

QUESTIONS FROM THE GEORGIA SOLAR ENERGY ASSOCIATION

FOR ALL 2018 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION CANDIDATES

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April 17, 2018

Section I – Power Resource Allocation

A. Do you think the current factors used to determine the resource mix for power generation (i.e. capital investment, operations and maintenance, taxes) are sufficient? What additional factors – air quality impacts, water quality and water use, and land use impacts, for example – should be included in managing Georgia’s power generation decisions?

As stated on its website, the mission of the Georgia Public Service Commission is to exercise its authority and influence to ensure that consumers receive **safe, reliable** and reasonably priced telecommunications, electric and natural gas services from financially viable and technically competent companies.

In my opinion, the PSC should take into consideration how environmental impacts can affect the reliability and safety of electricity. For example, thermoelectric base power requires large amounts of water. What will happen during times of severe drought when we have to continue to use water for our thermoelectric power plants? What will that mean for other demands such as irrigation and municipal use? The PSC should therefore definitely consider water impacts as a factor to determine the resource mix of power. With regards to safety, are we only interested in the safety of the electricity generation, transmission, and delivery, or are we also concerned about the safety of Georgia’s citizens? I believe it should also include the latter. And if we look at safety via this more inclusive lens, then perhaps we’ll make different decisions. For example, we know that coal ash ponds and air pollution from burning fossil fuels pose a health and safety danger to Georgians, especially our young, ill, and elderly neighbors.

B. What role does solar, both on-site and large-scale, play in the future generation mix for Georgia?

I believe it is critical to deploy cost-effective and minimally environmentally impactful on-site and large-scale solar systems. If elected, I will work with the regulated utility to find the best pathway for increasing solar in Georgia’s generation mix.

Section II – Rate Structure

A. What is the appropriate way to assess the value of on-site solar in the future generation mix for Georgia?

I think that we need to revisit Georgia Power’s “solar avoided cost” calculation for excess on-site solar.

B. What additional measures should be taken to support consumers’ private investment in on-site solar in Georgia?

As a conservative, I am not a fan of additional incentives. I think that if we get the value of on-site solar right, as well as update some rules related to on-site solar, then the market will take care of itself. I think that right now, we do not have a fair, market-based pricing for excess solar sold back to the utility.

C. Do you support on-bill financing for solar installation?

My support will depend on the details of the on-bill financing programming.

D. As customer adoption of on-site solar grows in Georgia, how should that impact rate design?

I think of the future of rate design more broadly than just on-site solar. The future will also include increased energy efficiency across all market sectors, greater penetration of electric vehicles, greater adoption of electricity storage, as well as new types of renewable energy technologies that we cannot yet imagine. Given all of this, I know that the future of rate design is something that the PSC will have to thoroughly consider.

E. How should solar be treated compared with other demand-side energy investment, such as energy efficient lightbulbs, in rate design?

I want to focus on the most cost-effective energy resource first. And the most cost-effective energy resource is efficiency. Because energy efficiency avoids the need for additional electricity generation, it also does not use or consume any water. Having said that, I am amenable to discuss with advocates and the regulated utility how best to treat solar and other demand-side investments during the rate design process.

Section III – Power Consumer Protection

A. What would you do to protect Georgia consumers from steep rate hikes to pay for the completion of Units 3 and 4 at Georgia's nuclear Plant Vogtle?

I will not vote in favor of rate hikes of any kind that solely go to completion of reactors 3 & 4. Ratepayers have already done their share to prop up this failing project. I understand that rates are likely to go up, but I will not vote in favor of steep hikes that are used to offset risk from Georgia Power and Southern Co. Nor will I allow for these costs to be passed off in add-ons to ratepayers via their bills like the Nuclear Construction Cost recovery tariff, or Plant Vogtle tax.

B. What are the lessons to be learned about the regulatory process that managed the construction of Vogtle?

Free-market, conservative principles are not being applied during the regulatory process that manages the construction of Vogtle Units 3 and 4. As a conservative, I think it is completely unacceptable that Commissioners who claim to be Republican have socialized the cost of construction for Vogtle Units 3 and 4. Shareholders of Southern Company, which is Georgia Power's parent company, should bear the risk of construction, not Georgia's ratepayers and the nation's taxpayers. So, the lesson that I've learned is this: don't expect Republicans who are bought by the industries that they regulate to exercise free-market, conservative principles in their regulatory decision-making process.

C. What changes should be made to the regulatory process to incorporate these lessons for future commission deliberations?

I'm on record saying that I'd rather not have regulation. But so long as this system exists, the regulators have to regulate, otherwise we just have crony capitalism where all the risks are socialized and all the profits flow to a select few. Therefore, I think we have to have Commissioners who make decisions that are in the best interest of Georgia residents and not Southern Company shareholders. I plan to work with the utilities, not for them.

Section IV – Utility Industry Regulation

A. How should the PSC's role change or the regulatory process change as customers, accustomed to many options in other aspects of living, increasingly seek a range of choices regarding their energy provider, rate schedule and energy source?

Radical change to the PSC's mandate, or rather, the nature of the regulated market, can only be done via the state Legislature. Having said that, I will be open to discussions regarding how the PSC's role can change or the regulatory process can be updated to take into account new technologies, as well as customers' evolving demands and needs.

B. How should the PSC's role or the regulatory process change in an era of growing adoption of on-site distributed energy and increasing adoption of electric vehicles?

See my answer to Question A.

C. How should the role of the utility adapt to an era of decreasing or flattening energy demand?

I understand and appreciate that Georgia Power provides a valuable product – electricity. Through my Conservative lens, I believe that Georgia Power should be made whole for the product it sells (as opposed to being rewarded for wastefulness, cost overruns, and delays). As I stated, I'd rather not have regulation in the first place. But so long as the market in which Georgia Power functions is regulated, I will make sure that I do my job and treat Georgia Power fairly. I would be willing to discuss with Georgia Power novel modifications to their delivery of electricity and other services that they provide to their customers (so long as it is within the PSC's purview).

Section V – General (Ethics, transparency, constituent service, staff management and input)

A. What is the proper relationship between Georgia Public Service Commission members and industry stakeholders such as utility executives, industry vendor companies and paid lobbyists?

I have pledged to not accept any monies from individuals associated to the utilities the PSC regulates. I believe an easy answer to this is to disallow special interests from contributing to candidate's campaign, this removing any conflict of interest. When a commissioner has to show up at one address to get 50% of their funding, something is fundamentally wrong with the process. Georgians should feel confident that their interests are being considered during the process and that the commissioners are not rubber-stamping requests on behalf of utilities.

B. In considering the input of the PSC staff on rate-making, resource allocation and other decisions, what latitude should the PSC Commissioners apply in deviating from staff recommendations?

Ultimately the decision lays with the commissioners. They are the ones who are held accountable by the voters. I think if the campaign financing was addressed and special interests were removed from the equation, ratepayers would have more confidence that commissioners going against staff recommendations truly had good intentions. When a unanimous decision is made against staff recommendations in favor of the largest campaign donor, it does not give Georgians confidence. We cannot afford apathy government's ability to function in any capacity, municipal, state, federal.