

Public Service Commissioners are Powerful (No Pun Intended)

**PSC voted 4 – 1 to increase Atlanta Gas Light monthly bills \$1.14, effective November 3rd
PSC is considering Georgia Power request for automatic rate hikes on electricity**

Consumer advocates fighting the requested Georgia Power rate hike include

MARTA, AARP and Georgia Watch, but individuals should call the commissioners, as well.

Georgia's five Public Service Commissioners are constitutional officers that serve six-year staggered terms. So, there's never a complete turn-over. They all campaign state-wide and are elected by *all* Georgia voters, although each must live in the district he represents. PSC is an extremely important regulatory agency that certifies land-line telephone companies that do business in Georgia and sets policy and rates for utilities – electricity, transportation, natural gas and telecommunications. The executive director of PSC is in charge of pipeline safety. PSC authority over transportation includes such businesses as couriers, movers and limousines.

Perhaps, their least-known responsibility is a periodic review of Georgia nuclear power plants, such as Plant Vogtle in Augusta, where PSC oversees the plant's \$6.4 billion expansion. PSC has scheduled three meetings to hear Georgia Power's Third Semi-Annual Vogtle Construction Report for the period ending 12-31-09. These meetings are open to the public and will be in the Commission Hearing Room, 244 Washington Street, Atlanta on November 22nd, December 21st and January 20, 2011. Audio of PSC meetings is broadcast live online at www.psc.state.ga.us.

This year's newly elected commissioner of District 2 takes office January 1st and will serve through December 2016. But, in the remaining weeks of this term, PSC will make decisions that will seriously affect consumer wallets. Get to know these powerful commissioners. Their every decision affects the standard of living for consumers.

This month Georgia Power is requesting authority to implement AUTOMATIC rate increases *once or twice a year*, if company profit isn't near 12 percent. Already, Georgia Power affiliates in Alabama and Mississippi automatically increase rates for their customers. Don't think that can't happen here. If PSC allows automatic increases here, Georgia Power would collect over \$1 billion more over the next three years, totaling an extra \$137 per customer during that time.

Perks for Senior Citizens. The PSC gives senior citizen discounts on gas, electric and phone bills, if the utility is in the senior citizen's name. To qualify for a credit on monthly phone bills and discounts for natural gas and electricity, seniors must be over 65 and recipients of TANF, SSI, food stamps, or Medicaid. Call PSC if you qualify for these discounts.

ACTION – OPPOSE the rate hike and all attempts to implement automatic rate increases.

Dates of Georgia Power hearings before PSC: November 8, 9, 10 and December 1, 2, 3; decision to be on December 3

Location of meetings: Commission Hearing Room, 244 Washington Street, Atlanta; live audio at www.psc.state.ga.us

Toll-free telephone for Public Service Commissioners: 1 800 282-5813. Their individual office numbers are as follows:

District 1: Doug Everett, term ends 2014; call 404 463-6745, fax 404 463-6699, deverett@psc.state.ga.us

District 2: Robert Baker, Jr., term ends Dec. 31, 2010; call 404 656-4514, fax 404 657-2980, bbaker@psc.state.ga.us

District 3: Chuck Eaton, term ends 2012; call 404 657-2020, fax 404 657-2010, ceaton@psc.state.ga.us

District 4: Lauren McDonald, Jr., Chair, term ends 2014; 404 463-4260, fax 404 463-4262, lmcdonald@psc.state.ga.us

District 5: Stan Wise, term ends 2012; call 404 657-4574, fax 404 657-4576, stanwise@psc.state.ga.us

It's Bad, But Here: RT3, Federal Plan to Control Education

Imagine hearing an auctioneer triumphantly shout, “State and local control of education is going, going, gone!” Then, BANG goes the gavel! That’s the “auctioneer’s” unconstitutional transfer of education from local and state officials to the federal government. States may accept or reject Race to the Top (RT3) “voluntary” grants, but acceptance requires adopting a federal strings-attached curriculum, disguised as “standards,” a term used to hoodwink the trustful.

The National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) launched the Common Core State Standards Initiative in April 2009. The plan involves Governor Sonny Perdue, whom the NGA appointed in 2009 to co-chair the initiative, along with a co-chair from the CCSSO. By September 2009, 51 states and territories had agreed to support the development of “internationally benchmarked” English and math standards, designed to supercede 85 percent of the recipient’s English and math standards.

