



# GPSC News

Spring 2011

Volume 10 Issue 2

## Legislature Ends 2011 Regular Session

\*Session ends April 14  
 \*Budget passed  
 \*Commission budget cut 7.8 percent in AFY 2011  
 \*FY 2012 cut of 7.8%  
 \*Special Session set for August 15

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**Next Issue August 2011**

Lawmakers adjourned sine die on April 14 to end the regular session of the 2011 General Assembly at approximately 20 minutes before midnight. With a budget agreement for Fiscal Year 2012 already on the books, the final day was more relaxed and less dramatic than in the past.

For the Commission, the session meant more budget cuts and fighting off efforts to reduce the Fiscal Year 2011 Amended Budget by draconian proportions. However, the conference committee on the budget restored the funding in the FY 2011 Budget in



**Chairman Wise presents Commission Budget to Legislature**

**H.B. 77** thanks to the hard work and lobbying efforts by the Commissioners. Ultimately

though the Commission will absorb a more than eight percent cut in this year's budget.

For FY 2012, **H.B. 78**, the Commission will see an additional one percent reduction above the Governor's original 7.8 percent budget cut recommendation delivered to the Legislature in early January.

Due to the need to reappoint the state's legislative, Congressional, Commission and local election districts, the Legislature will return on August 15 for a Special Session. The Special Session is expected to last two to three weeks.

## Commission Seeks Additional Facts on a Risk Sharing Mechanism for Georgia Power's Plant Vogtle Nuclear Power

The Commission April 5 voted to seek additional evidence and testimony on a risk sharing mechanism to deal with any potential construction cost overruns at the Georgia Power Company Plant Vogtle construction project in Waynesboro, Georgia in Docket 29849. The Commission unani-



mously approved a motion proposed by **Commission Chairman Stan Wise** that requires Georgia Power to file testimony detailing why the Company be-

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## Legislative News

**Commission Chairman Stan Wise** on March 17 told members of the Georgia State Senate Economic Development Appropriations Subcommittee that the Commission is facing a critical point due to the past three years of budget cuts and staff reductions. Chairman Wise presented the Commission's Fiscal Year 2012 Budget to the Subcommittee as the Senate begins its review of the FY 2012 Budget approved by the House last week.

"We have been able to take the cuts through attrition and retirements but at some point we need to be able to replace critical positions," said Wise. "We are facing the loss due to re-



tirement of several experienced personnel in our Utilities Regulation Unit in the next two to three years. We need the resources to properly evaluate utility rate cases against utilities who have unlimited resources." Wise noted that the Utilities Regulation Unit now has a vacancy rate of 25%. Commissioner Wise also pointed out the need to retain funding for membership dues in the Na-

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tional Regulatory Research Institute (NRRI) and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC). "NRRI especially provides an

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## Commission Seeks More Information on Vogtle Risk Sharing Proposal

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believes the risk sharing mechanism proposed by the Commission's Public Interest Advocacy Staff will not work and to file their own risk sharing mechanism proposal. The staff could then respond to the Company's filing with the Company being allowed to file rebuttal to the Staff's comments. The Commis-

sion will convene a hearing to hear testimony and evidence on this issue on July 6.

An amendment proposed by **Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, Jr.** and approved unanimously asks both sides to present a timetable for these proceedings to the Commission so that all parties will have sufficient time to present their evidence.

The Commission set a schedule at its April 19 meeting.

"Because we are on time and we are under budget, it is appropriate that we look at these instances where there is disagreement and understand the impact," said **Chairman Wise**. "It becomes clear that there is an impact on the Company, the shareholders and ultimately the

ratepayers of this state, and that it is a huge issue. If the impact is one way or another, I think this Commission needs to fully explore what these issues are," Wise added. Chairman Wise's full remarks are available on the Commission's YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/ThePSCGa>.

The Company and Commission Staff have been unable to reach

an agreement on a risk sharing mechanism pursuant to the Commission's order in this Docket on February 25, 2010 in the Commission's certification of the Plant Vogtle construction project cost. In that same order the Commission certified the Georgia Power share of Plant Vogtle project at \$6.1 billion. The Commission certified the need for the additional units and generating

capacity at Plant Vogtle in its March 17, 2009 decision in Docket 27800.



## Commissioners Briefed on Nuclear Power Safety in Georgia

Several members of the Commission received a briefing on March 14 from Georgia Power Company officials on the nuclear reactor incident in Japan. The Commissioners received details about the incident in Japan at the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant and about the integrity and design of the nuclear power reactors operated by Georgia Power and Southern Company near Waynesboro and Baxley, Georgia.

The Commission wants the public to know it is monitoring the information coming in from Ja-

pan and sends its sympathies to those afflicted.

The Commission also reiterated its ongoing commitment to ensure the health and safety of Georgia's citizens, noting that all nuclear plants in Georgia are operating safely.

