

“The question is whether any civilization can wage relentless war on life without destroying itself, and without losing the right to be called civilized.”

Rachel Carson



Earth Week 2024

Rewarding exploitation undermines democracy & the common good

There can be little doubt that if our era is objectively chronicled, it will be marked by escalating, corrupt opportunism – exploitative practices being rewarded rather than punished. When the growing injustices of abusing the common good repeatedly go uncorrected, victims grow cynically disengaged while grifters are emboldened and empowered.

Consider two prominent examples related to Georgia’s Public Service Commission, the agency supposedly responsible for representing the public interest in issues related to the price of electricity, as well as how it’s generated and distributed. Contrary to their legal obligation, PSC members have shifted billions-of-dollars in Plant Vogtle expansion cost-overruns from Georgia Power executives and Southern Company stockholders onto residential energy consumers. Southern Company stock-returns and executive salaries soared during the 15-year project, while its subsidiary, Georgia Power, caused massive cost burdens that the PSC converted to a 40% increase in residential utility rates to compensate for corporate blunders. Apparently, the PSC would rather sustain the ample incomes of company executives and stockholders than protect household energy-users and the common good.

Similarly, after a federal court determined that the method for electing PSC members violated the Voting Rights Act, instead of immediately correcting the problem, Georgia courts delayed the next election, extending the term-of-office for two members from three years to five. Moreover, while enjoying their unfairly prolonged PSC authority, these members helped worsen Georgia’s pollution of air and climate for many years ahead by irresponsibly approving expanded fossil-fuel-burning power-generation instead of converting to clean energy.

Oppression undermines democracy, environmental justice, and the common good when flagrant exploitation by special interests is politically sanctioned instead of being prohibited. As citizens and voters, we must strive to improve our institutions so that they serve well-founded priorities.

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Ten Policies to Help Make Earth Great Again

1. Prohibit environmentally degrading activities, based on balanced, thorough assessment of their consequences for life-support systems and at-risk communities.
2. Immediately adopt escalating restrictions on the emission of heat-trapping emissions, with the goal of eliminating all such emissions no later than 2050.
3. Eliminate all government subsidy of activities that threaten or degrade environmental quality, critical species, and social justice.
4. Issue comprehensive monthly reports based on well-researched scientific evaluation of key ecosystems essential to life-support and food supplies.
5. Adopt federal procedures requiring mandatory review of all legislative proposals and existing laws to revise them as needed, based on these ecosystem threat-assessments.
6. Tax all incomes over \$10 million annually at a minimum of 20% and provide a 50% carbon-emission-reduction tax-credit for all households earning less than \$200,000 a year.
7. Use at least half the proceeds from high-income-bracket taxes to restore damaged ecosystems, correct environmental injustices, and enforce emission-reduction mandates.
8. Implement a comprehensive international environmental education and internship program, strengthening capabilities for global ecosystem restoration and protection.
9. Adopt federal requirements applicable to licensed media outlets to eliminate all environmental disinformation, while disseminating weekly updates on ecosystem conditions.
10. Implement federal trade policies that strictly prohibit products, services, and practices that degrade essential ecosystems, consistent with the latest scientific assessments.