

5 the number of elected officials on the PSC, which regulates Georgia Power and decides what the company can charge customers.

2020

the last year there was a PSC election. Two commissioners should have faced elections in 2022, and one was supposed to in 2024.

7%

how much of Georgia Power's energy mix was renewables as of 2022. Well over half is coal, oil, or gas, and the company plans to expand its use of gas.

\$16

the amount added each month to a typical residential customer's bill after the PSC unanimously approved Georgia Power's plan to recover \$2.1 billion in under-budgeted costs for coal and natural gas in 2023.



“Learning what the Public Service Commission is and all things associated with it was enlightening and empowering. It certainly prepared me journalistically and personally to better craft and convey information to share publicly.”

—Clarence Thomas in Macon, Ga.
Grist Community Reporting Fellow

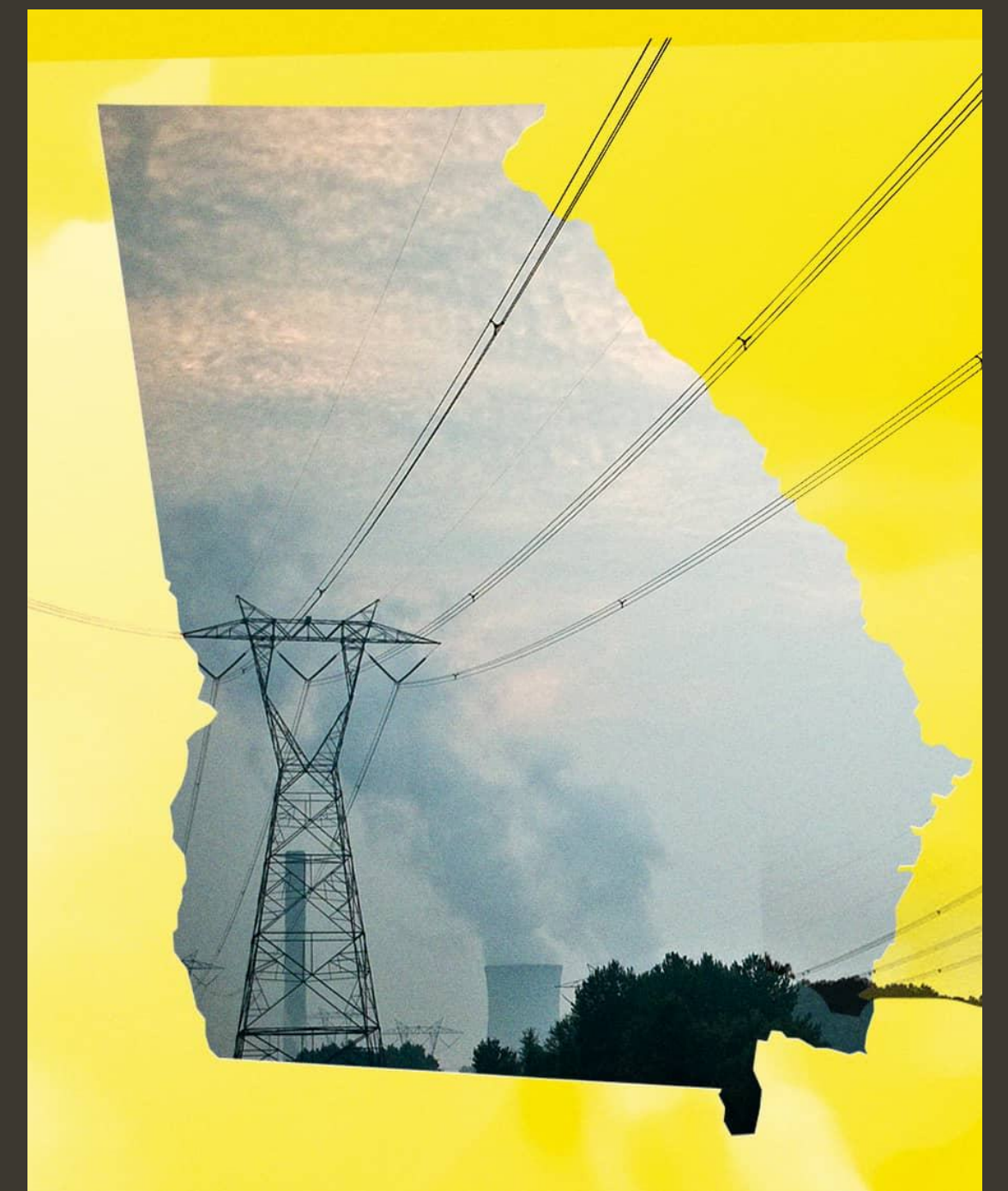


Grist (grist.org) is a nonprofit, independent media organization dedicated to highlighting climate solutions and uncovering environmental injustices. WABE (wabe.org) is the NPR and PBS affiliate for the metro Atlanta area. This informational brochure was created in 2024 as part of a project to demystify the Georgia Public Service Commission, the small but powerful state-elected board that makes critical decisions about everything from raising electricity bills to developing renewable energy. If you have questions, please contact: community@grist.org.

Scan this QR code with your phone camera to find resources on our website, including stories, a timeline of PSC decisions, election information, and more.



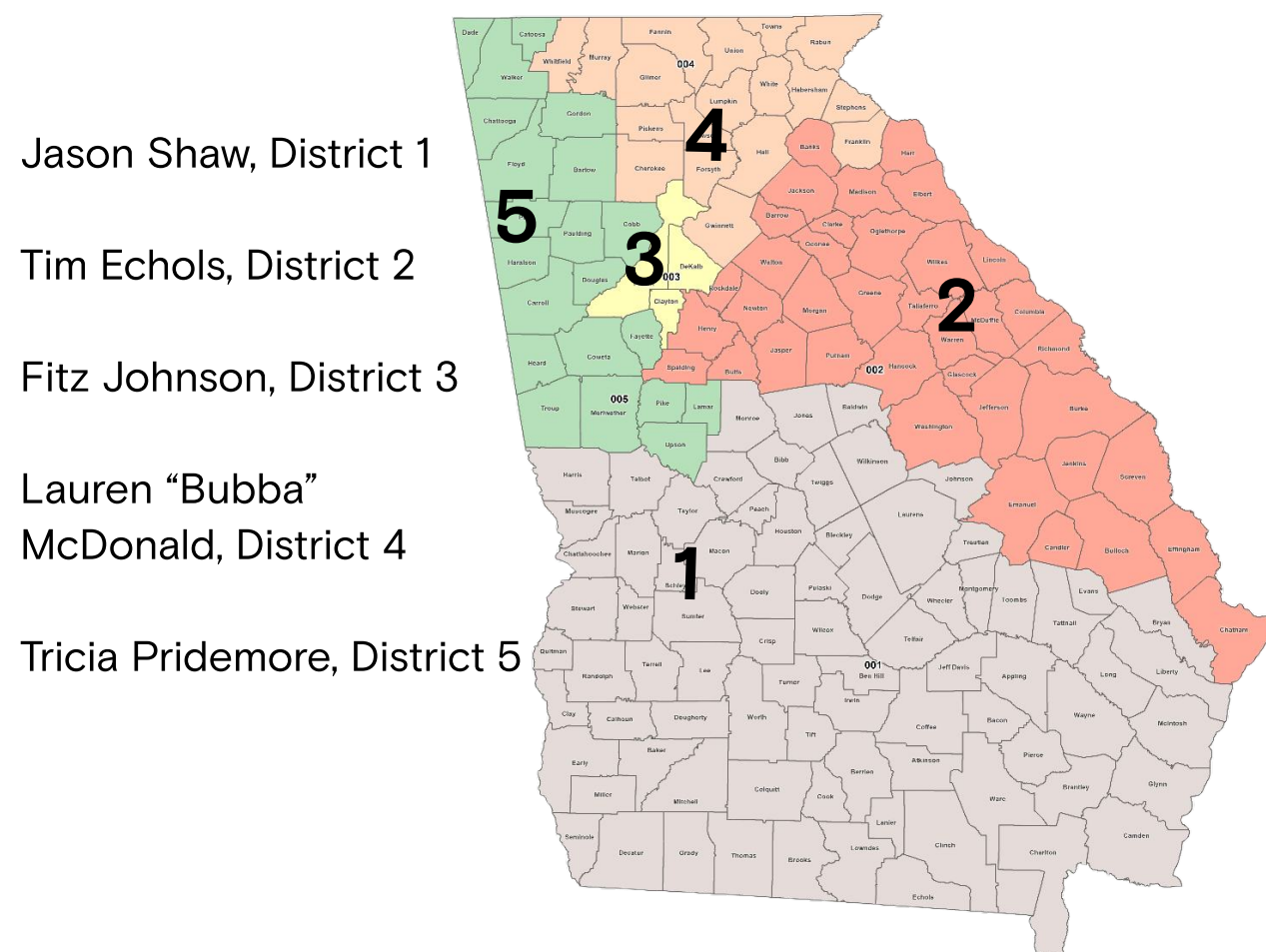
Your guide to the Georgia Public Service Commission



What is the PSC?

The Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) was established in 1879. It oversees investor-owned utilities — Georgia Power — as well as natural gas pipelines and telecommunications in the state. Each of the five commissioners must reside in one of five districts, but they are elected statewide. That means you can vote in all PSC elections, regardless of district.

Who is on the PSC?



How does the PSC impact me?

The PSC determines the cost of electricity bills for Georgia Power customers: The PSC determines rates, or how much Georgia Power customers pay for electricity. In addition to that, you’re charged fees for various projects and rate increases approved by the PSC. Some examples: Rates increased by just under \$9 as the second of two new nuclear reactors went online in 2024; Georgia Power recovered costs for coal and gas that added almost \$16 a month in 2023.

The PSC makes decisions about Georgia’s energy future: The commission determines where much of the state’s energy comes from. As of 2022, Georgia Power mostly still got its power from greenhouse gas-emitting fossil fuels: 48% natural gas and 15% coal. Nuclear accounted for 23%; renewables (mostly solar) was 7%. Meanwhile, cities like Atlanta are pushing for 100% clean energy within the next decade, and about 64% of Georgians surveyed by Yale Program on Climate Change Communication say developing renewables is the most important way to address energy needs.

What happened with the PSC election lawsuit?

In 2020, a group of Black voters in Atlanta sued Georgia’s Secretary of State, alleging the way the PSC is elected diminishes Black residents’ votes because they are not representative of individual districts. A third of Georgia residents are Black, but only two Black people have served on the PSC (including current commissioner Fitz Johnson). Both were initially appointed. All current commissioners are Republicans.

A federal court found that the election methods violate the Voting Rights Act of 1965; that ruling was overturned by an appeals court. In summer 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to take up the case. No elections have been held since the case began. Under a bill signed by Gov. Brian Kemp in 2024 laying out a new schedule for PSC elections, two commissioners who were supposed to run in 2022 — Johnson and Tim Echols — will serve through 2025. Tricia Pridemore serves through 2026; Lauren “Bubba” McDonald and Jason Shaw serve through 2028. Voting rights and energy advocate groups sued over this law in July 2024, seeking earlier elections.

How does my bill break down?

Line items on your bill can be confusing. Here’s what they mean:

Current Service: Includes a flat rate for meter installation and maintenance, plus a charge based on household usage. But that’s not all — there’s an additional fee for Georgia Power to recover costs for fuel, like natural gas, included in this. There’s a “demand side management” fee folded in, which covers administrative costs for energy efficiency programs. As of spring 2024, current service also includes the cost of Plant Vogtle’s Unit 3 and 4 nuclear reactors.

Environmental Compliance: Covers climate-friendly initiatives required by federal mandate, like scrubbers on coal plants; it also covers cleanup costs associated with coal ash, a byproduct of combustion.

Sales tax and municipal franchise fee: Covers costs Georgia Power pays to the state and municipalities.

Check out a more detailed bill breakdown:



Representation matters. It’s the most important thing to have at least one person on the commission that represents the unique and particularized needs of your district.

—*Brionté McCorkle*
Georgia Conservation Voters

How to contact the PSC

All commission hearings and meetings are open to the public and anyone can attend. Commission hearings and meetings are livestreamed on the PSC YouTube channel.

Toll-free in Georgia: 800-282-5813
Metro Atlanta: 404-656-4501
Email: gapscc@psc.ga.gov

You can make a public comment during the meeting, but only in person. Public comments are heard during the first hour of hearings and the last 15 minutes of committee meetings. Comments must conform to certain guidelines, including a limit of three minutes at the lectern. You can submit written comments at the PSC website.

People who regularly address the PSC say don’t be discouraged if you don’t receive a response right away. Follow up respectfully as time allows, and if you still aren’t satisfied reach out to commissioners through other means, such as calling their offices.