

Georgia does it right with data centers

Georgia has proven time and again that it has the unique ability to temper rapid economic changes with responsible planning, ensuring we successfully navigate our state's continuing growth.

Few industries illustrate this more clearly than the rapid rise of data centers.

These investments are large, complex, and energy intensive. They understandably raise serious questions about infrastructure, affordability, and environmental responsibility. Those questions deserve thoughtful answers, and over the past several months, Georgians have shown up to help provide them.

At recent public hearings before the PSC, my colleagues and I heard from a wide range of voices: students concerned about climate impacts, local officials focused on tax base and infrastructure, energy experts discussing grid reliability, and working men and women from the building trades who see firsthand what these projects mean for skills development, wages, and long-term opportunity.

That diversity of perspective is one of the greatest strengths of the PSC's process.

The Economic Reality
According to a recent analysis by the University of Georgia, data centers are already delivering economic value to Georgia. Construction activity alone has created tens of thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic output. Once operational, these facilities significantly expand local tax bases,

often transforming land that generates modest revenue into assets worth billions of dollars.

Local governments are using that revenue to build schools, upgrade water systems, and invest in communities that – for decades – lacked the tax capacity to do so. These are not abstract benefits, but tangible improvements in the lives of many Georgians.

At the same time, the UGA study makes an important point: while companies do consider Georgia's tax incentives when choosing a location, their main decision-making factor is access to affordable, reliable electricity.

Protecting Customers from Cost Shifting

A concern frequently raised is whether these new, large, industrial customers might add costs to existing residential or small-business ratepayers. The PSC is building guardrails to ensure this will not happen.

In some parts of the country, regulators are having to make difficult choices on how costs are allocated because rapid growth outpaced planning. Existing customers were left exposed to risks they did not create.

Georgia, on the other hand, planned early and continues working to protect ratepayers while allowing for reasonable growth.

Georgia's regulatory framework is designed specifically to prevent cost shifting. The PSC has ensured large customers like data centers are required to pay rates that reflect the full cost of serving them – including

infrastructure, capacity, and long-term system impacts. These safeguards exist so that families and small businesses are not asked to underwrite infrastructure they won't use.

Reliability Is Not Optional

Reliable electricity is foundational for a modern economy. Hospitals, manufacturers, logistics networks, households, and now data centers all depend on it. As demand grows, planning for new power generation and infrastructure must be done carefully, deliberately, and transparently.

After months of financial analysis and several public hearings, the PSC recently approved a significant expansion of Georgia Power's energy production infrastructure, specifically new natural gas and solar/battery systems. The increase in power generation is unprecedented, but the PSC has an obligation to ensure the lights stay on, prices remain stable, and Georgia remains competitive.

The choice is not between economic growth and environmental stewardship. Nor is it between innovation and affordability. The challenge is to balance all of the above, using facts not hyperbole.

In our public hearings, Georgia Power produced hard evidence of the rapid need for new electric generation. Over

Georgia Power will sign contracts with enough large-load customers, such as data centers, to use all the approved facilities.

Some have suggested that data centers may not come to Georgia quickly enough to utilize all the certified new power generation. The evidence I have seen says otherwise. Regardless, in the unlikely event the need for new electricity does not materialize, the PSC has the flexibility to adjust its course, and to do it quickly.

The PSC can direct Georgia Power to suspend new power generation projects that have not started. We can close other plants early. We can end purchase power agreements with other states, and we can tell Georgia Power to sell excess electricity on the open market.

With the current rate freeze and financial backstops guaranteed by Georgia Power, Georgia would have five years to make needed adjustments. This will ensure current ratepayers will not be on the hook, even if Georgia Power's many forecast models are wrong.

A Proven Regulatory Model

Georgia's economic success is the product of a regulatory framework that values long-term planning, cost discipline, and accountability. Our model has helped deliver some of the most affordable electricity rates in the nation while supporting growth across manufacturing,

technological infrastructure.

Our model works because it insists on forethought and responsibility. Infrastructure investments must be justified, and protections for existing ratepayers must remain central to every decision.

Listening to Working Georgians

As we planned for this needed expansion, one of the most compelling perspectives offered during our hearings came from representatives of Georgia's skilled trades. Electricians, HVAC technicians, and construction professionals reminded us that data centers are not just steel, wires, and servers. They are training grounds for the next generation of skilled workers.

These projects operate around the clock and require highly trained personnel to build and maintain them. That translates into apprenticeships, certifications, and steady, high-quality

jobs that cannot be outsourced. For many young Georgians, these projects represent a pathway into the middle class.

Moving Forward with Confidence

Data centers are not a passing trend. They are part of the backbone of a modern economy. The question is not whether Georgia should welcome them, but how.

By listening to diverse voices, insisting on reliability, preventing cost shifting, and remaining anchored to a proven regulatory framework, Georgia will continue to lead.

Economic growth and responsible regulation are not opposing forces. When done right, they reinforce each other. Georgia has proven this before, and there is every reason to believe we will continue down this path.

Jason Shaw, of Lakeland, is the Chairman of the Georgia Public Service Commission, and previously served four terms in the Georgia General Assembly



Jason Shaw

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School board meeting

(Continued from Page 1)

tax money for the school system if it passes in the legislature.

Dr. James also mentioned House Bill 1193, an early literacy bill proposed to improve K-3 literacy with literacy coaches and science of reading training, and is being co-created by former Clinch county educator Stacey Lutz.

Dr. James also mentioned there will not be an academic achievement awards this year, and mentioned adding additional student parking by the green house, and the need to resurface the track around the football field.

Chamber social event

(Continued from Page 1)
the next 10 months, Robb and outgoing chamber board members Godfrey, Dolly Lee and Scott Griffin, and announced that new board members include Denise Brown, Alison Smith, and Kali Hansley. She also announced that this year's officers will be President-Derek Herlocker, Vice-President-Harrison Tucker, Treasurer-Michael Railey, and Secretary-Maddie Cason.

Clinch County High School's culinary arts class catered the event, and CTAE Director Carra Goodman provided an update on the high school's CTAE program.

The chamber also presented a check for \$2,500 to the Suwannee River Golf Course in Fargo from proceeds from their 2025 golf tournament. Len Robbins accepted the check on behalf of the golf course, and gave a brief update on improvements being made to the course.

UGA Blueberry Field Day

Hosted by the UGA Blueberry Breeding Program and UGA Berrien County Extension Office

Date: March 27, 2026

Time: 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Location: UGA Alapaha Blueberry Research Farm, Alapaha Georgia (<https://goo.gl/maps/yC54vkyALCqP8waS9>; about 2.7 miles south of Alapaha on US Hwy 129)

After farm visit, we will serve lunch at the UGA Berrien County Extension office followed by an educational session.

Presenter	Title
Dr. Luan Oliveira	Precision Agriculture Blueberry Trials.
Dr. Jonathan Oliver	Blueberry Disease Management
Dr. Angelos Deltsidis	Postharvest management of Georgia blueberries
Dr. Ashfaq Sial	Monitoring and management of insect pests in blueberries
Federica Rossi	From Light to Fruit: How Selective Pruning Affects Blueberry Yield and Quality
Natalia Espinoza	Optimizing fertilizer use: How do fertilization practices impact soil health and blueberry nutrition?
Sindoor Nalajala	Breeding Better Blueberries: Expanding diversity through hybridization

- Any trouble finding the farm please contact Benjamin Reeves at 229-445-5962
- Pesticide credit hours will be available
- In the event of inclement weather, the program will be promptly rescheduled