



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER
OF THE OREGON
CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARD

THE BEAR FACTS

SPRING
2024

DEAR CUB MEMBERS

Although we are only a few months in, 2024 has already shaped up to be one of the most exciting in my time at CUB. This year, we have some big opportunities to make deep and lasting changes to Oregon's utilities.

2024 is projected to be one of the more challenging years for utility customers. We have **THREE OF SIX MAJOR UTILITIES REQUESTING DOUBLE-DIGIT BILL INCREASES (PAGE 3)**. We're seeing a troubling pattern of regulators not considering customer impacts when approving utility spending. Oregon households are struggling to afford bills after multiple years of big rate hikes.

But we are also seeing more opportunities than ever to make big strides in customer protection. Between public outcry and CUB's efforts, **WE ARE WELL-POISED TO MAKE MAJOR REFORMS TO OREGON'S UTILITY REGULATION (PAGE 1)**. Already, in the Oregon Legislature, **WE WON ON MAJOR CONSUMER PROTECTION BILLS (PAGE 2)**. This includes Right to Repair, which has been a CUB priority for nearly five years.

In the year of **CUB'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY (PAGE 4)**, we have a lot to celebrate. I have been a part of CUB since the beginning. I know many of you have too. No matter how long you have been a member, thank you for your support.



Bob Jenks
Executive Director, Oregon CUB

REFORMING OREGON UTILITY REGULATION

As utility bills in Oregon continue to rise in 2024, CUB is asking tough questions from state regulators. Currently, utility regulators spend a lot of time looking at many requests from utilities to raise rates. This analysis can take up to 10 months in many cases. **BUT OVERALL AFFORDABILITY TO CUSTOMERS IS NOT PART OF THE EQUATION FOR REGULATORS.**

We need to look at utility bills holistically—before we see rates skyrocket. Right now, regulators are not working holistically. We do not have a clear picture of what to expect from utility bills as utilities submit sometimes dozens of increase requests each year. Within each of these requests, regulators look at each line item, but not on the overall impact.

Regulators already have tools that they can use to lower the impact on customers. Our goal is to force them to use these options to protect customers' ability to afford necessary services.

REGULATOR'S TOOLKIT

- DIRECTING UTILITIES TO CUT EXPENSES
- DELAYING INCREASES
- LIMITING PROFITS IF CUSTOMER COSTS ARE HIGH



MAKING UTILITIES
AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE,
RELIABLE, & CLEAN FOR
THE PEOPLE IN OREGON

THE BEAR FACTS

SPRING
2024

CUB PROTECTS CUSTOMERS IN THE OREGON LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The 2024 Oregon State legislative session has officially ended. While the short session was just 35 days, CUB is proud to say that **ALL OF THE BILLS WE SUPPORTED ARE ON THEIR WAY TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE.**



RIGHT TO REPAIR (SB 1596)

After years of work, the Oregon Legislature has finally passed the **RIGHT TO REPAIR ACT (SB 1596)**, the strongest of its kind in the country! Now, Oregonians will have the ability to repair our electronics either ourselves or through a third party. Repairing home and personal electronics is less expensive and it is better for the environment.



CLIMATE BUDGET: HEALTHY HOMES AND HEAT PUMPS FOR RENTERS (SB1530)

As part of SB 1530, several Climate Budget requests passed with overwhelming support. The **HEALTHY HOMES PROGRAM** received \$15 million to support affordable energy bills and resilient housing through whole-home energy upgrades. The bill also provides \$4 million for **OREGON'S RESIDENTIAL HEAT PUMP FUND** and \$3.5 million to provide air conditioners and air filters to Oregonians in need.

BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS PERMITTING PATHWAYS (HB 4015)

HB 4015 passed, making it easier to build battery storage by integrating battery storage system permits with existing renewable energy projects. **BATTERY ENERGY STORAGE SYSTEMS** allow renewable energy to be stored and used later. This increases resilience, helps prevent blackouts, and makes renewable energy more available when we need it.



