

Senate Utilities, Energy & Communications Committee, Steven Bradford, Chair
CPUC Oversight Hearing: Emphasis on Energy Affordability
1021 O Street, Room 1200 • February 28, 2023

Take Action to Make Energy Bills Affordable

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Thank You, Chair Bradford, for your leadership in holding CPUC accountable to affordability.

- 1) TURN believes we can and should live in a society where power, broadband and phone services are treated as basic human rights for all families.
- 2) Take action to prevent cost of greening the grid from cutting off Black, Brown and other vulnerable populations from grid, because their monthly bills are too doggone high!

1) Legislative Action: Use funds already allocated to help ratepayers hit by recent rate spikes.

- 1) Use your authority to designate the remaining \$600 million of \$1.2 billion already allocated for rate relief to help CARE, FERA, and LIHEAP recipients recently hit by winter rate spikes by extending the dates covered to March 2023.
- 2) Whatever you do: **Please don't let the Governor's budget proposal pull back unspent funds that have already been allocated for ratepayer relief!**
- 3) Hold utility shareholders accountable for covering wildfire costs caused by negligence.
 - a. Authorize TURN, and other groups, to fully participate in Office of Energy Safety proceedings on wildfire safety, similar to their participation in CPUC proceedings.

2) CPUC Action: Don't let Sky be the Limit!—For size of utility requests, and approvals.

- 1) Limit each utility to submit no more than three ratesetting applications each year.
 - a. In 2022, major utilities submitted over 44 separate Applications impacting rates.
- 2) Limit rate increases to Social Security Cost of Living Adjustment.
 - a. At very least, require utilities justify every dollar requested over rate of inflation.
- 3) Control utility spending by applying the recently updated Benefit–Cost ratio tool to every spending proposal submitted by utilities.
 - a. Applying Benefit-Cost ratio to each proposed utility spending project, allows the Commission to assess whether the benefit to ratepayers is worth increasing their bills, so that only the most cost-effective projects are approved.
- 4) Tighten oversight of balancing accounts by requiring that any utility spending that exceeds approved limits be submitted for review.
 - a. Balancing accounts, especially with a reasonableness band, encourage utility spending beyond forecasts, adding to the affordability crisis.
- 5) Prioritize affordability by supporting the ability of ratepayer, climate and equity advocates to participate in CPUC proceedings.
 - a. Process the backlog of 225 Intervenor Compensation claims, some of which have languished for months and years so advocates can maintain financial solvency.

Please contact TURN for additional concrete solutions to the energy bills affordability crisis.