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Opinion

**TRICIA PRIDEMORE: HOW CALIFORNIA'S ENERGY POLICIES
CAN BENEFIT GEORGIA'S BUSINESSES**

- Tricia Pridemore
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As a lifelong Georgian, I tend to find difficulty in identifying the connections between California and the Peach State. However, all Georgians should be paying close attention to the actions taken by California regarding energy regulation and their potential impact for job growth here at home.

With Congress leaving much of the nation's energy regulation in the hands of the individual states, we are left with an out-of-control regulatory and policy environment in liberal states such as California. These dramatic spikes in energy prices have left many California business owners scratching their heads and wondering, "How can I continue to make ends meet if my energy prices keep going up? Where can I relocate my small business or major corporation that won't be subject to sudden energy demand spikes and cost increases?"

Lucky for the business owners in California, I have their solution: Georgia is open for business.

During my time on the Georgia Public Service Commission, Georgia has benefited greatly from the liberal policies and burdensome regulations imposed on small business in states like California and New York. We need look no further than California's efforts over the last year, which have clearly sided with liberal energy activists as the expense of the consumer.

While Georgia has maintained a regulated energy market, California chose to deregulate their electric industry in the early 1990s. Since that time, headache after headache have contributed to a substantial increase in the cost of energy production leading to over usage and blackouts on multiple occasions. Additionally, California's lack of regulation has failed to keep costs in check, leaving energy customers in the state to foot the bill. Georgia is proving an opposite approach can lead to better service for businesses and individuals. One example is our Integrated Resource Plan process that guides Georgia's energy generation mix and portfolio investment for the long-term.

This hands-off approach to energy regulation in states like California have led existing and prospective companies to search elsewhere for expansion. Georgia's low-cost of energy production to the consumer, stable regulatory environment and commonsense approach to maintaining a diverse energy portfolio all greatly contribute to a strong pitch for companies to look beyond California. In the last decade, we have seen major companies such as Kia, Mercedes Benz, Caterpillar and State Farm locate corporate headquarters in Georgia. By continuing an all-of-the-above approach to commonsense energy regulation, we can continue to create new jobs, grow the economy, and expand the tax base. In March, Gov. Deal announced that California-based Facebook had selected Walton County to invest \$750 million for a state-of-the-art data center that will create 100 new jobs in the county. During the announcement, Facebook specifically referenced Georgia's low cost of energy for 24 hour data center operations cooling as a contributing factor in their selection.

The 2019 IRP will give the Georgia Public Service Commission an opportunity to do what California has refused to tackle. We will review the current state of energy production and consumption through a series of public hearings, ask questions of Georgia Power Company and other utility providers about consumption outlook, and come to reasonable conclusions about where our state should invest in energy production at the lowest possible cost to the consumer. Through this review, we will take time to strengthen Georgia's diverse energy portfolio, and I am looking forward to the proceedings that will help us prepare for Georgia's future.

Tricia Pridemore is the Georgia Public Service Commissioner for District 5.