

GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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Mac Barber, Chairman
Dave Baker
Bobby Baker
Bob Durden
Stan Wise

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PSC '98 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Public Safety

GEORGIA'S HIGHWAYS SHOULD BE SAFER

The House and Senate have agreed to expand the number of truck enforcement officers in Georgia. Seven new officers will be hired this summer resulting in approximately seven thousand more truck inspections each year.

"Georgia continues to rank among the top ten states with the highest number of truck crash related fatalities," said Public Service Commissioner Bobby Baker. "By increasing our truck safety efforts by 25%, the legislature is now working with us to decrease the number of truck related crashes in Georgia."

The officers will be assigned to high commercial traffic areas in Atlanta, Savannah, Columbus and Augusta. Georgia's highways are made safer through truck inspections that check for road worthiness and driver sobriety and fatigue levels. The officers are 80% funded through a federal truck safety program with cost to the state being \$106,650.

Consumer Protection

TELEMARKETING "NO CALL LIST" PASSES BOTH CHAMBERS

Consumers who wish to limit telemarketing calls will be able to place themselves on a "PSC No Call List" starting in July. For a one time \$5.00 charge, consumers are placed on a list which telemarketers are banned from calling. Included in the definition of a telemarketer are persons or companies that

"encourage the purchase or rental of, or investment in, property, goods or services..." House Bill 71, introduced by Speaker Tom Murphy last year, passed both chambers this session after excluding calls from political pollsters and candidates for public offices. Also exempt from the legislation are charitable or religious organizations and persons or entities that have a prior or

current business or personal relationship with the subscriber.

"We are considering privatizing this effort to maximize the number of citizens who wish to subscribe to the no call list," said Public Service Commissioner Bobby Baker.

Telemarketers who fail to check their list against the "PSC No Call List" and call someone on the list can be subjected to a \$2,000 fine per call.

CONSUMERS GIVEN MORE POWER TO COMBAT PHONE SLAMMING

The General Assembly passed legislation imposing tougher penalties against telephone companies that switch consumers local and long distance phone services without their consent - the practice known as "slamming."

Under provisions of H.B.1130, telephone companies are given ninety days to resolve a consumer's slamming complaint. If the offending company has not issued a refund entitled to the consumer within that ninety day period, consumers can sue the company in their local courts for up to three times the amount the consumer lost in rate differences.

"We are supportive of any measure that gives consumers more power to combat the isolated companies who engage in this practice," said Public Service Commissioner

Bobby Baker.

Slamming complaints at the PSC have escalated from nearly 200 in 1995 to nearly 2000 last year. As a result of legislation pushed by the PSC last year, telephone companies can now be fined up to \$15,000 per slamming violation.

Consumers who believe they have been slammed should report the incident to the Georgia Public Service Commission by calling 1-800-282-5813.

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