



# GPSC News

*Making Business and Safety Decisions Affecting Tomorrow*

## AMERICA UNITED IN FACE OF TRAGEDY

- \*America united in face of tragedy
- \*U.S. retaliates
- \*Security increased at all state buildings
- \*Employee awareness of surroundings
- \*Twin Towers hours change
- \*Archives parking lot hours change
- \*Employees must display state ID

### In this issue

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Commission Begins Georgia Power Rate Hearings</i>   | 2 |
| <i>Zambian Regulator Visits Commission</i>             | 2 |
| <i>Commission Assists Low-income Seniors</i>           | 3 |
| <i>Commission Sets Atlanta Gas Light Rate Hearings</i> | 3 |
| <i>Commission Asks Attorney General Probe</i>          | 4 |
| <i>Governor Orders Budget Cuts</i>                     | 5 |
| <i>Consumer Affairs</i>                                | 6 |
| <i>NARUC Meeting</i>                                   | 6 |
| <i>Governor Names Natural Gas Task Force</i>           | 7 |
| <i>Employee News</i>                                   | 7 |
| <i>Legislative Update</i>                              | 8 |
| <i>PSC Calendar</i>                                    | 8 |

### Commission Reacts

Commissioners and staff members reacted with shock and horror along with millions of other Americans in the wake of the terrible terrorist acts in New York City, Washington, D.C. and Pennsylvania on September 11. Commissioners were getting ready to begin the second day of hearings in the Georgia Power Company rate case when news of the attacks came into Commission offices. Commission Chairman Lauren "Bubba" McDonald opened the hearings on a somber note by asking for a moment of



silence. McDonald provided updates on the crisis throughout the hearing. "There's an obvious dampening in

the hearing today," McDonald said. The Commission did not cancel the hearings though Governor Roy

Barnes placed state agencies on alert. The U.S. responded on October 7 by bombing suspected terrorist training camps and Taliban military targets in Afghanistan. **Increased Security** Because of the attacks, state officials have increased security at all state build-

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Commission Supports BellSouth Long Distance Service

The Commission on September 27 approved Bellsouth's application for interstate long distance service, ending a nearly six-year long process to gauge the company's compliance with Section 271 requirements set forth in the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996. The Commission has



Telecom Director Leon Bowles presents 271 case

also evaluated third party testing of electronic

interfaces for BellSouth's operational support systems, set extensive performance standards for BellSouth to meet and monitored Federal Communications Commission action regarding Section 271 filings made by other Bell Operating Companies.

## America United In Face of Tragedy

*(Continued from page 1)*

ings. Employees are required to show a state ID in order to enter state parking lots. In addition, employees must now use key cards to the door leading from the footbridge connecting the Twin Towers with the Pete Hackney and Butler St. parking lots. These lots will be locked with cardkey access only, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Employees need to understand the importance of being aware of their surroundings, and not allowing unknown people to "piggyback" and slip into state facilities without using their own swipe card. Other new

security precautions include:

1. Twin Towers Building Business Hours: The Twin Towers building main entrance doors will open at 6:30 pm. The building will still be open until 5:30 p.m. If staff needs to arrive prior to 6:30 a.m., they can enter the building through the footbridge from the Pete Hackney/Butler St. deck using their cardkey or using the street level entrances at Piedmont or Butler.

2. Archives Parking Doors: The Archives parking lot doors that open the lots 2B, 3B and 4B will open at 6:00 a.m. If staff has to arrive prior to

6:00a .m., they can park on the surface level and enter the building, and then move their cars to their regular space in the 2B, 3B, or 4B lots later in the day.

The recent terrorist attacks have made us realize that we must learn to operate without some of the conveniences that we are used to in our daily lives, especially in our work environment.

If you have a story for the next GPSC News, please send to Bill Edge, [bille@psc.state.ga.us](mailto:bille@psc.state.ga.us). Next issue deadline is January 15, 2002.

