

For Immediate Release: May 14, 2018

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**Groups Seek Additional Evidence of Behind-Closed-Doors Discussions
between Georgia Power, Public Service Commissioners**
Motion for Discovery Filed in Appeal of Plant Vogtle Approval

Atlanta, GA—Georgia groups have filed a joint motion to uncover additional evidence of behind-closed-doors discussions between Georgia Power and some of the Public Service Commissioners in the days leading up to the Commission’s decision to continue the vastly over-budget Plant Vogtle nuclear expansion project. Under the Commission’s own rules, such secret communications are not permitted after the close of public hearings.

The Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) on behalf of Partnership for Southern Equity and Georgia Interfaith Power and Light, and the Barnes Law Group LLC on behalf of Georgia Watch, have filed a motion for limited discovery regarding the one-sided communications between the Georgia Public Service Commission and Georgia Power Company, and to present evidence of those communications to the Court.

The groups have appealed the Georgia Public Service Commission’s decision to continue constructing the Plant Vogtle expansion and approve billions of dollars in cost overruns in Fulton County Superior Court, charging that the approval violates state law and the Commission’s own rules concerning “ex parte” communications—i.e. private discussions between the Commissioners and one of the parties involved.

The purpose of the ex parte rule is to restore and maintain the public’s confidence that decisions made by the Commission on ratepayers’ behalf are fair and based on what is said in an open and public hearing room and not messages exchanged secretly behind closed doors.

Adopted by the Commission in 2007, the procedural rule forbids the Commissioners and their staff to meet privately with any party once evidentiary hearings on a matter conclude. If any such meetings do occur, the Commission—or the party that engaged in ex parte communications—must give all other parties to the proceeding notice of the communications and an opportunity to respond.

“We don’t know the extent and substance of those conversations and as a result, cannot know how seriously they may have impacted the Commission’s final decision,” said SELC senior attorney, Kurt Ebersbach. “Simply knowing that conversations took place isn’t enough – we need to know if those one-sided communications are what produced the lopsided result favoring Georgia Power at the expense of its customers.”

Georgia Watch Executive Director Liz Coyle filed an affidavit in support of the motion. “I believe that discovery is warranted to uncover the full nature and extent of these apparently improper ex parte communications, which denied all parties a fair process and produced such an unfavorable result for Georgia Power customers,” Coyle stated in the affidavit.

[Click here to read the filing.](#)

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***About Southern Environmental Law Center:** For more than 30 years, the Southern Environmental Law Center has used the power of the law to champion the environment of the Southeast. With over 70 attorneys and nine offices across the region, SELC is widely recognized as the Southeast’s foremost environmental organization and regional leader. SELC works on a full range of environmental issues to protect our natural resources and the health and well-being of all the people in our region. www.SouthernEnvironment.org*

***About Georgia Watch:** Founded in 2002, [Georgia Watch](#) is a statewide consumer advocacy organization working to educate and protect Georgia consumers on matters that impact their quality of life, particularly the effects of predatory business practices, the high cost of utilities and healthcare, and restricted access to the civil justice system.*