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## **Georgia Public Service Commission**

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**For immediate release**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

**From the Office of Commissioner Angela Speir**

#### **Commissioner Speir's Open Hearing Rule Adopted by Public Service Commission**

**ATLANTA**, August 21, 2007—Today, after months of debate, the Georgia Public Service Commission adopted an Open Hearing Process rule. While the rule that was adopted today is not as strong as the version originally proposed by Commissioner Angela Elizabeth Speir, she called it “a good first step towards insuring that Commission decisions are made based solely on the evidence in the record, not based on back-room deals or ‘off the record’ conversations.” The rule passed today is a result of Commissioner Speir's second attempt to get the Commission to adopt an ex parte rule. She first proposed an ex parte rule two years ago.

The Open Hearing Process rule adopted today increases the transparency of the Commission's hearing process and puts limits on ex parte communications. An ex parte communication is a communication by one party with a Commissioner about a case without the other parties to the case being present or having the opportunity to respond and without members of the public being able to know what was said.

"Prohibiting these 'off the record' conversations during the critical decision making phase of the process is of crucial importance to the integrity and fairness of the process. This rule isn't perfect, but it is a big step in the right direction for open government. Georgians deserve to have confidence in the decisions of their elected Representatives on the Commission. I am optimistic that this rule will go a long way towards restoring the public's confidence that the Commission's decisions are fairly decided and are based on what was said in the open hearing room—not behind closed doors."

Commissioner Speir is serving her first six-year term on the Commission. In 2002, she became the first woman elected to the Commission and in 2005 was the first woman to serve as Commission Chairman.

More information on this rule can be found on the Commission's website, [www.psc.state.ga.us](http://www.psc.state.ga.us), under Docket No. 24838.

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