

Georgia District 5

Public Service Commission 2026

**SHELIA
EDWARDS**

DEMOCRAT



**JOSH
TOLBERT**

REPUBLICAN

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Why your November 3 vote matters

The [election](#) on November 3 will decide the District 5 seat on the Georgia Public Service Commission. Democrat Shelia Edwards and Republican Josh Tolbert are running for a six-year term. The Commission [currently has](#) a partisan makeup of 3 Republicans and 2 Democrats. There is also an election this year for District 3.

The Georgia Public Service Commission regulates state utilities

The Commission [is composed](#) of five members who serve staggered six-year terms. Although the commissioners [are elected](#) by a statewide vote, the state is divided into five districts and commissioners represent the district in which they reside. The Commission [is tasked](#) with regulating rates for electric and natural gas utilities, as well [as promoting](#) competitive markets for landline telecommunications services and monitoring service quality. It [is required](#) to “balance Georgia citizens’ need for reliable services and reasonable rates with the need for utilities to earn a reasonable return on investment.” The Commission [sets](#) rates only for investor-owned electric and natural gas utility companies while regulating some aspects of municipally owned services, including monitoring the safety of natural gas services. The Georgia Public Service Commission [is established](#) by Article IV, Section 1 of the Georgia Constitution.

In recent years the Public Service Commission has taken many significant actions. The Commission [voted](#) to authorize the construction of nuclear power reactors at Plant Vogtle, [authorized](#) two rate increases for Georgia Power customers in 2022 and 2023, [voted](#) to freeze rates in 2025, [voted](#) to lower rates in 2026, [approved](#) an investigation into whether data centers are shifting some costs to residential customers, and [rejected](#) a plan to expand net-metering, which would have incentivized more solar panel installation.

To help you decide

Here’s background on the candidates’ public statements, actions, and experience. Follow our links to get more information.

SHELIA EDWARDS

shelia4psc.com

- **On company accountability**, “[will](#) demand transparency, insist on accountability.”
- **On data centers**, [says](#) that data centers “must pay the full cost of the infrastructure needed to serve them.” [Would](#) stop data centers from “cost-shifting to Georgia households.” [Says](#) that none should be built without “independent impact assessments” that measure economic and environmental costs.

JOSH TOLBERT

teamtolbert.com

- **On company accountability**, “Will [bring](#) greater transparency to the commission.”
- **On data centers**, “will [ensure](#) that the rapid growth of data centers is managed responsibly.” They need to be regulated and “[implemented](#) correctly,” so that they “pay more than the incremental cost of service and can be used to lower the rates for all Georgians.” ‘

SHELIA EDWARDS

- **On infrastructure,** [opposes](#) the taking of land from vulnerable Georgians to facilitate utility projects sanctioned by the Commission.
- **On new energy sources,** wants to be part of a Commission that “accelerates Georgia’s clean-energy future.” “If people want to [utilize](#) solar, they should be allowed to do so...we need to open those opportunities up.”
- **On utility rates,** [says](#), “the Commission must protect consumers from unnecessary rate increases. I am running to stop endless rate hikes and make sure families are not forced to pay more and more every year for electricity.” “We must [protect](#) families, seniors, and vulnerable communities from rising utility costs and energy insecurity.”

Shelia Edwards is [currently](#) a communications consultant at Kevin Ross Public Affairs Group, a publicist for the Mel Pender Foundation, and a graduate student at Georgia State University. She [earned](#) a bachelor’s degree in journalism from Benedict College. She [started](#) her career working for Lockheed Space Operations. She [has worked](#) in communications and management roles for a number of Georgia political institutions, including Congressman David Scott’s office, the Fulton County District Attorney’s Office, DeKalb County, and the Georgia House Democratic Caucus Committee.

Edwards’s endorsements include: the [Georgia](#) Democratic Party, [Georgia](#) Conservation Voters, [Make](#) Gwinnett Great Again, [Jane Fonda](#) Climate PAC, [Rachel’s](#) Action Network, and former [Atlanta Mayor](#) and US Ambassador Andrew Young, among others.

JOSH TOLBERT

- **On infrastructure,** [says](#) that his areas of focus include growing energy reserve [margins](#), strengthening natural gas pipelines, and promoting telecommunications infrastructure across Georgia. [Says](#) that some rate increases might be necessary if the power grid’s reliability is at risk.
- **On new energy sources,** [supports](#) the fact that Plant Vogtle is finished and producing reliable base load electricity. “[While](#) I like nuclear power, the only way I would support future development of nuclear power is with very strict cost controls.” [Opposes](#) clean energy mandates that raise prices, and supports using clean technologies “only when benefits are measurable and verifiable.” [Supports](#) hydroelectric power in the places with the right geographic and environmental conditions.
- **On utility rates,** [says](#) that his engineering background will allow him to push back against the utility companies and negotiate better rates for ratepayers. [Says](#) that customers will benefit if Georgia Power is incentivized to burn less fuel and find better prices.

Josh Tolbert [currently](#) works at Atlanta Experts, an engineering consulting business he founded. He [earned](#) a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering, a master’s degree in engineering science and mechanics, a master’s degree in mechanical engineering, and a PhD in mechanical engineering all from the University of Alabama. He [has worked](#) in engineering and technology roles at a number of energy companies in Alabama and Georgia since 2008 and taught mechanical engineering technology at Kennesaw State University from 2018 to 2019.

Tolbert’s endorsements include: [state Senator](#) Chuck Hufstetler, [state Senator](#) John Albers, [state Senator](#) Shawn Still, [state Senator](#) Ed Setzler, and [state Representative](#) Scott Hilton, among others.

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