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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Rewarding exploitation undermines democracy

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 cushy incomes of company executives and stockholders than protect household energy-users.

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 extended PSC positions, these members helped worsen air and climate pollution for years ahead by irresponsibly approving expanded fossil-fuel-burning power-generation instead of converting to clean energy.

Oppression undermines democracy when justice is flagrantly denied through politically sanctioned exploitation.

David Kyler  
Center for a Sustainable Coast  
Saint Simons Island