Family Financial Protection Act (SB 1595)

The **FAMILY FINANCIAL PROTECTION ACT (SB 1595)** passed out of the Legislature this session. It will help give Oregonians more fairness in debt collections by updating our laws to ensure folks can get back on their feet. CUB supports this new law because it can protect customers sent to collections for outstanding utility bills.





MAKING UTILITIES
AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE,
RELIABLE, & CLEAN FOR
THE PEOPLE IN OREGON

THE BEAR
FACTS
SPRING 2024

UTILITIES CONTINUE TO ASK FOR MORE ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC: ENOUGH IS ENOUGH.

Despite an 18% increase in January, skyrocketing bills, and heavy outcry from customers, Portland General Electric is asking for another rate increase of 7.2% for residential customers on January 1, 2025. Rates for PGE households have already gone up by 30% from December 2022 to January 2024. Now is not the time to request even more from Oregon households.

PGE has requested \$202 million under the guise of needing more money for battery storage projects. Only about \$17 million is for battery storage. The other 92% of the increase would go to higher profit margins, shifting financial risk away from shareholders, and a mechanism to make it easier to increase customers' bills every January.

IDAHO POWER: 27%

This year, Idaho Power is trying to raise rates for Eastern Oregon customers. An average household would see an increase of \$30 per month (27% increase). The increase covers over a decade of costs as this is the utility's first request since 2011.

An increase of this size could be incredibly damaging for customers. Eastern Oregon is already one of the most energy-burdened areas in the state. New bills would go up higher than \$30 during months when heating or air conditioning is turned on. An increase of this size could lead to a rise in disconnections.

PACIFIC POWER: 17%

Pacific Power is asking for \$304 million (17%) from customers that would go into effect next January. Courts found the utility grossly negligent in the 2020 Labor Day Fires and Pacific Power is facing a lot of money for damages. Now, it is scrambling to protect itself from future damages and attempting to charge customers for many wildfire-related costs.

Of the increase, over half is dedicated to wildfire-related costs. Pacific Power is asking for money for wildfire mitigation, increased insurance costs, and a fund for future wildfire damages. CUB is working to ensure customers are not held responsible for the gross negligence of Pacific Power.

NW NATURAL: 21%

NW Natural is asking for an additional \$110 mil (21%) from Oregon households this year. The gas utility wants to increase profit margins by tens of millions each year. NW Natural is also asking customers to pay for modernizing technology and upgrading its data centers, both of which CUB is scrutinizing.

NW Natural is again requesting more money from existing customers to subsidize growing its system. Last year, regulators cut this subsidy and agreed with CUB that this is bad for customers. Every new building adds new emissions, which must be cut under state climate regulations. NW Natural has no realistic plan to cut emissions and should not be allowed to continue to expand its system with customer money.



MAKING UTILITIES
AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE,
RELIABLE, & CLEAN FOR
THE PEOPLE IN OREGON

THE BEAR
FACTS
SPRING 2024

CELEBRATE CUB'S 40TH ANNIVERSARY

For 40 years, CUB has worked hard to advocate for affordable, accessible, reliable, and clean utilities for people in Oregon. We've saved customers \$9.8 billion, pushed back against rate increases, and advocated for customers' interests in the Oregon Legislature and the Public Utility Commission. And we'll keep advocating for years to come!

As CUB turns 40 this year, we invite you to join us in helping to raise \$40,000 to help us continue to build our capacity. We rely on the support of our members to fund much of our advocacy work. Your donations allow us to work in the legislature, build critical partnerships, and more

On May 15, we also invite you to celebrate CUB's legacy and future:

40th Anniversary Fundraiser
May 15, 2024 - 6-8 pm
Ecotrust Building, Portland

RSVP for CUB's 40th at oregoncub.org/events. Tickets are \$40 and all proceeds will contribute toward CUB's \$40,000 fundraising goal.!



THE BEAR
FACTS
SPRING 2024