgia Public Service Commission and regulates electricity and natural gas. He just returned from Germany and Brussels where he participated in energy conferences representing our state and country.*