



The Public
**ADVOCATES
OFFICE**

*The Voice of Consumers
Making a Difference*

Annual Presentation to the
Senate Energy, Utilities and
Communications Committee

June 4, 2020 · Elizabeth Echols, Director



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OUR MISSION

Obtain the lowest possible rate for service consistent with safety, reliability, and the state's environmental goals.

WHAT WE DO



Staff inspection at PG&E.



Staff monitors main replacement to ensure reliable water delivery.



Staff inspects Booster Station so you have fresh clean water when you need it.

2019 SAVINGS



Total customer savings was over \$4.3 billion through reduced utility revenues and avoided rate increases.



POLICY EFFORTS

Achieve the Best Value for Consumers by Ensuring:

- Access & Affordability
- Safety and Reliability
- Environmental Goals





ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

Energy Rate Cases

- Saved customers over \$4 billion across four general rate case proceedings: Southern California Edison Company (SCE), Southern California Gas Company (SoCalGas), San Diego Gas & Electric Company (SDG&E), and Bear Valley Electric Service.
- Recommended rejection of PG&E's proposal for a 500% increase to the minimum monthly charge for residential customers (from \$3 to \$15). The CPUC adopted our modest proposal for a \$1 increase.

Water Rate Cases

- Saved customers over \$97 million (\$272 per connection) in three general rate case proceedings: Suburban Water Systems, Golden State Water Company, and Great Oaks Water Company.

Merger of T-Mobile and Sprint

- Opposed the merger because, among other reasons, it would compromise public safety, reduce competition, and increase prices, particularly in the pre-paid wireless market which serves many lower income customers. The CPUC approved the merger.

Electric Rate and Bill Impacts

- Advocated that the CPUC require utilities to provide a running total of all proposed and approved increases to customer bills to enable the CPUC to identify potential significant increases to customers' rates and bills.



SAFETY AND RELIABILITY

Protecting Customers from the Financial Impacts of COVID-19

- Successfully urged the CPUC to provide immediate bill relief to electricity customers through early distribution of the 2020 Climate Credit. Instead of receiving a climate credit in fall 2020, residential customers will receive climate credits totaling \$35 to \$167 depending on the utility during May and June to help reduce their bills.
- Proposed a program that would allow for bill arrearage forgiveness, as long as the customer worked with the utility on a schedule to pay a portion of the arrearages. The program has the dual benefit of avoiding service disconnections and reducing the amount of debt the utility ultimately writes-off. The CPUC is set to approve the program at its June 11th meeting.

Emergency Disaster Relief Program Proceeding

- Recommended the CPUC exercise its authority to require wireless service providers to install back-up power in their cell sites and critical network nodes and to employ all means necessary to ensure wireless service is maintained for at least 72 hours from the start of an electrical outage (CPUC decision pending).

Protocols and Procedures for Voluntary Power Shutoffs

- Urged the CPUC to assess the utilities' decision-making processes, including a review of their operations, maintenance, impacted infrastructure, and compliance with their current wildfire mitigation plans.
- Recommended the CPUC require utilities to immediately ensure the accuracy of their lists of customers who participate in programs for persons with special energy needs due to medical conditions (medical baseline customers).
- Advocated that the utilities conduct an examination to identify vulnerable customers beyond those who are on medical baseline.
- Recommended the CPUC require more precise mapping of voluntary power shutoffs. The CPUC adopted this recommendation.



2019 Wildfire Mitigation Plans

- Identified numerous deficiencies and concerns about the proposed plans filed by the six investor-owned electric utilities ranging from failing to provide risk reduction cost efficiencies to insufficient data to support the plans' objectives. The proceeding is ongoing.

PG&E Locate and Mark Investigation

- Identified that PG&E's practices were not consistent with standard protocols, and in some instances resulted in excavators hitting PG&E's unmarked or improperly marked infrastructure.
- Opposed a settlement agreement that fails to address potential systemic issues. The CPUC adopted changes to the settlement agreement that addressed many of our concerns regarding systemic issues.

PG&E Bankruptcy and Safety Culture Investigation

- Recommended a process to establish performance requirements to determine if PG&E should continue to serve California and to establish a competitive process in which other entities could compete to serve California.
- The CPUC adopted a process similar to our proposal. PG&E's license to operate can now be revoked if it continues to have extensive safety failures.

SoCalGas Aliso Canyon Storage Facility Investigation

- Demonstrated that SoCalGas Gas did not conduct the necessary analysis that could have uncovered corrosion in one of the wells that leaked, and that the utility is missing critical safety information. The proceeding is ongoing.

California Water Service Company General Rate Case

- Reached settlement with the utility that included funding to support the Chromium 6 treatment plants in Dixon and Willows (CPUC decision pending).

Great Oaks Water Company General Rate Case

- Reached settlement to require the utility to deploy a new system-wide disinfection process (the CPUC adopted our settlement).



ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

Interconnection Rules for Distributed Energy Resources

- Urged the CPUC to streamline the interconnection procedure to integrate Distributed Energy Resources (DERs) efficiently while minimizing cost increases to ratepayers.
- Recommended load management approaches for electric vehicles that will help avoid the need for distribution upgrades and will improve grid sustainability through coordinated charging. The CPUC adopted our recommendation.

Transportation Electrification

- Entered into a settlement agreement regarding SDG&E's medium- and heavy-duty EV infrastructure program resulting in \$60 million in customer savings while doubling SDG&E's original program goals. The CPUC adopted the settlement.
- Recommended that utilities prioritize the installation of EV charging infrastructure in schools and state parks located in disadvantaged communities. The CPUC adopted our recommendation.

Integrated Resource Planning

- Objected to the procurement of new fossil fuel resources to meet system reliability needs.
- Recommended that any new projects involving existing fossil fuel generation be paired with storage projects that decrease GHG emissions, and projects that increase the efficiency of existing fossil fuel generation.

Energy Efficiency

- Continued to be a driving force in ensuring programs reduce customers' bills and spur innovation to meet the state's GHG reduction goals.
- Pushed for increased program benefits, and the elimination of wasteful spending on administrative costs.



2020 PRIORITIES

Achieve the best value for California consumers across the regulated industry sectors – energy, water, and telecommunications consistent with the state’s safety, reliability, and environmental goals.

- Affordable and Equitable Access
- Safe and Reliable Service
- State’s Environmental Goals



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