When in place, the k – 12 plan will provide state-to-state, district-to-district and nation-to-nation comparisons of American students and those in other countries. RT3’s ultimate goal is to hold all students to mediocre “world-class” standards, despite scientific literature on national standards that is too thin to support a U.S. policy move in that direction. The U.S. Department of Education sent a cadre of education “experts” to Boston, Atlanta, Denver and D.C. to “sell” the plan November 12, 2009 – January 20, 2010. On November 17 – 18 they were in Atlanta.

The “carrot.” The U.S. Department of Education dangles before states its \$4.35 billion RT3 “carrot,” encouraging acceptance of federal control. The money is divided into grants to states that will adopt Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the accompanying assessments.

CCSS funding is provided in federal stimulus bills (ARRA, H.R. 1, 2-17-09 and Omnibus Appropriations Act, H.R. 1105, 3-11-09) and ongoing donations from the Gates Foundation. Tennessee and Delaware won first-round grants, while nine other states (including Georgia) and Washington, D.C. won grants by late August. RT3’s heavy data requirement meant upgrading Georgia databases, so student records could be accessed from regular school computers.

Fast-Tracked Strategy: Whoosh! From Start to Acceptance

April 2009: NGA and CCSSO Launched Common Core State Standards Initiative

March 2010: U.S. DOE Released “Blueprint for Reform,” Reauthorization of ESEA

March 10, 2010: Release of K – 12 CCSS in English and Math, International Standards

April 9, 2010: Federal Notice Invited Applications for Race to the Top Assessment Grants

June 23, 2010: Deadline for Transmittal of Assessment Grant Applications

June 2010: Release of Final Version of CCSS

September 2010: 35 States and Washington, D.C. had Adopted CCSS

RT3 in Georgia

June 1, 2010: Submission of 212-Page Race to the Top Grant Application to U.S. DOE

July 8, 2010: Georgia Board of Education Adoption of Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS), as Race to the Top Component

July and August: Introduction of CCGPS to Georgia School Systems

August 24, 2010: Georgia Awarded RT3 Grant for \$400 Million Over Four Years

2010 – 2011 School Year: Implement Resource Alignment and Training

2011 – 2012 School Year: Implement Common Core Standards

Race to the Top: Federal/International Control of Education

Facts

The U.S. Constitution does not empower the federal government to control education.

Power not allocated to the federal government resides in the sovereign states¹.

Cultural differences among nations make international standards incompatible to the U.S.

U.S. DOE Reauthorization of ESEA (NCLB): A Blueprint for Reform, March 2010

- President Obama: “My ... Blueprint ... is ... an outline for a re-envisioned federal role in education.... To provide ... students with the world-class education they need and deserve.”
- Race to the Top (RT3) requires states to implement Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that control 85 percent of English and math curricula in participating areas.
- Prioritizes programs designed for English learners; students with disabilities; high-risk students; principles of universal design for learning; as well as school safety and diversity that promote and affirm alternate lifestyles
- Georgia² loses control over English and math in 26 districts, *i.e.*, 41 % of students
- Universally designed assessments are developed for use in the U.S. and worldwide
- A never-before-stated goal of the U.S. – “college- and career-ready” students – undefined.
- Georgia, one of 15 states controlled by an education consortium of D.C. and ten other states
- CCSS, a k – 12 plan, focusing on children “birth through college,” dilutes family values
- “Challenged” schools are taken over for systemic renovation, based on four categories:
Transformation model: Replace the principal; strengthen the staff; extend the learning time; implement select instructional programs; and install new governance and flexibility.
Turnaround model: Replace the principal; rehire up to 50 percent of school staff; implement instructional programs; extend the learning time; implement new governance plan.
Restart model: Convert or close and reopen under management of an effective charter operator, charter management organization, or education management organization.
School closure model: Close the school and enroll its students in higher performing schools.
- State and district superintendents, chief academic officers, and human resource directors will be recruited, prepared and placed to lead transformational change in their states and districts.
- The length and structure of the school day and year will be affected, so laws must change.
- Schools will be community centers for social services, from birth through college and career.
- States receiving RT3 grants must solicit matching funds from the private sector.
- Competitive grants will encourage the start or expansion of public charter schools.
- Charter management organizations may be eligible for larger grants.
- Grants go to magnet schools that improve academics and reduce minority group isolation.

ACTION – Oppose RT3. Contact the governor at 404 656-1776 and the school superintendent at 404 656-2800.

¹ See *Constitution of the U.S.*, Tenth Amendment. Federal role in education grew after 10-17-79, when President Carter took education from the Department of Health Education and Welfare to create a Department of Education, as payback for teacher-support in his election. On 10-30-79 he appointed as first Secretary of Education, Shirley Hufstедler, a judge on California’s 9th Circuit Court of Appeals and Trustee of Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. Aspen Trustees serving with her were Senior Fellow Henry Kissinger and Robert McNamara of World Bank. Humanism now dominates education.