As with every U.S. nuclear power plant, Southern Company's plants Hatch and Vogtle were designed, licensed and built to endure environmental hazards and disasters.

In addition, the Commission does not expect the events unfolding in Japan to have significant impacts on the licensing and

construction of two new units at Plant Vogtle. The co-owners remain committed to the projects and expected commercial operating dates for Units 3 and 4 remain 2016 and 2017 respectively.

The Commission points out that there are a number of key differences between the Vogtle plant site near Waynesboro and those in Japan. For example, Japan is in a high seismic activity area whereas the potential for an earthquake near the Vogtle site, as well as Plant Hatch, is significantly lower, and the magnitude

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## Commissioner Wise Supports Proposed AT&T Purchase of T-Mobile USA

Commissioner Stan Wise issued this statement supporting the AT&T acquisition of T-Mobile USA on March 21, 2011.

"Georgia has traditionally been a leader in wireless communications and this proposed merger would build off of that and be good for the state. The Georgia wireless market is fiercely com-



Commissioner Wise

petitive and this merger will not affect that. However, it does appear that the merger would result in 4G LTE reaching

many rural parts of the state that otherwise might not get the service. The additional broadband coverage that would result from this expansion of LTE would be good for Georgia consumers. I am supportive of the proposed merger because of the benefits that would accrue to

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## Governor Proclaims April as Dig Safely Month

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal proclaimed April 2011 as Dig Safely Month in Georgia. During a ceremony April 11 at the State Capitol, Governor Deal presented a proclamation to **Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, Jr. and Commissioner Tim Echols**, who accepted on behalf of the Georgia



Proclamation Day at the Capitol

Public Service Commission, and to Georgia 811 President and CEO Claudette Campbell. Also present were members of the Commission staff and representatives from the Georgia Utility Contractors Association, Georgia Department of Transportation, Georgia Power Com-

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## Echols Announces Crackdown on Illegal Movers

**Commissioner Tim Echols** on March 11 announced the first of many proposed joint sting operations between the Georgia Public Service Commission and the Georgia Department of Public Safety. At approximately 10:30 a.m. on March 11, 2011 in the Polo Fields Subdivision in Cumming, Georgia, "Let's Move It", a "rogue" moving company unregistered with the Commission began loading the household goods of a local homeowner onto a rented cargo truck. State law and Commission rules require all household goods movers operating in Georgia to register with the



**Commissioner Tim Echols**

Commission, provide cargo liability insurance, medical certificates for all drivers and to keep their

rates within the confines of Commission approved tariffs. After stopping the truck, Department of Public Safety officers discovered two moving helpers faced outstanding criminal warrants. Officers arrested these employees and took them to jail. They also cited the driver of the vehicle cited for failure to have a medical certificate as required by law and cited a fourth employee for having a fraudulent Department of Driver's Services identification card. Officers summoned the company owner to the scene and issued him a citation for failing to register his company with the Commission as required by law. He faces a possible \$1,000

fine and/or 12 months in jail on the criminal citation. In addition, the Commission may levy up to a \$5,000 fine for civil charges. "Under no circumstances should Georgia consumers hire movers not registered with the Georgia Public Service Commission," said Echols. "As the case today proves, you not only put your worldly possession at risk by using a rogue mover, but you put your family's safety at risk by exposing them to the criminal

elements thumbing their nose at the law." Echols said he is putting all rogue household goods movers, limousine companies, and charter bus companies and non-consensual towing companies on notice that the Public Service Commission will not tolerate the unscrupulous exploitation of Georgia consumers. "Georgia consumers should always check the Public Service Commission web site before hiring a household goods moving

company, a limousine company, a charter bus company or a non-consensual towing service," said Echols. Unfortunately for the family involved in today's moving incident they were left to unload all of their possessions themselves from the cargo truck rented by the moving company following the arrest of all the company employees. The specific violations include a criminal misdemeanor

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## Commission Fines Telecom Company; Sets Hearing for Vogtle Risk Sharing

**T**he Commission April 19 unanimously approved a consent agreement with Legacy Long Distance International, Inc. that requires the company to pay a civil penalty of \$125,000 to resolve issues that include providing institutional

telecommunications services (ITS) without a valid certificate issued by the Commission in Dockets 8076, 28152 and 30554. Legacy must pay \$40,000 to the Commission within one month of the Commission's order, and make additional payments of \$10,000 a

month for the next six months. Legacy must make the final payment of \$25,000 by the end of the eighth month from the date of the Commission order. All monies received are paid into the state treasury. In Docket

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# Echols Speaks in Savannah on Nuclear Waste

