

GeorgiaWatch

Protecting Consumers, Promoting Transparency, Empowering Citizens

The Watcher: The newsletter of Georgia Watch, the state's leading consumer watchdog

From Executive Director Elena Parent

Dear Friends,



I am thrilled to be Georgia Watch's new Executive Director. Angela Speir Phelps will now focus on expanding our Consumer Energy Program as the Senior Director. The Consumer Energy Program has been very successful since Angela founded it in 2009, and will be able to accomplish even more going forward.

My two top priorities as Executive Director are to:

- Promote public policies that positively impact Georgians, especially in the areas of energy, finance, access to health care, and access to civil justice, and to
- Develop a responsive network of leaders in Georgia, and utilize the network to make an impact on laws and regulatory policies.

While growing the organization's profile and influence, I look forward to working with the Georgia Watch team to expand the depth and breadth of our work while maintaining the effectiveness of our core programs.

Speaking of our core programs... Angela Speir Phelps and Helen O'Leary are preparing for the once-every-three-years filing at the Georgia Public Service Commission by Georgia Power of its integrated resource plan. This plan, among other things, will show how the utility proposes to respond to the projected demand for electricity in an economical and reliable manner for the next 20 years. Alongside our coalition partners, Georgia Watch will work

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Clark Howard says to save the date!



For the past ten years, Georgia Watch has represented your interests, not special interests.

To celebrate this achievement **we're having a 10th anniversary gala on Thursday, October 18, from 6:00-8:00PM at the home of Georgia Watch board member Clark Howard.**

Invitations to this fundraising event will go out in August. Your ticket purchases will enable Georgia Watch to continue doing our important work for you.

toward increased energy efficiency and the inclusion of more renewable energy in Georgia Power's energy portfolio. As always, we will advocate for fair rates and greater transparency.

Bill Rencher is taking over the Health Access Program with gusto. Under Bill, look to see the Health Access Program continue the excellent work it has always done providing direct service to consumers, advocating for consumer-friendly policies from hospitals and insurance companies, and speaking up in the policy arena for quality, affordable health care for all Georgians.

Liz Coyle has ensured that Georgia Watch is a trusted resource for the media and kept our organization in the news. Karla Johnson, Grassroots Outreach Coordinator, has made presentations to hundreds of consumers in the past six months, educating them about financial, energy, and health care issues and building a network we can call upon when we do our work in the public policy arena.

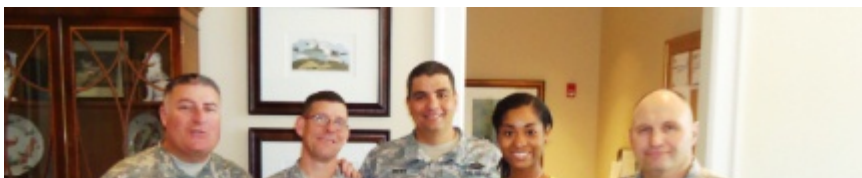
We are all excited about our 10-Year Anniversary Fundraiser at the home of Georgia Watch Board Member and syndicated talk show host, Clark Howard, on October 18. Mark your calendars!

Georgia Watch continues to be the premier consumer watchdog and advocate in the State, and with the support of all of you, ensuring that Georgians are educated and protected on matters that impact their wallets and quality of life.

Update on Grassroots Outreach Events

Through grassroots outreach events statewide, we've met with and educated a number of civic groups and individuals on a myriad of consumer issues including costly energy and utility bills, the latest federal patient safety guidelines, and ethics reform at our state capitol.

We presented information about the functions of the Public Service Commission, hospital-acquired infections and the need for tougher ethics laws in Georgia to the Acworth Kiwanis Club and members of the Macon League of Women Voters. A few short weeks later, we visited the Classic City Kiwanis Club of Athens, the Hartwell Kiwanis Club and the Savannah Sunrise Rotary Club. Next, we shared information with military members at Fort Stewart, Hunter Army Airfield and servicemen at the Georgia Air National Guard to raise awareness of identity theft, predatory lending and ways to freeze their credit.



As Clark says, Georgia Watch is "the only bona fide group in Georgia looking out for consumers" and a donation to Georgia Watch is "double the bang for your buck, because you're helping a great organization that's working for you *and* you get savings back on your income tax."

Every donation counts and is fully tax deductible. Donate today!



We believe it's important to hear from you directly. In addition to our outreach events, we have attended a number of your community events and meetings, including the annual Lupus Awareness Walk, Stand-Up Alliance Town Hall Meeting, The National Center for the Prevention of Home Improvement Fraud Workshop and the Scams Jam in DeKalb County, just to name a few.

Georgia Watch is proud to serve as your consumer watchdog – working to ensure your voices are heard loud and clear. If you would like to learn more about our work protecting consumers, email Karla Johnson to schedule Georgia Watch to speak to your group at kjohnson@georgiawatch.org or call (404) 525-1085, ext. 15.

Georgia Watch welcomes new staff

Elena Parent, Executive Director

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Representative Elena Parent (D–Chamblee) joined Georgia Watch as executive director in June 2012. Elena was raised in Alexandria, Virginia, where she attended public schools and graduated from T.C. Williams High School. Elena received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with Highest Distinction from the University of Virginia in 1998 and was initiated into Phi Beta Kappa. She earned her law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in 2002, where she served as Symposium Editor for the Virginia Journal of Social Policy and the Law. Elena practiced as a litigator at Atlanta law firm Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP from 2002 through 2008. In 2009, she served as the Chief of Staff to State Senator David Adelman, now the United States Ambassador to Singapore, and assisted HOPE Atlanta, a prevention of homelessness non-profit, with development and fundraising.

In 2011, Elena was the recipient of the Fulton County Daily Report's "On the Rise" award, and also a member of the Atlanta Business Chronicle's "40 Under 40." In June, she was presented the 2012 Environmental Leadership Award from Georgia Conservation Voters, a non-partisan organization dedicated to preserving and

enhancing the quality of life of all Georgians by making conservation issues a top priority with Georgia's elected officials, political candidates and voters.

Bill Rencher, Health Access Program Director

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Bill Rencher joined Georgia Watch in June 2012 as the new Director of the Health Access Program. Bill was born and grew up in Orlando, Florida, but has spent the past 17 years living in Atlanta. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Furman University, where he studied History and Spanish, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Florida College of Law. Subsequent to receiving his law degree, Bill moved to Atlanta, Georgia and worked for 14 years as a Real Estate Attorney, specializing in commercial title insurance. During that time, Bill had the opportunity to travel to more than 80 counties in the State of Georgia, examining real estate records and seeing firsthand the significant income disparities that exist between the rural and urban areas of our state.



Deciding to embark on a new career in Public Health, Bill entered Georgia State University's Master of Public Health program in the Fall of 2010. Bill's MPH curriculum focused on the epidemiology of HIV and STDs in impoverished communities, as well as the effects of scarce health care resources on health disparities. In addition to being a Georgia Health Foundation scholar during his time at Georgia State, Bill was also a Graduate Research Assistant to the Institute of Public Health's biostatistician, assisting with manuscripts on tobacco control, drug addiction, and depression. Before receiving his MPH in May 2012, Bill worked as a program intern for the CDC Foundation where he managed projects relating to safe injection practices, preventing infections in cancer patients, and building global capacity to treat chronic diseases.

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