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## Georgia Public Service Commission

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### News Release

#### **PSC Approves Funds for Low-Income Heating Assistance;Lowers Rates for Institutional Telephone Calls**

Atlanta, November 2, 2004 —.The Georgia Public Service Commission (Commission) today unanimously approved the release of \$3 million from the Universal Service Fund (USF) to give qualified low-income citizens and senior citizens in Georgia some relief from this winter's expected high natural gas heating bills. Commissioner David Burgess,who sponsored the proposal, noted, "These funds will enable many Georgia families to keep the heat on this winter and pay those soaring natural gas bills." Commissioner Stan Wise added," The legislature was correct to give us this authority. We now have the opportunity to grow the system and help our senior citizens." Today's action means a total of \$6.1 million is available from the USF this winter to provide relief to eligible low-income families and senior citizens.

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) disburses the funds through Community Action Agencies across the state. Eligible households must meet federal poverty guidelines in order to receive the assistance. For the first time, DHR will be able to use these funds to assist people already disconnected with paying deposits to get reconnected and staying connected to the natural gas system.

Since 2001, the Commission has disbursed more than \$21 million in assistance to low-income families and senior citizens to help pay winter natural gas bills.

In other action, a majority of the Commission voted to reduce the rates charged for Institutional Telephone calls. The proposal calls for a 10 percent reduction in the intrastate long distance collect call rate but the reduction would be phased-in over a four-year period beginning July 1, 2005. The surcharge would drop 5 cents a year from the current \$2.20 to \$2.00 while the per minute rate would drop from 24 cents per minute to 19 cents per minute. For more information on this issue, enter Docket Number 18870 in the Commission's docket search function.

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