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Utility Justice Campaign


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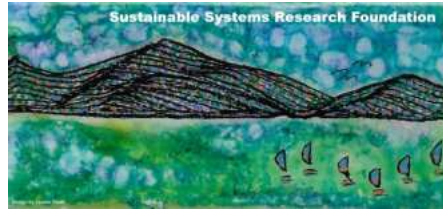


Democrats
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CALIFORNIA
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Indivisible
California
GREEN
TEAM



May 16, 2025

The Honorable Anna Caballero
Senate Appropriations Committee
1021 O Street, Room 2200
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: SB 332 (Dr. Aisha Wahab) SUPPORT

Dear Chair Caballero and Committee Members,

We, the undersigned organizations, write in strong support of **SB 332 (Wahab), the Investor-Owned Utilities Accountability Act**, which seeks to protect Californians from rising energy bills, increasing utility shutoffs, destructive wildfires, and other harms caused by profit-driven investor-owned utilities (IOUs).

SB 332 is a fiscally prudent investment in long-term energy system stability, affordability, safety and state financial resilience. It calls for a feasibility study to evaluate alternative ownership models for California's electric utilities. Based on comparable public utility studies¹, this robust, independent feasibility study will not exceed **\$5 million** and would come out of the ERPA fund, therefore not impacting the general fund. This is a fraction of the **\$13.5 billion PG&E wildfire settlement**, the **\$21 billion wildfire fund created by AB 1054**, or the **billions of dollars paid annually in shareholder returns**—all ultimately subsidized by California ratepayers and backed, in various ways, by state mechanisms. Preventing future bailouts begins with examining smarter structures now. This study could create a pathway to a safer, more reliable, and affordable energy system that not only supports ratepayers, but also protects the state of California from future public financial exposure.

Investor-owned utilities have a well-documented history of safety violations and prioritizing shareholder profits over public welfare. After the 2018 Camp Fire—sparked by outdated PG&E equipment and resulting in 85 deaths—PG&E filed for bankruptcy with more than **\$30 billion in liabilities**. Since then, it has continued to cause fires, including the Kincade (2019), Zogg (2020), and Dixie (2021) fires. Independent audits, including an investigation by a grand jury, revealed the company diverted safety funds to executive compensation and dividends, despite repeated warnings about aging infrastructure.

The harm these utilities cause is ongoing and deeply inequitable. Low-income communities and communities of color disproportionately bear the brunt of high energy costs, pollution, and utility disconnections. Currently, about 1 in 5 Californians are in arrears due to unaffordable utility bills. That's roughly 7 million people. In 2024 alone, IOUs disconnected customers' power for nonpayment **over 317,000 times**, a 50% increase over 2023. These shutoffs put lives at risk, particularly in rural areas and among disabled Californians living in high fire-risk zones.

There are proven alternatives. Publicly owned utilities (POUs) and rural electric cooperatives (RECs) charge **roughly half** the average rates of IOUs², while delivering more reliable service. Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), which broke free from PG&E decades ago, now has rates that are **58% lower** than PG&E's. The California Energy Commission's recent projection of rate increases³ demonstrated that revenue requirements are anticipated to nearly triple in IOU territories in the coming decades. And a 2023 study by the Public Advocate's Office found that if transmission lines were financed and owned by the state government rather than IOUs, it could save Californians **\$28 billion—about 25% savings**.⁴ The potential savings from applying that same principle to distribution infrastructure are substantial and deserve serious study. At a time when the people of California are paying the highest rates in the continental United States and shouldering the cost of IOU failures—including billions in wildfire liabilities—this modest planning investment in a study offers a strategic opportunity to explore models that could reduce rates for the long term.

SB 332 offers a multi-pronged approach to ratepayer protection and utility reform, including:

- **Funding a feasibility study** to explore not-for-profit alternatives to the IOU model and identify more affordable, equitable, and reliable approaches to delivering electricity.

¹ [Evaluation of the Ownership of Maine's Power Delivery System](#) cost \$500,000

² Assessing California's Climate Policies—Residential Electricity Rates in California

³ 2024 IEPR Electricity Rate Forecast

⁴ <https://www.publicadvocates.cpusc.ca.gov/-/media/cal-advocates-website/files/press-room/reports-and-analyses/230516-caladvocates-public-investment-in-infrastructure.pdf>

- **Mandating disclosure of utility shutoff data** on IOU and POU websites. Transparent reporting is essential to understanding and addressing the impacts of disconnections on vulnerable communities.
- **Requiring independent audits of aging equipment** in high fire-risk areas. Many components of California's grid have outlived their usable life, and utilities can no longer be trusted to self-monitor safety compliance.
- **Linking executive compensation to safety performance**, to counteract current incentives that reward cost-cutting and risky infrastructure over public well-being.
- **Mandating cost-effective, safety-focused equipment replacements**, including undergrounding lines or deploying microgrids, especially during post-fire rebuilding efforts.

Californians deserve utilities that are accountable, safe, equitable, and climate-resilient—not private monopolies incentivized to cut corners and pass costs onto the public. **SB 332 is a strategic, relatively low-cost measure** that empowers the state to evaluate better ways of delivering electricity in the public interest.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to recognize the long-term fiscal and public safety benefits of this legislation and to vote **YES** on SB 332.