## Commission Begins Georgia Power Rate Case

The Commission will resume hearings in the Georgia Power rate case on November 19 with presentations from Commission staff. Hearings in this case opened on September 10 as Georgia Power's Chief Executive Officer, David Ratcliffe, explained the utility's case for a projected increase of 1.2% in residential



Commissioners Listen To Opening of Georgia Power Rate Case

customers' monthly bills over the next five years. Georgia Power says the increase would be 50 cents a month per customer for the first year. All final briefs and proposed orders are due by December 6.

The Commission is scheduled to make a decision in this case at a Special Administrative Session on December 20, 2001.

## Zambian Regulator Visits Commission

The Commission hosted Judith Msonda from the Zambia Energy Regulation Board who came to study the Commission's record keeping procedures. The Zambia ERB regulates natural gas, electricity, petroleum and alternate forms of energy. Zambia is in



Pat Welcome Shows Judith Msonda PSC Records

southern Africa with a population of nearly 11 million people. Msonda works in the Records and Administration Section of the ERB. Msonda said her visit here was very informative and she was particularly impressed with the Commission's electronic record-keeping and internet access to records.

# Commission Begins Atlanta Gas Light Earnings Review



The Commission began its review of Atlanta Gas Light Company's earnings with a technical workshop on October 17, 2001. Commission staff will propose an adjustment to AGL's rates by November 16, 2001 along with a projected test year and revenue requirement. If AGL does not consent to the proposed rate adjustments by November 30, 2001, then hearings will begin on December 17, 2001.

Additional hearings are scheduled for February 11-15, 2002 and April 8-12, 2002 with a Commission decision scheduled for April 29, 2001. The Commission staff contends that AGLC is earning 4 to 7 % above its authorized return on equity (ROE) of 11%. The Commission staff, AGLC and any intervening parties will be allowed to present evidence and give testimony about AGLC's earnings. AGLC will present its direct testimony beginning on February 11 and

continuing through February 15. The Commission will hear staff and intervener's rebuttal beginning April 8 and continuing through April 12. The Commission is scheduled to make a final decision on April 29, 2002 in a Special Administrative Session at 10 a.m.



# Commission Passes Assistance For Low-Income Seniors

The Commission on October 16 finalized its plan to provide a two-part \$10 million relief package to help low-income seniors pay their natural gas bills this winter. The first part, proposed by Commissioner Robert Baker, calls for the Commission to give \$2 million from the Uni-

versal Service Fund to the Georgia Department of Human Resources . DHR will match the Commission's \$2 million with funds from the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). For example, qualifying senior citizens could be eligible for a maximum \$200 grant from LIHEAP and a \$200 match from the Universal Service

Fund for a total of \$400 paid to the consumers' natural gas marketer. DHR will administer this program. The second part of the plan, proposed by Commissioner David Burgess, provides a \$50 monthly credit over a five-month period on natural gas bills of senior citizens who qualify as low-income with their gas

marketers. The credit begins with the November 2001 billing cycle and ends with the March 2002 billing cycle. These grants will require \$8 million in funding from the Universal Service Fund.

## Wins For Clean Air Campaign Effort

Congratulations are in order as the Commission wins a 2001 Silver Award as a Pacesetter Employer from the Georgia Clean Air Campaign. This means the Commission offers commuter assistance or other smog

reduction programs. Kudos to Program Assistant Pat Welcome who as the Commission's Clean Air Coordinator helped the Commission win this Award. The Award was announced October 4 at the annual PACE awards luncheon in downtown Atlanta.





## Commission News

Commissioners on August 21 approved an AGLC request to charge natural gas marketers a \$10 fee per disconnection if AGLC exceeds 1,200 disconnections a day. However the Commission also required AGLC to account for the expenditure of the monies received and file a monthly report detailing the number of disconnections. On September 18 the Commission also limited Shell Energy to 768 disconnections a week after getting numerous complaints about customers who have been disconnected erroneously.