**Commissioner Tim Echols** spoke to Utility and Industry officials March 31 in Savannah at the Georgia Utilities Coordinating Council meeting at the Hyatt Hotel on Bay Street about the importance of privatizing the nuclear waste management process and getting it out of government hands. "We have in this country over 60,000 tons of high-level nuclear waste stored at more than 100 sites in 39 states, and the 104 commercial reactors produce about 2000 additional tons of additional used fuel each and every year," said Echols. "The hottest waste is in the



cooling pools, and then later it is moved to dry casks. That dry waste is what the federal government trash truck is supposed to pick up." Echols said that while he wished the government would take the waste to the partially completed Yucca Mountain repository in Nevada as promised, he is not holding his breath. "It would take nine Yucca mountains by the turn of century to house all the waste we are producing," he said. "Getting one Yucca has proved almost impossible, let

alone nine." Echols said he favors a Heritage Foundation proposal that would allow utilities, nuclear technology companies and consumers to manage used nuclear fuel. That plan suggests that valuing used fuel against the cost of permanent burial is a calculation best done by the companies that provide fuel management services. "Congress should repeal the penny per kilowatt-hour flat fee that Georgia rate-payers have been paying all these years," said Echols. "The total paid in so far by exceeds \$1.2 billion—just for our state."

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## McGriff Speaks to Washington, D.C. Pipeline Meeting

**Pipeline Safety Director Danny McGriff** spoke to the Pipeline Safety Executive Forum on April 18 in Washington, D.C. McGriff appeared at the invitation of U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. McGriff spoke to the group on excavation damage, inferior and aging pipes and pipeline construction quality.



## Commissioners Get Nuclear Briefing

*(Continued from page 3)*

of any earthquake is likewise much lower. The Vogtle site was evaluated for the most severe earthquake that might occur once in a 10,000 year period. The reactor design selected for AP1000 design greatly exceeds

that requirement for the Vogtle site. The AP1000 relies on passive safety systems that rely on gravity, natural circulation, convection, compressed gas and condensation to maintain safe operation and

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## Pipeline Safety Staff Attends Training

**During the week of March 7, 2011 members of the Commission's Facilities Protection Staff** attended a General Pipeline Safety Awareness course in Leak City in Athens, Alabama. **Jason Smith, Lisa McKnight, David Lewis and Chris Swann**



gained knowledge in training on Methods conducting a safe investigation during an accident involving hazardous materials. In addition, they received



Procedures for recognizing, evaluating and controlling hazardous substances.

## Commission Advises Consumers on Renting Limos and other passenger carriers

Prom and graduation season is here again and the Georgia Public Service Commission offers some helpful advice for Georgians who may be hiring passenger carriers for these events.

Be aware of illegal companies. Under Georgia law (O.C.G.A. §§ 46-7-2, 46-7-3, 46-7-85.3, 46-7-85.4 and 46-7-12) all passenger carrier companies that fall under the Commission's authority and operate within the state are required to be registered and have proof of insurance on file with the Commission. A list of the licensed companies can be found on the

Commission's website.

"We want to make sure parents and their children do not become victims of illegal and unscrupulous chauffeurs," said **Commission Chairman Stan Wise**. "Check out our web site and make sure the company you are considering is listed as certified and vetted by the Commission."

**Commissioner Tim Echols**, who chairs the Commission's Transportation Committee, says the Commission is also concerned about the safety of high school students who rent limou-

sines for prom night events. "Limousine companies without proper insurance and background checks can place your children at risk. Make sure you only hire properly certified and licensed companies," said Echols.

Chauffeurs who drive for licensed limousine carriers are required to have permits which are only issued to drivers that work for limousine companies approved by the Commission and who have successfully completed a criminal history investigation from the Georgia Depart-

ment of Driver Services. All passenger carriers that fall under the Commission's authority are also required to obtain from the Georgia Department of Revenue an intrastate registration permit and vehicle ID stamps.

When making your reservations always get a written confirmation. As a reminder, contact the company a few days prior to the scheduled event to confirm the arrangements. Remember that the Commission no longer regu-

lates the rates charged by limousine companies so shop around for the most competitive price and confirm that price to avoid last minute surprises.

Parents should be aware that under state law limousine companies are allowed to sell alcoholic beverages only if they have been issued a permit to sell alcoholic beverages from the Georgia Department of Revenue. However, limousine companies must obey all applicable local

and state laws including prohibitions on serving alcoholic beverages to underage minors. Any violations should be reported to local police and the Georgia Department of Revenue.



### Dig Safely Month

*(Continued from page 3)*

pany, Atlanta Gas Light Company, Atmos Energy, AT&T and STS, who are involved in the prevention of damage to Georgia's underground utility infrastructure.



### Wise Supports AT&T Merger

*(Continued from page 3)*

Georgians." "Additionally, it is my understanding the AT&T Wireless will remain headquartered in Atlanta. It is huge for Atlanta and the state of Georgia that we are home to the largest wireless company in the U.S."

