
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, UTILITIES AND
COMMUNICATIONS**

**Senator Josh Becker, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular**

Bill No:	SB 491	Hearing Date:	3/24/2025
Author:	Laird		
Version:	2/19/2025	Introduced	
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Sarah Smith		

SUBJECT: State Energy Resources Conservation and Development Commission:
chair: report to the Legislature

DIGEST: This bill requires the chair of the California Energy Commission (CEC) to annually appear before the relevant legislative policy committees to report on specified activities of the CEC.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the CEC, consisting of five members appointed by the Governor, and specifies the duties of the CEC. Every two years, the Governor must designate a chair and vice chair from the CEC's membership. The CEC must appoint a public adviser every three years to carry out certain public engagement duties. (Public Resources Code §25200 et. seq.)
- 2) Requires the CEC to assess trends in energy consumption and analyze the social, economic, and environmental consequences of these trends. The CEC must establish energy conservation measures, including building and appliance energy efficiency standards, and recommend additional conservation measures to the Governor and the Legislature. (Public Resources Code §25216)
- 3) Establishes the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), consisting of five members appointed by the Governor, and authorizes the CPUC to fix rates and establish rules for public utilities. (Article 12 of the California Constitution)
- 4) Requires the CPUC to prepare an annual report on its activities and performance and requires the president of the CPUC to appear annually before the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature to present the report. (Public Utilities Code §§910 and 321.6)

This bill:

- 1) Requires the chair of the CEC to appear annually before the relevant policy committees of the Legislature to report on the CEC's responsibilities, including the following activities:
 - a) Research, development, and demonstration.
 - b) Building and appliance efficiency standards.
 - c) Electricity and natural gas demand forecasts.
 - d) Siting of thermal powerplants.
 - e) Implementation of the Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) Program and energy labeling.
 - f) Transportation fuels and alternative fuel vehicles.
- 2) Requires the CEC's chair to report on the CEC's activities from the prior year and efforts taken to solicit input from Californians in diverse parts of the states.
- 3) Requires the CEC's chair to report on the successes and challenges encountered in carrying out its responsibilities and outreach efforts.

Background

This bill requires the chair of the CEC to appear annually before the Legislature to report on the CEC's activities. The CEC plays a significant role in the state's energy policy and administers multiple programs that impact the duties of the CPUC and the California Independent System Operator (CAISO). Under existing law, the CEC's duties have long included the following:

- Analyzing state demand and supply for electricity and natural gas;
- Administering the RPS program;
- Environmental review and certification of proposed large thermal power plants;
- Establishment of building and appliance efficiency standards that promote energy conservation;
- Coordination and development of zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) technology and infrastructure; and
- Managing the largest state-level energy research and development program in the nation.

In recent years, the Legislature has expanded the CEC's duties to include a number of new duties related fuel markets, energy reliability, and renewable energy development. These new duties include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Administering a streamlined permitting process for certain large-scale renewable energy projects that opt-in for state-level certification.
- Establishing the Strategic Reliability Reserve to fund sources that enable the shifting or reduction of net peak demand during critical reliability events. The CEC administers two programs that receive funding from the Strategic Reliability Fund: the Demand Side Grid Support (DSGS) and Distributed Electricity Backup Assets (DEBA) programs.
- Establishing the Division of Petroleum Market Oversight (DPMO) and collecting and analyzing petroleum refinery data, monitoring fuel pricing trends, overseeing oil refinery turnaround and maintenance periods, and setting minimum transportation fuel inventory levels for refineries.
- Creating a strategic plan for developing offshore wind resources.
- Setting bidirectional charging requirements on certain electric vehicles (EVs) sold in the state.

The CEC, CPUC, and CAISO each play a critical role in forecasting, planning, and addressing energy demands. Increasingly, policies adopted by one of these agencies will impact the activities of the other energy agencies. For example, the CEC's building and appliance energy efficiency standards may influence utility building decarbonization investments overseen by the CPUC. Greater electrical loads resulting from higher electrification may impact the availability of resources through the CAISO. Targets for certain renewable energy development can impact utility procurement overseen by the CPUC. Despite interrelated impacts between activities undertaken by the CEC, CPUC and CAISO, existing law only requires the CPUC annually appear before the relevant state legislative policy committees. This bill would expand those annual reporting requirements to the CEC.

Prior/Related Legislation

SB 610 (Laird) of 2024 was substantially similar to this bill when heard by this committee. The bill was subsequently amended into a different subject matter. The bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

SB 733 (Hueso) of 2022 as passed by this committee, was substantially similar to this bill. The bill was subsequently amended into a different subject matter. The bill was held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee

SB 708 (Hueso) of 2019 would have required the CAISO to disclose information relating to tariff or rule of conduct violations by market participants or scheduling coordinators and established other transparency requirements. The bill also would have required the CAISO's Chief Executive Officer to appear annually before the

relevant policy committees of the Legislature to report on the CAISO's operations and state of the grid. The bill died in the Assembly.

SB 497 (Bradford) of 2019 was substantially similar to this bill and would have required the CEC to appear annually before the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature to report on specified activities. The bill died in the Assembly.

SB 376 (Bradford) of 2017 was substantially similar to this bill and would have required the CEC to appear annually before the appropriate policy committees of the Legislature to report on specified activities. The bill died in the Assembly.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT:

None received

OPPOSITION:

None received

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: According to the author:

“Senate Bill 491 requires the Chair of the California Energy Commission to appear before the Legislature annually. This bill ensures meaningful engagement between the state's primary energy planning entity and the Legislature to facilitate progress towards meeting our clean energy goals. In times of rapidly changing climate, collaboration is more urgent and important than ever to ensure Californian's have access to safe, reliable, and affordable energy.”

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