Attorneys argue before Commission during "Winback " proceeding

### Commission Holds Proceeding Into BellSouth "Winback" Activities

Commissioners on October 3 listened to arguments from several CLECs about BellSouth's alleged illegal practices in persuading customers who leave BellSouth to switch back. The Commission ordered a staff investigation on July 23, 2001 and ordered BellSouth not to engage in any winback activities for seven days once a customer switches to another provider. The Commission has set no date for a decision in this issue.

## Commission Rulings

Commissioners set a November 1, 2001 date to hear testimony on allegations that Target Directional Boring of Blairsville, Georgia, violated the Georgia Utility Facility Protection Act. The allegations stem from an August 28, 2000 explosion at a residence at 9159 Woodgreen Way, Jones-

boro, Georgia that totally destroyed this residence and damaged several adjacent structures.

### Commission Fines BellSouth

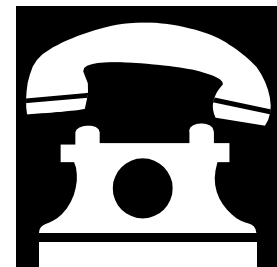
The Commission so far this year has handed down nearly \$30 million in penalties

to BellSouth for failing to meet performance standards in providing service to Competitive Local Exchange Carriers. The Commission assessed penalties of \$7 million during the month of May. The Performance Standard of which BellSouth was requesting reconsideration involves the average disconnect timeliness in instances in

## Commission Rulings

which customers switch local telephone providers but keep the same telephone numbers. The Commission's decision also directs BellSouth to pay \$3.5 million directly to the Competitive Local Exchange Carriers for failing to meet this disconnection standard in the prescribed manner.

The penalties assessed by the Commission to BellSouth will be paid into the General Treasury of the State of Georgia.



## Commission Calls For Website Probe



The Commission has requested that Attorney General Thurbert Baker investigate and prosecute the person or persons responsible for flooding the Georgia No Call List Website with thousands of hits simultaneously between August 14 and 20, 2001, causing the site to overload. PSC Chairman Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, Jr. made the request on behalf of the Commission in a letter to Attorney General Baker.

Since becoming operational in 1999, the Georgia No Call List has dramatically limited the number of telemarketing calls that can be placed to the homes of individuals who have registered their objections to receiving these types of calls. Currently, the Georgia No Call List now contains over 236,000 residential subscribers.

A Georgia resident may subscribe or receive additional information about the "No Call" list by calling the toll free

number, 1-877-GANOCALL (1-877-426-6225). Information and a subscription to the "No Call" list can be obtained through the Internet at [www.ganocall.com](http://www.ganocall.com).



## Governor Orders Budget Reductions

*From the Atlanta Constitution:*

In a move that forecasts a clouded economy for Georgia during the next two years, Gov. Roy Barnes has ordered state agencies to cut current spending by 2.5 percent and next year's budget by 5 percent. The cuts will not include layoffs

of state workers, which state budget director Bill Tomlinson said are "not acceptable." "Revenues will grow at slower than expected rates for the current and future years," Tomlinson wrote in a statement. "Therefore, we are taking immediate action to control expenditures and avoid layoffs." The cuts are to begin no later

than Dec. 1. Budget officials wouldn't put a dollar amount on the cuts, which would help offset a decline in state revenues that has been detected since July. Barnes gave his agency directors until the end of the month to submit new plans for their current fiscal year budgets and next year's proposed budgets. While the agency heads were

told to expect a 2.5 percent reduction in state and lottery funds, tobacco and motor fuel tax funds were excluded from such a projection. That could spare many of the Department of Transportation's road projects from any immediate cuts. The October 1 announcement came after a round of meetings between Barnes and state budget officials.

