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## Georgia Public Service Commission

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### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

## **PSC Sets Rules on How EMCs Will Offer Rural Broadband**

### **First EMC Approved by PSC to Provide High Speed Internet Service**

Atlanta, April 22, 2020 – The Georgia Public Service Commission has released a final order directing Electric Membership Cooperatives that want to provide broadband Internet service in rural parts of the state to develop a cost allocation manual. The PSC must approve that manual before the EMC can start to provide Internet service.

The PSC order represents the culmination of a yearlong effort between the PSC, EMCs, the Georgia Cable Association, and AT&T. Officials with all these groups were tasked by the Georgia General assembly to develop guidelines for EMC broadband service via Senate Bill 2, which passed in the 2019 session of the General Assembly.

Commissioners approved the order last month. It was finalized, signed, and placed on the PSC Website yesterday. The order can be found in pdf form by following this link: <https://psc.ga.gov/search/facts-document/?documentId=180784>

PSC Commissioner Jason Shaw helped lead the efforts. A resident of Lakeland, Ga., Commissioner Shaw has seen the problems a lack of reliable Internet service has created in the less populated areas of the state. Often, children must travel to a McDonalds or a public library to access the Internet so they can complete homework assignments. Likewise, businesses large and small find themselves inadequately equipped to perform services in a world more and more dependent on the Internet.

“This is a major issue,” Shaw said as the Commission voted to approve the order. “Hopefully what we’re doing here will move the needle on rural broadband, which I think is the number one issue facing rural Georgians.”

Commissioner Tricia Pridemore expressly thanked Georgia EMC, the Georgia Cable Association and AT&T for their hard work and their many compromises. But she gave particular kudos to her colleague for his efforts that led the competing interests to come together in agreement.

“Commissioner Shaw has led this effort,” she said. “He has done an amazing job to continue to push rural broadband.”

The order approved by the Commission stipulates, among other things, that a cost allocation manual show that an EMC will not raise energy prices to the customers to develop broadband service, an EMC will not provide better rates to customers who utilize both broadband and energy from an EMC, and an EMC will show that it has the available assets to provide broadband and a financial plan to do so.

An EMC in Southwest Georgia, Diverse Power, had already filed a cost allocation manual with the PSC for approval. The PSC unanimously approved their cost allocation manual at its Tuesday Administrative session.

The Georgia Public Service Commission is a five-member constitutional agency that exercises its authority and influence to ensure that consumers receive safe, reliable, and reasonably-priced telecommunications, electric and natural gas service from financially viable and technically competent companies.

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