



GoodNews from The Good Works Show

Georgia Watch Looking Out for the State's Consumers

Since 2002, Atlanta's Georgia Watch has worked to create a state that is a model for consumer protection. The organization provides services to all of Georgia, with special attention on the elderly and other vulnerable groups. "We really work to empower and protect consumers on matters that impact their wallets and quality of life," said Liz Coyle, Georgia Watch Executive Director.

The organization promotes consumer education and safeguards in four main areas: personal finance, healthcare, energy efficiency, and civil justice. Georgia Watch works with consumers to ensure they are aware of their rights in each of these zones. In personal finance, Georgia Watch, conducts workshops on identity theft and helps to protect senior citizens from financial fraud and scams. In healthcare, the organization promotes transparency in billing and financial assistance policies, and consumers are provided information on safe, quality, affordable healthcare. Georgia Watch also provides consumers with access to the court system, and work to maintain and uphold the individuals' rights within the judicial system. Lastly, in the area of energy options and education, Georgia Watch provides ways for consumers to lower their energy use, and save money on their utility bills.

With many successes stories in their 13-year history, Georgia Watch is currently working on adding one more. "In the energy work that we do," Coyle said, "we are working hard to make sure the state has policies that lift up clean, renewable kinds of energy."

In fact, Georgia Watch is encouraging the regulatory bodies of the state to use alternative methods energy, focusing on renewables like solar and wind power.

"There is tremendous opportunity with wind energy to meet some of Georgia's needs, without the harmful emissions of a coal burning facility," Coyle said. These additional efforts to reduce emissions and provide consumers with clean power will ultimately help lower energy and utility bill costs.

"Energy efficiency is really about how you limit your use of energy in smart ways," Coyle said. "We are particularly focused on helping low-income consumers who are burdened by the high cost of utilities because they don't have that kind of disposable income. But often they don't know that they have tools readily available to them, so they can take steps to lower those bills."

In addition to their work on the state level, Georgia Watch also takes action in Washington, DC. Currently, the group is working with the Consumer Protection Bureau to support new rules on predatory and payday lending. Acting as a watchdog for those at risk of loan sharks trying to trap consumers in a cycle of debt, Georgia Watch offers individuals ideas and tools on constructive ways to take charge of their finances. This includes building strong relationships with credit unions and other lending institutions.

Learn more about Georgia Watch by visiting their website www.georgiawatch.org.



Tune in Saturdays at noon on NewsRadio 106.7 FM as co-hosts, Elaine Armstrong and Jim Caponigro highlight the good that makes Atlanta Work.

Learn more at GoodwillNG.org/goodworks or email the show at goodworks@ging.org.