Recent layoffs, like the announcement of cuts at Delta Air Lines, and reductions in everything from shopping and dining out to tourism will hit state coffers. The attacks on New York and Washington Sept. 11 have made matters even more uncertain. Even before the attacks, state revenues were down more than 6 percent, about \$136 million,

for the first two months of the 2002 budget year, which began in July 1, 2001. Eager to allay any fears of job cuts among the rank and file state workers, Tomlinson wrote that "attrition within the work force is acceptable; layoffs are not acceptable."

# Consumer Affairs



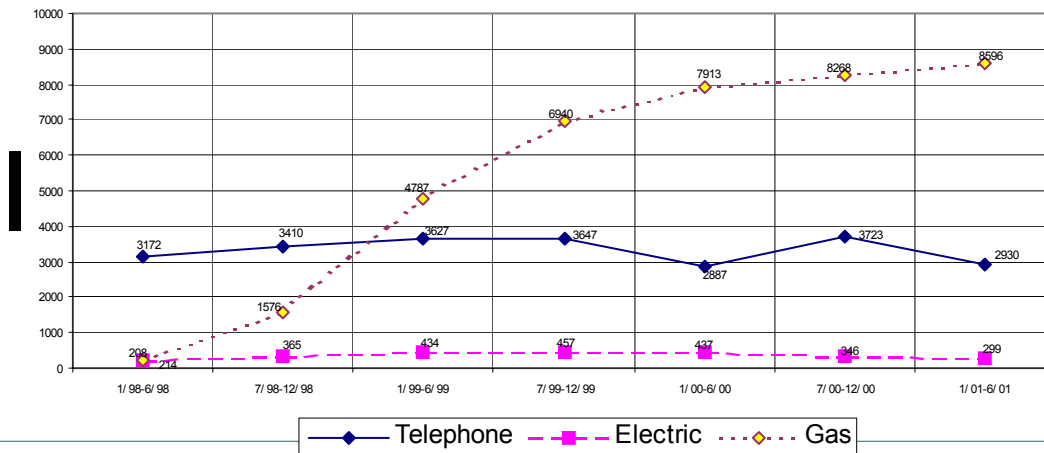
## Nowicki Speaks at Bonbright Conference

Consumer Affairs' Director Phil Nowicki spoke at the Bonbright Center Energy Conference in Atlanta on September 7. The Conference theme was: "Restructuring Fumbles: Lessons from Energy Deregulation." Dr. Nowicki's topic was: "Customer Care in the Age of Restructuring." Nowicki related to the audience the Commission's experience with the Natural Gas Competition and Deregulation Act of 1997. He cited two of the Act's

primary objectives, to protect the consumer and to allow marketers the opportunity to compete effectively, as key reasons for lawmakers support of deregulation. Given the rapid transition of the market and the critical role of government oversight, Nowicki said that many of the marketplace problems could have been mitigated had the Commission been staffed at a sufficient level to address them. Nowicki remarked that legislative bodies tend to associate deregulation with less government but he said that this belief was a myth and

is contrary to empirical evidence. In Georgia alone, Nowicki commented, natural gas complaints went from a pre-deregulation low of 208 for the first six-months of 1998, to a post deregulation high of 8,596 for the first six-months of 2001. During that same period, electric complaints slightly increased from 214 to 299, while telecom complaints slightly decreased from 3,172 to 2,930. Nowicki's presentation, shown below, compares complaints in the three industries over the past

Consumer Affairs  
Complaint Comparison Between Telephone, Electric and Gas Industries  
August 15, 2001



## NARUC Convention Set For Philadelphia

The annual NARUC convention is set for November 11-14, 2001 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The keynote speaker will be Mark Shields, a nationally known columnist and commentator with unmatched credentials as an analyst of the



U.S. political system. He can be seen every Saturday night as the moderator of

CNN's The Capital Gang, alongside Robert Novak, Al Hunt, Kate O'Beirne, and Margaret Carlson. There will be sessions on natural gas and electric deregulation, environmental policies and national energy policies.