Wise is Commission Chairman in 2011.

### Nuclear Briefing

*(Continued from page 5)*

shut down safely. Many of the enhanced features of the AP1000 design are specifically intended to eliminate the dependence upon mechanical and electrical support systems to keep the fuel cool during an event.

# Employee News

## Congratulations

To **Michelle Thebert** and husband Matt on the birth of their second child, Collin Thomas Thebert. He was born at 11:55 pm on April 14, 2011. He weighed seven pounds and seven ounces. Collin and Michelle are doing well.



## Sympathy

Condolences to: **Dona Cucich** on the passing of her husband Steven on April 12. The funeral was held on April 16 at Arlington Memorial Gardens in Sandy Springs. "I just wanted to thank all of you who have expressed your sympathy and support to me during my husband's illness and death. I have felt the love from you all during my whole long time ordeal and this current expression of kindness is

most needed and appreciated. Thank you for being a real family for me. I appreciate you all."

To **Lisa Jensen** on the passing of her brother on April 11. "I would like to sincerely thank everyone for your prayers, cards, and generous donations. Your kind and thoughtful expression of sympathy was definitely comforting and a source of strength for my family and me in this difficult time."

## Commission Fines Telecom Firm; Sets Hearing Schedule for Plant Vogtle Risk Sharing

*(Continued from page 4)*  
29849, the Commission also approved a Procedural and Scheduling Order for the special hearing in the Plant Vogtle Construction Monitoring Report on the proposed Risk Sharing Mechanism. The hearing and filing schedule is as follows:  
April 27-Georgia Power files testimony

June 10-Staff files testimony  
June 24-Georgia Power files rebuttal  
July 9-Hearing  
July 18-Briefs and orders due  
The Commission will issue a decision during the August 2, 2011 Administrative Session.



## Illegal Mover Sting

*(Continued from page 4)*  
charge of O.C.G.A. § 46-7-3 and 46-7-39 for failure to have a Commission certificate. The company will also face civil violations before the Commission under O.C.G.A. §46-2-90 and 46-2-91. The criminal charge will be in the form of a Uniform Traffic Citation in the State Court of Forsyth County.

## Wise Testifies on Commission Budget

*(Continued from page 2)*  
invaluable resource for staff training through webinars that reduces travel expenses," added Wise. He noted these organizations enable the Commission to stay abreast of national issues that affect all Georgians. The Governor's recommended FY 2012 Budget for the Commission is a 7.8% cut to the Commission's FY 2011 budget. Since

2008, the Commission has seen a 22% overall reduction in state funds. Commissioner Wise is serving as Commission Chairman in 2011. He has served on the Commission since 1995 and this is his fourth term as Chairman.



## Echols on Nuclear Waste

*(Continued from page 5)*  
Echols said the events in Japan are tragic, and we certainly don't want to ever see it happen again. "Hopefully, this will energize our Congress to take nuclear waste management out of the hands of government bureaucrats," he said.



# Commission News

## Commission Calendar

### Georgia State Holidays For 2011

**New Year's Day**  
**Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday**  
**Confederate Memorial Day**  
**Memorial Day**  
**Independence Day**  
**Labor Day**  
**Columbus Day**  
**Veterans Day**  
**Thanksgiving**  
**Robert E. Lee's Birthday**  
**Washington's Birthday**  
**Christmas**

**January 3**  
**January 17**  
**April 25**  
**May 30**  
**July 4**  
**September 5**  
**October 10**  
**November 11**  
**November 24**  
**November 25**  
**December 26**  
**December 23**



#### May 2011

4-Administrative Session  
 9-10-Georgia Power hearing  
 13-Committees  
 18-Administrative Session  
 20-Vogtle hearing  
 24-Special Administrative Session  
 30-holiday

#### June 2011

2-Committees  
 7-Administrative Session  
 16-Committees

## Commission Calendar

23-Administrative Session  
 23-Georgia Power hearing  
 24-Committees  
**July 2011**  
 4-Holiday  
 5-Administrative Session  
 6-Georgia Power hearing  
 14-Committees  
 21-Administrative Session  
 21-Georgia Power hearing  
 28-Committees

#### NARUC

##### Summer Meeting 2011

July 17-20, 2011  
 Los Angeles, California

##### Annual Convention 2011

November 13-16, 2010  
 St. Louis, Missouri

##### Winter Meeting 2012

February 5-8, 2012  
 Washington, D.C.

#### SEARUC

##### Annual Meeting 2011

June 12-15, 2011  
 Nashville, Tennessee



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#### COMMISSIONERS

**Stan Wise, Chairman**  
**Chuck Eaton, Vice-Chairman**  
**Tim Echols**  
**H. Doug Everett**  
**Lauren "Bubba" McDonald, Jr.**

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