Sincerely,

Organizational Sign-ons

Travis Gibrael, Research and Popular Education Organizer Reclaim Our Power: Utility Justice Campaign	Emily Smet, Co-Chair Sacramento Chapter Democratic Socialists of America
Selah Goodson Bell, Energy Justice Campaigner Center for Biological Diversity	Jose Torre-Bueno, Executive Director Center for Community Energy
Jeffrey Bulls, President Saginaw CAP	Daniel O'Connell, Executive Director Central Valley Partnership
Irene Kao, Executive Director Courage California	Tracy Rosenberg, Executive Director Media Alliance
Leah Redwood, California Organizer Oil and Gas Action Network	Robert Perry, Principal Analyst Synergistic Solutions
David Green, Lead Wellbeing Economy Alliance California	John Farrell, Co-Direct Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Stephen Campbell, Regulatory Director Vote Solar	Glenn Brand, Vice-President of Policy and Advocacy Solar United Neighbors Action
Debbie Notkin, Chair of the Board Friends of the Public Bank East Bay	Laura Neish, Executive Director 350 Bay Area Action
Gregory Stevens, Northern California Director California Interfaith Power and Light	Carol Weed, Steering Committee Sustainable Rossmoor
Jean Tepperman, Co-Coordinator Sunflower Alliance	James Court, President Consumer Watchdog
Marven Norman Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice	Jessica Tovar, Executive Director The Local Clean Energy Alliance

Antonio Diaz, Organizational Director
PODER

Sari Bilick, Organizing Program Director
Human Impact Partners

Kelly Smith
Stop PG&E

Xochitl Cortez, Executive Director
Frontline Catalysts

David Gassman, Co-Convenor
Bay Area-System Change not Climate Change

Scott Brown
Party for Socialism and Liberation

Ector Olivares, Program Manager
Catholic Charities of Stockton

Moyses Aguirre, Campaign Coordinator
Youth vs. Apocalypse

Cheryl Auger, President
Ban SUP (Single Use Plastic)

Ashley McClure, Executive Director
Climate Health Now

Dave Shukla, Operations
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy

Bill Balderson
Solidarity, Bay Area

Susan Silber, Project Director
Collective Resilience

Peninsula Chapter of the Democratic Socialists of
America

Janice Schroeder, Core Member
West Berkeley Alliance for Clean Air and Safe Jobs

Allen Myers, Founder
Regenerating Paradise

Daniel Chandler, Steering Committee Member
350 Humboldt

Herman Barahona, Lead Community Organizer
The Sacramento Environmental Justice Coalition

David Martinez, Orange County Climate Equity Advocate
and Organizer
Climate Action Campaign

Carol Wee, Board of Directors
Democrats of Rossmore

Scott Henderson, CEO
Doing Good Works

Micah Perlin, Director
California Climate Voters

Esperanza Vielma, Founder and Ex Co-founder
Coalition for Economic Equity and Economics (CEEE)

Katharine Harrison, Chair
SanDiego350 Legislative Team

Levana Saxon, Co Founder, Participatory Action Research
Advisor
Partners for Collaborative Change

Corrine Van Hook-Turner, Chief Executive Officer
People's Climate Innovation Center and National
Association of Climate Resilience Planners (NACRP)

Helen Eigenberg, Co Founder
HODG

Pat Barrett, CEO
Mineral Baths Community Gardens

Aleta Toure, Coop Member
Parable of the Sower Healing Center (Intentional
Community Cooperative)

Jerry Rivers, Environmental Scientist and Climate Activist
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment
(NACCE)

Jay Salazar, Core Member
Disability Justice Culture Club

Doria Robinson, Executive Director
Urban Tilt

Thomas Helme, Coordinator
California Environmental Justice Coalition

Ali Anderson, Co-Executive Director
Feed Black Futures

Sherry Lear, Steering Committee
350 Southland Legislative Alliance

Zach Lou, Coalition Director
California Green New Deal Coalition

Deborah Scarborough
San Luis Obispo Democratic Party

Adele Watts, Interim NorCal Program Co-Director
Communities for a Better Environment

Gary Hughes, Co-Director / Americas Program
Coordinator
Biofuelwatch

Febby Boediartha, Energy Justice Manager
California Environmental Justice Alliance Action

Sara Zimmerman, Executive Director
Climate Equity Policy Center

Isaiah Glasoe, Volunteer Organizer
Public Power San Diego

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Indigenous Environmental Network

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Bay Area Third Act

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Santa Cruz Climate Action Network

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San Diego DSA

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Third Act SoCal

Deborah Moore, Campaign Strategist
Third Act

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Sustainable Systems Research Foundation

Jennifer Tanner, Leader
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Hilda Gaytan, Executive Director
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Gopal Shanker, President
Récolte Energy

Ellen Marks, Director
California Brain Tumor Association

Justin Schott, Director
Energy Equity Project

Rae Huang, Senior Organizer
Housing Now!

Gloria Alonso, Environmental Justice Advocacy
Coordinator
Little Manila Rising

Suzanne Hume, Educational Director & Founder
[CleanEarth4Kids.org](https://www.CleanEarth4Kids.org)

Sarah Sharpe, Deputy Executive Director
Central California Asthma Collaborative

Elected Official Sign-on
Igor Tregub, Councilmember District 4
City of Berkeley

Cecilia Lunaparra, Councilmember District 7
City of Berkeley

Gayle McLaughlin, Former Mayor (2007-2015) and
Councilmember (2005-2007, 2015-2017, 2021-2024)
City of Richmond

Soheila Bana, Councilmember District 4
City of Richmond

Claudia Jiménez, Councilmember District 6
City of Richmond