

Oregon CUB

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Our Mission:

*CUB works to make
Oregon utilities affordable,
accessible, reliable, and clean.*

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The Bear Facts

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
OREGON CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARD

Fall 2022

Heat, Rising Rates, Environmental Protections

As we move from summer to fall, our seasons have fundamentally changed. When I was born, the typical Willamette Valley summer had 7 days above 90 degrees. This year, we have seen 26 days above 90 degrees.

Our goal at CUB is to protect utility customers from the immediate consequences of climate change. While working to clean up our utilities, we must also keep bills affordable.

To address climate change, CUB is focusing on cleaning up the energy supply. We helped develop the 2021 100% Clean Electric bill, which will slash utility emissions. We are also working to eliminate the subsidies for expanding the fossil natural gas system.

Air conditioning is now necessary to protect the health of Oregonians. The Emergency Heat Relief legislation CUB helped pass this year is bringing cooling to low-income homes.

But we also worry about the cost of winter heating. With historic rate increases proposed from Oregon's largest utilities, customers could soon face higher bills. CUB is working hard to reduce these increases.

This work is far from done. CUB will keep fighting for affordable, accessible, reliable, and clean utilities for Oregon.



Regards,

Bob Jenks

Executive Director, Oregon CUB

Preventing Shutoffs

Recently, CUB has been hard at work to stop utility disconnections. After a winning a historic utility shutoff freeze in 2020, CUB is advocating for permanent changes to protect customers from losing critical utilities.

This year, regulators are looking to permanently change rules around utility disconnections, payment plans, late fees, and deposits. Proposed rule changes include ending late payments, eliminating deposits, and limiting reconnection fees for low-income customers. Also included is limiting shutoffs for vulnerable customers and preventing shutoffs in many extreme weather events.

Utility shutoffs are more than an inconvenience - they are incredibly painful, dangerous, and expensive for families. Low-income households and people of color are most likely to have their power shut off. These proposed rule changes would be a major win for Oregon households. CUB will continue to advocate for the changes to go even further.

CUB Works to Prevent Winter Bill Shock

Winter heating bills are going up. CUB is demanding that rate shock be considered when setting rates. Rate shock occurs when utility bills increase faster than customers can handle them.

Because winter is the season with the higher energy bills, CUB is asking regulators to take action to prevent rate shock before the winter heating season.



*Winter heating bills are coming.
Your support will help CUB keep them manageable.*

Set rates at the lowest level possible. For some costs, such as the profits, the regulators identify a reasonable range and sets rates within that range. With massive rate increases, regulators should set rates at the lowest level legally possible.

Delay rate increases until after the winter. Traditionally, Oregon has increased rates for gas utilities in November and for electric utilities in January. CUB is asking regulators to delay some of these increases.

Avoid unnecessary costs. CUB has been working to eliminate unnecessary costs like promotional advertising from NW Natural rates. We are also trying to stop a series of proposals from Pacific Power that shift costs and risks onto customers.

While CUB is unable to stop rates from going up at all this winter, we are working to ensure that winter heating bills are as affordable as possible.

PGE Rate Case (Major Victories!)

Last year, PGE requested to increase customer rates by \$80 million. After 14 months of advocating, CUB brought the increase down to just \$10 million.

In the PGE Rate Case, CUB Won:

- \$70 million in savings
- Ending deposits for residential customers
- Lowering customer risk for expensive repairs after large storms

Thank you to all of the CUB supporters who sent in comments to regulators and donated to this campaign.
You helped make this major victory possible.

CUB Fights Historic Pacific Power Bill Increases

This year, Pacific Power asked for its largest rate increase in 20 years. The utility is asking for a 14% bill increase (\$106 million). CUB is hard at work advocating for customers like you.

CUB is asking regulators to:

- Protect customers from rate shock
- Reduce Pacific Power's profit margins
- Stop rule changes that would shift financial risk to customers
- Reject an increase in fixed bill charges



*Help CUB win a victory for
Pacific Power customers!*

This case will continue this fall. **We need your support to continue pushing back to against this threat for Pacific Power customers.**

Help CUB Stop Increasing Bills

Dear CUB Members,

This year, Oregon utilities have asked for historic increases to customers' bills. CUB needs your help to fight for affordable utilities for Oregon.

Donate today to help stop historic utility bill increases!

For profit utilities are always looking to make more money from customers. As your consumer advocate, CUB has been hard at work fighting historic bill increases this year. NW Natural customers are facing a 42% increase. The cost of natural gas is skyrocketing. Pacific Power is asking for the largest bill increase in 20 years.

Already, we have seen major successes thanks your support. CUB's advocacy saved PGE customers \$70 million this year. In the NW Natural rate case, we have already prevented the utility from increasing their profit margins. But, the work is not over.

We need your support to protect Oregon households, NOT add more costs to gas bills.

As customers continue to face rising inflation, even more will continue to struggle to make ends meet as bills increase. We need your help to keep Oregonians connected with affordable utilities.

The fight against these rate increases is long, hard work, with some processes taking more than a year. We need your help to keep up the pressure and secure more wins for customers like you.

We're up against utilities with a lot of money and resources.



Donate today to help CUB push back rising bills!



Energy Policy for the People

University Place Hotel and Conference Center

oregoncub.org/cubcon22

#CUBCon22

October 14, 2022

8:00am - 5:00pm

In person at University Place Hotel and Conference Center in downtown Portland.

Register at oregoncub.org/cubcon22

Energy Policy for the People

The days of top-down energy policy are over. Oregon's 100% Clean Electricity law and other major pieces of legislation passed in recent years have been led and developed by grassroots communities. Increasingly, community voices are showing up and seeking more pathways to get involved. But it's clear that more needs to be done.

[Click here to donate to CUB!](#)

NW Natural Seeks 42% Rate Increase

This year has been a bad year for NW Natural customers. Since October 2021, the gas utility has asked for three major bill increases – totaling a 42% requested increase. CUB has been hard at work fighting these proposed increases, but the work is not yet over.

Last November, NW Natural rates went up by 13% to reflect increases in the wholesale cost of gas. In December, the utility filed a case to raise rates another 12%, including its profit margin, executive bonuses, and advertising budget.

CUB has been fighting this latest increase and has successfully reduced it – but the case isn't yet over.

Now NW Natural is proposing an additional 16% increase to cover rising wholesale natural gas prices. From extreme weather increasing demand to the war in Ukraine, the cost of methane is going up.

An increase this large is too much. We will continue to push for affordable, accessible, reliable, and clean utilities for Oregon.

Read more inside to learn what CUB is doing to protect utility customers like you in a historic year for proposed utility bill increases!



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