

**QUESTIONS FROM THE GEORGIA SOLAR ENERGY ASSOCIATION
FOR ALL 2018 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION CANDIDATES**

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?

The thing that really stands out to me about the current factors used to determine the resource mix for power generation is that it is highly micromanaged. Five people should not have the ability to determine the mix for the entire state. We should be crowdsourcing those types of decisions to consumers who are better able to make purchases that reflect their values, whether it be cost and/or environment or any number of other factors that five people alone couldn’t possibly have the imagination to envision for 10.5 million Georgians.

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

The cost of implementing solar has been falling rapidly. So much so, that I really foresee it as the next wave of development in Georgia. We need to make sure bureaucrats and politicians aren’t able to stand in the way of that movement. I was recently reading an article about how the recent tariffs put in place by the Trump administration aren’t harming the solar industry as much as expected due to falling costs making up the difference. Imagine if there were no tariffs! We’d likely be experiencing quite a boom in the industry. And, whether we’re buying the hardware from China or right here at home, an increase in sales means jobs. Jobs in installation, maintenance, sales, supply chain, etc.

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?

Citizens should be free to generate the energy they need however they like. And, in a free market, one would expect that there would be multiple buyers willing to buy excess energy, as long as that cost made sense over other methods of generation. I support net metering, and setting the price to something that beats other generation methods for the power company. However, the ideal situation would be one in which a single power

company doesn't have a monopoly, and the government steps out of the transaction completely.

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

Regulators should get out of the way of all private investment in on-site solar. That's the best way to support consumers. Allow citizens to acquire their solar setup through any means of financing any other private entity is willing to give.

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

Of course. As long as consumers are not forced to finance through on-bill financing, I fully support this method of financing.

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

As I mentioned earlier, I don't believe rate design should be a duty of the Public Service Commission. We should be crowdsourcing that to ratepayers and utilities in the form of free markets.

However, in the unideal world we live in, folks who install on-site solar should be allowed to sell their excess energy back to the utilities for a lower price than it would be to generate by other means. That means a net generation cost reduction for utilities which should result in lower rates.

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

Being more efficient *should* already help ratepayers to reduce their bills. In Georgia, that's not necessarily true as we enjoy some of the lowest rates in the nation along with some of the most expensive bills. That happens because of fees on our bills. Flat fees mean that conserving energy at home doesn't affect your bill much. We need to change that. We need to incentivize people to reduce their carbon footprint by reducing costs with use. Low income families should be able to save a buck or two by reducing their consumption of energy.

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?

Any project plan for Units 3 and 4 at Plant Vogtle that includes financing through fees or increased rates for ratepayers would immediately receive a “No” vote from me. The entire point of the project is to generate the energy we need while keeping rates low. Georgia Power is investor owned, and investors need to put up their own money for projects like this and just wait on the return. The fact that they aren’t willing to tells me they know the return isn’t good.

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

The lesson I’ve learned is that the regulatory process doesn’t work. It has devolved into a rubber stamp for the industries the Public Service Commission is meant to regulate. It was recently reported that my Republican opponent, Chuck Eaton, took in nearly 75% of his declared contributions from people related to the industries he is meant to regulate. What does that mean for ratepayers when the regulated are paying for these commissioners to be in power?

That’s why we shouldn’t concentrate power into five individuals and trust them to make decisions for all 10.5 million Georgians. That’s why we must empower ratepayers to make energy consumption choices for themselves.

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

I am a proponent of deregulation. First of power generation, then to distribution. As technology in the industry advances, that goal becomes easier and easier. Costs to enter the market gradually fall and the state of a natural monopoly is phased out. That’s the best way to allow Georgians to make the best decisions for themselves and their loved ones.

As for the here and now, commission deliberations should always be held with the backdrop of, “What would a free market look like?” It is extremely difficult to answer that question with certainty, but it’s a good starting point in the system we have.

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?

The role of the PSC should be diminished in lieu of empowering those customers to make the decisions that will affect themselves and their loved ones.

- 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?

The role of the PSC should be diminished to allow for the freedom of customers and their utilities to enter into contracts that benefit each other as energy generation shifts to the consumer side.

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

That question really should be directed to the utilities themselves as they are the ones that must adapt. I'd imagine more value added services are the answer. As demand for energy decreases, consumers will be looking for other services. It's up to the utility to find where the demand is.

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?

The relationship should be purely professional and informational. Utilities have just as much of a right to voice an opinion as consumers, and they should. But more weight needs to be put on the consumers voice as they are the ones thrust into this unfair system of mandated monopoly that puts all the power in the hands of utilities. No more fancy dinners. No more campaign contributions. No more Christmas hams and other gifts. You get a voice at the table during deliberations, just like everyone else.

- 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?

The people of Georgia elected the commissioner and instilled with them the power to make decisions on behalf of the people. Now, there are a lot of problems with that premise given the current electoral climate, and the general "un-sexiness" of the office of Public Service Commissioner, but that is the whole idea of setting up the commission in the first place. They should always be allowed to deviate from staff recommendations.

They should also suffer the consequences of public outcry and be challenged on it. The blatant disregard of staff recommendations, who clearly had the best interests of ratepayers in mind, in regards to Plant Vogtle is disgusting and we should challenge them on it. The data is there. The Plant Vogtle project is bad for ratepayers, and the PSC staff showed that in black and white based on the numbers presented. Commissioners voted on a bad deal for Georgians and they should be kicked out for it in November.