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Georgia Watch names Sen. Robert Brown a “Friend of the Consumer” *Legislator commended for consumer advocacy in 2009*

ATLANTA - Senate Minority Leader Robert Brown (D-Macon) was named a “Friend of the Consumer” today by Georgia Watch for battling the interests of big business and speaking up for the average Georgian. Sen. Brown worked in opposition of Senate Bill 31, an accelerated rate increase imposed by Georgia Power that will raise monthly power bills for residential customers in order to finance the expansion at Plant Vogtle, a nuclear power plant near Augusta.

SB 31, which was signed into law by Governor Perdue earlier this year, forces residential and small business ratepayers to prepay for the expansion at Vogtle while excluding many big businesses. In 2011, these Georgia Power customers will see an increase of \$1.30 per monthly power bill, a cost that will ratchet up each year to around ten dollars per month in 2017. These increases will occur years before the reactors produce a kilowatt of energy. Additionally, much of the increased cost will not go towards financing new reactors. A large portion of the revenues raised pursuant to SB 31 will increase Georgia Power’s total profits and pay corporate income tax for the utility.

“[SB 31] is a complicated big bill that does one very wrong thing. And that one thing is its presence in [the legislature], it doesn’t belong here.” Sen. Brown said in a speech from the Senate well on February 10, 2009. **“That’s what we have the PSC for.”**

The PSC, or Public Service Commission, is a regulatory body that was developed to oversee rate and fuel cases in Georgia. The PSC, which is comprised of five commissioners, is charged with balancing a customer’s need for reliable service and reasonable rates with the need of utilities to earn a reasonable return on investment.

“Sen. Brown was right: there was no need for the legislature to get involved in a matter that could be and later was dealt with by the PSC,” Deputy Director Danny Orrock said. **“We commend Sen. Brown for speaking up for consumers who will have to start paying for a new nuclear power plant at least six years before it is operational.”**

“This is going to cost the citizens of Georgia a lot more money than we even know,” Sen. Brown said. **“This is a bad bill, in a bad place, in a bad time, in a bad way.”**

Georgia Watch praises Sen. Brown for his impassioned efforts in speaking up for the average consumer and in educating his fellow legislators on the negative aspects of Georgia Power’s accelerated rate increase.

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Founded in 2002, Georgia Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501-(c)(3) watchdog group focusing on consumer education and research in the areas of health care, insurance, identity theft, consumer energy issues and personal finance. Visit www.GeorgiaWatch.org for more information.