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## **Georgia Public Service Commission**

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**For Immediate Release**

**17-14**

### **From the Office of Commissioner Chuck Eaton NEWS RELEASE Obama's Choice**

Atlanta, March 30, 2012 - There once was a man who had a stable of horses; a barn full of fine animals for lease. At first glance, it appeared that his business offered great flexibility, a steed for every desire. But at the moment of commerce, the customer learned that the only ride available was the one nearest the door. So despite the appearance of many good options, there was really no choice at all. That man's name was Hobson, and his customers ruefully coined the expression "Hobson's Choice:" the appearance of flexibility that really isn't!

In a similar vein, the Environmental Protection Agency recently issued 1600 pages of new regulations that control existing coal-fired power plants, a staple producer of energy for our nation. With great fanfare, often repeated by the media, EPA announced that there was full flexibility as to how the rules could be implemented. What's lost in the minutia of the volumes of regulations is that the only choice is to ultimately move away from coal, which accounts for roughly half of our nation's energy production. EPA's purported "flexibility" is a perfect example of a Hobson's Choice because, if implemented, there is no choice but to abandon coal. And the terrible irony is that the result would actually increase worldwide pollution, as our coal and manufacturing jobs are shipped overseas to countries with far fewer environmental controls.

And what about the impacts at home? Look no further than the president's own words in 2008 when discussing the earlier iteration of his carbon plan: "Under my plan of a cap-and-trade system, electricity rates would necessarily skyrocket."<sup>[1]</sup>

Fortunately, the president doesn't have the final word. Georgia has a robust energy planning process for electric utilities that involves long-range planning, with keen sensitivity to customer and economic impact. As chairman of the Public Service Commission, my colleagues and I intend to adamantly challenge this latest federal regulatory overreach and prevent electricity rates from skyrocketing.

Georgia operates some of the most efficient, well-run, environmentally responsible facilities in the country. Reliability and affordability are the result of our current regulatory construct. The Obama Administration's initiative looks to dictate what energy sources can be built and how and when they can be run. But beyond that, it even tries to mandate renewable energy percentages and the amount of energy efficiency options consumers must buy regardless of the cost to

consumers. Mr. President, respectfully, that is our job, not yours. Enough with the federal power grab ... in this case, a literal power grab.

On July 29, EPA is holding a public hearing on the proposed ruling in Atlanta, and we intend to make the case against this latest federal overreach. We will hold up Georgia as a responsible example of flexible, successful energy policy that is broadening our reliance on renewables, reducing emissions and maintaining reliable, affordable energy for our economy and its citizens.

Commissioner Eaton is serving his second term on the Commission, having been re-elected in November 2012. He is currently serving as Commission Chairman.

His full biography is at <http://www.psc.state.ga.us/pscinfo/bios/eaton.asp?tab=Tab2>

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