

# Committee on Resources

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## **TESTIMONY OF ROBERT D. STEELE VICE PRESIDENT, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS OGLETHORPE POWER CORPORATION**

before

Subcommittee on Water and Power  
Committee on Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives

at

Augusta, Georgia  
September 27, 2004

Chairman Calvert, Congressman Burns and Members of the Subcommittee:

On behalf of Oglethorpe Power Corporation ("Oglethorpe"), I am pleased to provide testimony in reference to the benefits of hydroelectric power generation and the importance of the proposed legislation, HR 5044, The Federal Hydroelectric and Environmental Enhancement Act of 2004. My testimony will focus primarily on how hydroelectric generation is a reliable renewable resource and how by operating at optimal energy and capacity capabilities everyone, not just Georgians, but all Americans benefit.

First, let me start with telling you a little bit about who we are. Oglethorpe is a not-for-profit corporation owned by 39 Electric Membership Corporations ("EMCs") across Georgia. We are the nation's largest power supply cooperative, and through our Members we provide service in 150 out of the state's 159 counties, which means our member EMCs provide retail electric service to roughly 3.7 million Georgians. We have been helping to power Georgia homes and businesses for the past 30 years. In addition, we are a member of the Southeastern Federal Power Customers (SeFPC), an organization of electric cooperatives and municipally owned electric systems throughout the Southeast that is committed to maintaining the vitality of federal hydropower projects.

One of our goals at Oglethorpe is to manage our power supply resources to the optimum benefit of our Members. We go to great lengths to ensure that at all of our facilities generate electricity reliably and efficiently. This is why we are supportive of Mr. Burns' and Mr. Norwood's desire to create legislation that promotes the benefits of hydroelectric power.

Energy generation in the form of hydropower is good for the environment. A good example is our Rocky Mountain hydroelectric plant near Rome, Ga. This \$1 billion facility produces clean hydropower by pumping and releasing water between two reservoirs – one at the base of a mountain and one high on its summit. This process reuses water and does not degrade the surrounding environment. In fact, we have partnered with the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to create a wonderful recreational area on our site that benefits thousands of Georgians and others who make use of its facilities.

In short, hydropower is a resource that utilizes but does not damage that water that flows abundantly through our country and can lower our dependency on foreign oil -- which couldn't be more important at this point in our country's history.

I know this is not the appropriate Committee from which to seek more federal funds, and I do not want to belabor the point, but I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the first step to achieving maximum efficiency with the nation's hydroelectric plants is to make sure all the federal facilities are maintained and operating in peak condition. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. However, with your bill HR5044 this can be the first step in shifting Congress' focus back to the benefits of hydroelectric generation. Through these much-needed studies and reports we'll have a starting point by which we can identify the potential and capabilities

at our major hydroelectric facilities and create a plan to achieve optimal hydroelectric generation and environmental protection.

Again, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to come and speak at this important field hearing. I and Oglethorpe Power Corporation are at your service. We look forward to working with each of you in the future.