



YOUR GUIDE TO ELECTRICITY AND ENERGY POLICY IN GEORGIA

Grist

Five elected officials in Georgia hold the power to set electricity prices and control how Georgia Power sources its energy. But PSC meetings and documents are long and jargon-heavy, making it hard to understand or engage with the process.

Who regulates electricity?

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. 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?

Jason Shaw, District 1

Tim Echols, District 2

Fitz Johnson, District 3

Lauren “Bubba” McDonald, District 4

Tricia Pridemore, District 5

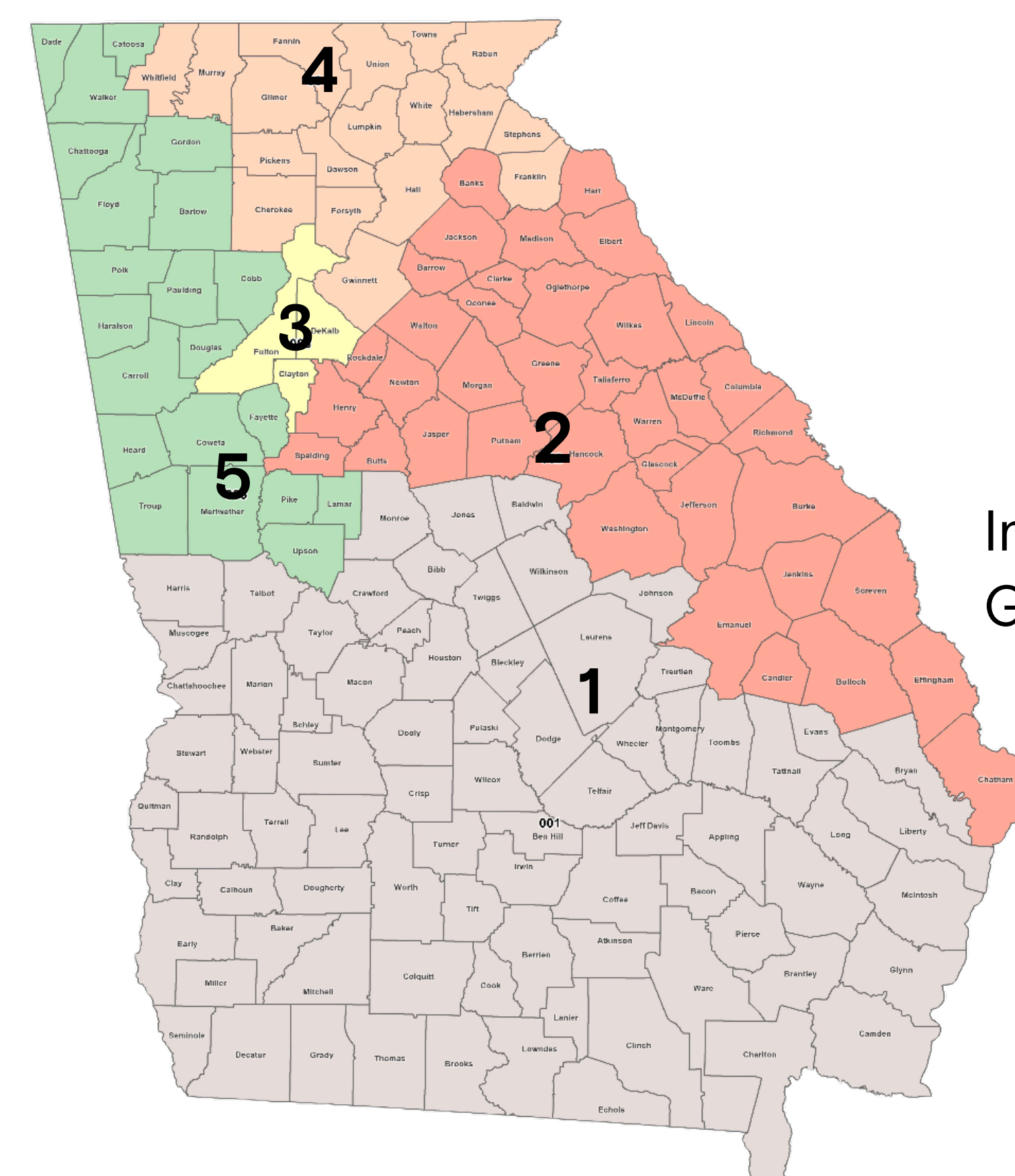


Image via
Georgia PSC

Here’s more you should know about the commission:

- Black voters sued Georgia’s Secretary of State in 2020, alleging the way the PSC is elected diminishes Black residents’ votes because residents throughout the state—whose demographics, politics, and needs vary widely—are not representative of the individual districts. A federal court found that the election methods violate the Voting Rights Act of 1965; that ruling was overturned by an appeals court.
- Echols and Johnson were up for election in 2022. Pridemore is up for reelection in 2024. None of these elections are scheduled as of March because of the lawsuit.
- A third of Georgia residents are Black, but only two Black people have ever served on the PSC (including Johnson, who is currently a commissioner). They were both initially appointed to fill vacancies—not elected.
- All of the current commissioners are Republicans.

How does this impact me?

The PSC determines your bills. The PSC determines electricity rates, or how much Georgia Power customers pay for electricity. In addition to your electricity rate, you're charged fees for various projects approved by the PSC. Some examples: Construction of new nuclear reactors at Plant Vogtle has added up to 10% to your bill every month since 2011; high natural gas costs added almost \$16/month in 2023; from 2023-25 the PSC is raising rates to cover costs Georgia Power deems necessary.

The PSC makes decisions about your future. The PSC determines where much of the state's energy comes from, since Georgia Power is the largest utility here. Georgia Power's parent company, Southern Company, has made a commitment to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, but 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), 7%. Cities like Atlanta are pushing for 100% clean energy within the next decade, and about 64% of Georgians surveyed think developing renewables is the most important way to address energy needs according to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication.

What can I do as a resident?

- Register to vote and stay updated on the candidates' platforms when there is a PSC race on the ballot.
- Attend committee meetings or make public comments during hearings
- Familiarize yourself with groups organizing around energy issues, such as Georgia Conservation Voters and Eco-Action, as well as local government agencies and institutions that educate about energy issues.
- Research the facts about energy sources such as nuclear, natural gas and solar, as well as climate change (and learn how to identify misinformation).

Want to know more?

You can find stories, resources, and a glossary of terms here:



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About us

This project, by nonprofit media organization Grist, aims to demystify the Georgia Public Service Commission. To ensure our journalism reaches and involves residents who face major barriers to accessing accurate, consistent information, we are hosting workshops with community partners, creating printable resources, and launching a paid journalism training program around this topic.