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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEWS RELEASE

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Commission Approves \$5 Million in Assistance for Low Income Natural Gas Customers over Next Five Years

ATLANTA, September 1, 2015 -- The Georgia Public Service Commission (Commission) today approved \$5 million in grants over the next five years to enable three community service agencies to assist both low-income citizens and low-income senior citizens in paying natural gas bills and replacing or repairing natural gas furnaces and water heaters. The agencies who will actually administer these programs are HopeWorks, composed of six Community Action Agencies through their Emergency Program, The Salvation Army and the Heat Energy Assistance Team or H.E.A.T. The grants for assistance with natural gas bills are only available for customers on the Atlanta Gas Light Company distribution system.

The Commission will allocate the grant money from the Atlanta Gas Light Company Universal Service Fund (USF), a fund the Commission administers under the 1997 Natural Gas Competition and Deregulation Act. Georgia law allows the Commission to allocate funds from the USF for three main purposes: 1. Ensure natural gas is available in areas served by natural gas marketers; 2. Extend natural gas service to under or unserved areas; and 3. Assist low-income residential consumers in times of emergency as determined by the Commission under O.C.G.A §46-4-161.

Commission Chairman Chuck Eaton said, "These programs help to ensure the most vulnerable low-income citizens on AGLC's system have natural gas heating during the winter."

"Today's action continues this Commission's long standing tradition of assisting low-income Georgia natural gas customers with their heating bills and enabling them to stay warm this winter," said Commission Vice-chairman Lauren "Bubba" McDonald.

"When the Georgia legislature deregulated natural gas in 1997, they tasked the Commission with being a steward of the Universal Service Fund created as a part of the legislation," said Commissioner Tim Echols. "Today's action of the Commission to disburse funding for low-income heating assistance through HopeWorks, The Salvation Army and H.E.A.T. will benefit the poorest in our state."

The HopeWorks Emergency Program will provide grants to replace and/or repair natural gas furnaces and water heaters for low-income senior citizens in their respective areas. The six agencies involved in the Emergency Program are:

1. Central Savannah River
2. Coastal Ga. Area Community Action Authority
3. Gainesville 9th District Opportunity, Inc.

4. HopeWorks (Formerly Resource Service Ministries)
5. Middle Georgia and Heart of Georgia Community Action Agency
6. Tallatoona CAP, Inc.

“I would like to thank the Commission for their vision and their compassion for low-income senior citizens here in the state of Georgia and their vote of confidence for continuing this much needed program,” said Michael Kimsey, Executive Director of HopeWorks. You can contact HopeWorks at <http://hopeworks4us.org> or by calling 404-872-0167.

The Salvation Army will provide grants to low-income customers on the Atlanta Gas Light Company distribution system. The Salvation Army will receive \$200,000 a year for five years beginning in 2016. Since 2011, the Salvation Army has distributed more than \$900,000 to over 12,000 households in Georgia from USF grants provided by the Commission. To contact The Salvation Army, call 1-800-25-SHARE or visit their web site at www.salvationarmygeorgia.org. “We are looking forward to serving thousands of additional clients who otherwise would not be served without the generosity and concern of the Georgia Public Service Commission,” said Michael J. Bradford, Director of Project SHARE.

H.E.A.T. will also provide grants to low-income customers. H.E.A.T. will receive \$200,000 a year for five years beginning in 2016. Since 2008, H.E.A.T. has provided more than \$689,000 in assistance for nearly 1,800 households in Georgia. Interested parties can contact H.E.A.T. by calling 678-406.0212 or visiting them on the web at www.heatga.org. “This funding will help thousands of low-income Georgians throughout the state who will need emergency energy assistance and we are happy to have this funding to be able to help them,” said Janet Joseph, Executive Director of H.E.A.T.

Under terms of the Commission decision, all the program recipients of the USF funds must provide monthly reports to the Commission. Any unused funds will carry over to the next year.

The Georgia Public Service Commission is a constitutional agency which exercises its authority and influence to ensure that consumers receive safe, reliable, and reasonably-priced telecommunications, electric and natural gas service from financially viable and technically competent companies. For more information go to www.psc.state.ga.us

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