Georgians for Affordable Energy

Fighting for Fair Utility Rates and a Clean Energy Future

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Georgia Advocacy Groups File Formal Complaint Demanding Recusal of Public Service Commissioners Over Georgia Power Rate Freeze Proposal

ATLANTA, GA — Four leading Georgia advocacy organizations — Georgians for Affordable Energy, Georgia WAND, GCV Education Fund, and the Center for a Sustainable Coast — have jointly filed a formal complaint with the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC), calling for the recusal of Chairman Jason Shaw, Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald Jr., and Commissioner Tim Echols from all proceedings related to Georgia Power's proposed three-year base rate freeze.

The complaint, submitted on June 6, 2025, asserts that Commissioners Shaw, McDonald, and Echols have violated PSC Rule 515-2-1-.01, which prohibits commissioners from expressing opinions or prejudging matters that come before the Commission.

At a May 21 press conference with Governor Brian Kemp, Chairman Shaw and Commissioner McDonald publicly supported the Georgia Power proposal. Commissioner Echols later echoed these sentiments in a May 27 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article, stating, "Freezing the rates for three years is the best thing we can do for ratepayers right now." Such statements reveal pre-existing opinions that violate the impartiality required under Commission rules.

Commissioners' recent public endorsements of the rate freeze demonstrate a clear bias, compromising the integrity of the upcoming hearing scheduled for June 26.

The proposed rate freeze, while publicly framed as consumer relief, will instead lock in Georgia Power's elevated 11.9% Return on Equity (ROE), more than two percentage points above the industry average of 9.57%. The profits that ROE delivers are so excessive that if electricity rates were increased $2 billion to begin paying off investments Georgia Power has already made, but the ROE reduced to industry norms, customers' bills would actually decline beginning January 1, 2026.

The rate freeze proposal, if approved, would allow massive capital investments to proceed without public scrutiny and regulatory oversight during a normal rate case process. As Georgia law permits Georgia Power to recoup all capital expenditures plus profits from customers, the proposed freeze would shift massive costs onto ratepayers without transparency.

We request two potential remedies:

1. Immediate denial of the proposed rate freeze and resumption of the standard rate case proceedings, allowing for proper review of costs and adjustment of Georgia Power's excessive ROE.
2. Appointment of an impartial hearing officer, such as an independent Administrative Law Judge, to ensure a fair and unbiased review process.

These issues deserve far more scrutiny and discussion than the one-day hearing currently scheduled for June 26, 2025, for this proposed rate freeze. And the hearing cannot be conducted with transparency and fairness, given the commissioners' public statements.