² Local districts affected in Georgia get half the \$400 million grant to underwrite innovations and pilots outlined in the application, leaving the remaining \$200 million for (a) upgrading student databases, (b) creating teacher evaluation tools and (c) professional development for educators. At this writing, 26 local districts are participants in RT3: Atlanta, Ben Hill, Bibb, Burke, Carrollton, Chatham, Cherokee, Clayton, Dade, DeKalb, Dougherty, Gainesville, Gwinnett, Hall, Henry, Jones, Meriwether, Muscogee, Peach, Pulaski, Rabun, Richmond, Rockdale, Spalding, Valdosta and White. NOTE: Those districts comprise 41 percent of public school students, 46 percent of Georgia students in poverty, 53 percent of Georgia African-American students, 48 percent of Hispanics and 78 percent of the state’s lowest achieving schools.

There's No "Trust, but Verify" Component in New START Treaty

Famous exchange at the 1987 signing of the INF Treaty

When President Reagan cited a Russian proverb, "doveryai, no proveryai," translated trust, but verify, Gorbachev said, "You say that at every meeting." Reagan retorted, "I like it!"

"New START only limits our ability to defend ourselves while offering no new verifiable commitments from the Russians. This is not an agreement Reagan would sign." – The Heritage Foundation

Heritage's comments were the last statements in an analysis of the New START Treaty. Since verification is not required in New START, Senator Johnny Isakson should take note. He voted with Democrats to get it out of committee "because Reagan signed the START Treaty."

Background. START I discussions of June 29, 1982 – May 31, 1988 ended when President Reagan and Russia's Gorbachev signed the Ballistic Missile Launch Notification Agreement, requiring each to notify the other at least 24 hours in advance of all ICBM and SLBM launches. On April 8, 2010, President Obama and Russia signed the New START Treaty, although "trust, but verify" is not in it. With Russia's history of cheating on treaties, that's a huge problem.

Great Britain's Margaret Thatcher said Reagan won the Cold War "without firing a shot!" because he stood firmly against Russian demands that the U.S. give up anti-missile defense systems (SDI – Star Wars). **Phyllis Schlafly, Eagle Forum Founder/President** and contemporary of President Reagan, explained why Reagan would not sign the New START Treaty. Below are her comments, including her selected "bolding" of sentences:

- **Reagan would never have accepted a treaty that left the United States in a position inferior to Russia.** That's why he criticized SALT II before and after he became President.
- The Russians have said that they, thanks to New START's Russian-designed counting rules, will actually be allowed to maintain 2100 nuclear weapons rather than the 1550 we expect to have. In addition, the Russians will be able to keep thousands more weapons than we have under the guise that they are called "tactical" nuclear arms (which is an arbitrary and questionable term because some have sizeable yields and have been targeted against both our allies and the United States). The Russians have a ten-to-one advantage in this category. It is not believable that Reagan would have okayed this as an equitable agreement.
- Reagan explicitly rejected the unilateral nuclear freeze, which Obama proposes to make permanent by rejecting modernization and underground testing of our weapons. Reagan knew this is a formula for disaster. He would never agree to limit U.S. arms unilaterally.
- Reagan would certainly have objected to New START's prohibition of missile defenses. Anti-missile defense was absolutely vital to Reagan. He wanted to defend Americans, rather than avenge them. Russians are gloating that New START achieves their longtime goal of stopping U.S. missile defenses. It is no answer to say the agreement is "only" in the preamble.
- **It is offensive to argue that Reagan would support New START. He never read it. It is a travesty to invoke President Reagan as a supporter.**

ACTION – Oppose. Ask Senators Isakson and Chambliss to vote NO on New START. It reduces U.S. defenses.

Senator Chambliss: Toll-free in Macon, 1 800 234-4208; Toll-free in D.C., 1 877 851-6437; Savannah 912 232-3657, FAX 912 233-0115; Augusta 706 738-0302, FAX 706 738-0901; Macon 478 741-1417, FAX 478 741-1437; Atlanta 770 763-9090, FAX 770 226-8633; Moultrie 229 985-2112, FAX 229 985-2123; D.C. 202 224-3521, FAX 202 224-0103

Senator Isakson: Toll-free in D.C., 1 877 851-6437; Atlanta 770 661-0999, FAX 770 661-0768; D.C. 202 224-3643, FAX 202 228-0724

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