# Barnes To Appoint Natural Gas Task Force

*From News reports:*

Saying he has "profound concerns" about the impact of natural gas deregulation on Georgians, Gov. Roy Barnes will appoint a task force to look into ways to protect consumers.

In an October 5 letter to the Commission, Barnes said he's "satisfied that the process has served the industrial and business consumers well," but is "strongly persuaded that the state needs to take steps to protect the individual consumer of natural gas." In outlining plans for a Natural Gas Consumer Protection Task Force, Barnes pointed to three developments that prompted his

concern. The drop in the number of gas marketers from 19 at the start of deregulation in 1998 to eight now - with three controlling 94 percent of the market. Georgians are now "paying among the highest retail gas rates in the United States as marketers struggle with millions of dollars in bad debt," Barnes said. "Record numbers of Georgians have been disconnected for nonpayment," and large numbers are "using gaps in the system to avoid paying bills altogether." Barnes said the task force will include the Commission plus "other knowledgeable persons" about the impact of deregulation at the consumer level. The

letter represents the first time Barnes has taken such a high-profile role in the volatile issue of natural gas deregulation. The governor's spokesperson, Joselyn Butler, said Barnes felt it was "time to begin a conversation," given the problems many Georgians are having paying their gas bills. As of Oct. 1, about 68,000 homes and businesses were without gas after having service shut off for nonpayment of bills to marketers. Another 42,000 were on the disconnection list, according to Atlanta Gas Light, or more than 7 percent of the deregulated natural gas market.

## New Employees



Welcome to **Brent Jones**, who

joined the Commission September 17 in the GUFPA office. Brent most recently worked in New York. His wife Lisa is the IE Co-op coordinator at Georgia Tech.



**Gary Mason**

**Gary Mason** is no stranger to the Commission. He assumed his duties as GUFPA Case Manager on September 17. We look forward to his leadership as this new section gears up for serious work in underground facilities protection. Gary has been with the Transportation Division for the past two years.

**Jason Smith** began his new position as a GUFPA Technician with the Commission September 17. This is his third stint with the PSC. Jason first came to the Commission in July 1997 but left in January 1998. He returned in July 2000 as a Records clerk. He is a graduate of Clark Atlanta University, finishing in December 1996 with a degree in Radio-Television-Film.



## Legislative Update



Georgia legislators finished two special sessions this past summer to redraw local House and Senate districts as well as U.S. Congressional districts based on the results of the 2000 U.S. Census. Lawmakers failed to take action to redraw the five Public Service Commission districts. Commissioners must live in a district but are elected statewide. The Senate tabled the bill. State Representative Terry Coleman of Dublin sponsored the PSC redistricting bill. Legislators also passed bills

outlawing video poker games and revising educational requirements for cosmetologists.



## Commission Calendar

### November

1-Target Boring hearing  
6-Administrative Session  
12-Veterans' Day Holiday  
15-Committees  
19-Georgia Power Hearings  
20-Administrative Session  
22-23 Thanksgiving Holiday  
29-Committees

### December

4-Administrative Session  
13-Committees  
17-21—AGL Hearings  
18-Administrative Session  
20-Special Administrative Session Georgia Power Rate Case  
24-25-Christmas Holiday  
27-Committees

## Commission Calendar

### January 2002

1-Holiday  
2-Administrative Session  
10-Committees  
15-Administrative Session  
21-MLK Holiday  
31-Committees

### NARUC

Annual Meeting  
November 11-14  
Philadelphia, PA  
Winter Meeting  
February 10-13, 2002  
Washington  
Summer Meeting  
July 28-31, 2002  
Portland, Oregon

### GPSC ONLINE:

[www.psc.state.ga.us](http://www.psc.state.ga.us)



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**Stan Wise**  
**Robert Baker**  
**Bob Durden**  
**David Burgess**

