



**OREGON CUB**  
610 SW BROADWAY, SUITE 400  
PORTLAND, OR 97205

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Portland, OR  
Permit No. 2134

## CUB ENERGY POLICY CONFERENCE

### ENERGY POLICY FOR PEOPLE & PLANET

Our energy systems are built for one purpose: providing energy to **people**. This energy is essential for our daily lives. We rely on utilities to provide safe and reliable service so we can stay safe, healthy, and comfortable. With the rollout of climate regulation, we are also moving toward utilities that are safe, healthy, and beneficial to our planet. But how can we maintain our systems to work for people who use them?

October 4, 2024  
9 am -5 pm  
Leftbank Annex, Portland

**Energy Policy for People & Planet** will explore the intersections between utility planning, customer affordability, and climate protections. How can we balance reducing emissions without raising disconnection rates? How can the planning process help create a more sustainable rate making process? And how can we make the most of utility regulation to benefit customers and utilities?

Buy your tickets at [oregoncub.org/conference](https://oregoncub.org/conference) today!



THE BEAR  
SUMMER 2024  
FACTS



QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER  
OF THE OREGON  
CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARD

THE BEAR  
SUMMER 2024  
FACTS

## DEAR CUB MEMBERS

This year has been a difficult year for many people. Everything is becoming more expensive, and energy bills are no exception. We've seen record levels of utilities shutting off households' power because Oregonians are struggling to afford their bills. But I have never been more proud of and inspired by CUB members like you.

At CUB, this year has been the busiest in my nearly 30 years here. Our team is working on more cases than ever before to advocate for safe, fair, and affordable utilities for Oregonians. Utilities are asking for more money more often with **three major rate increase cases still ongoing (page X)**. We are pushing for big changes as **wildfire mitigation has left communities in the dark (page X)**. We're also engaging with community to **share stories of how utility issues impact Oregonians (page X)**.

And you have been with us every step of the way. CUB members like you have flooded public comments on utility requests for more money. By August, we have seen nearly 5,000 people telling regulators that enough is enough. Being a CUB member is so much more than a donation. Through a challenging year, CUB supporters have given us the strength, encouragement, and people power to get the job done.

Thank you for your tireless support of our work to make utilities affordable, accessible, reliable, and clean.



*Bob Jenks*

Bob Jenks  
Executive Director, Oregon CUB

## CUB PUSHES FOR CUSTOMER DEBT FORGIVENESS PROGRAMS

Spring of 2024 saw the highest level of people being disconnected from power for non-payment since reporting started in 2018. PGE alone shut off more than 4,700 households in April 2024 vs 1,313 in April 2023. Many of these families had to go without electricity for over a week, simply because energy bills were too high for them to afford.

**Electricity is not a luxury -- it's a human right.**

**This fall, regulators are looking at solutions to require utilities to create debt forgiveness programs.** Over the last few years, we have helped create bill discount programs for customers of for-profit utilities. But with disconnections at a record-breaking high, we need to address the debt too many are struggling with as utilities keep asking for more money.

Adding programs to forgive past-due bills will help thousands of Oregonians keep their power on. CUB will be there every step of the way fighting for stronger protections.





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

THE BEAR  
SUMMER 2024  
FACTS

## SUMMER CASE UPDATES UTILITIES ASK FOR RATE HIKES

This year, four of Oregon's six for-profit utilities have asked to raise customers' bills. CUB is still fighting to lower three of them.

We are asking regulators to limit rate increases to 10% or 7% plus inflation, whichever is lowest. This cap would apply to the total increase customers see over a year. Any requests over that cap would be pushed into the next year or beyond.



### PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC

After several updates, Portland General Electric (PGE) is now **asking to raise billing rates for all customers by 10.9%** in 2025, up from its originally requested 7.4%. CUB is pushing regulators to reign in skyrocketing spending by PGE and recentring peoples' ability to afford critical energy services.

**This double-digit proposal comes on the heels of a record number of households shutoffs.** The higher request is from the increased natural gas costs.

New billing rates could start on January 1, 2025. After the effects of January's rate hike and ice storm, we need to stop increases in the middle of winter.

### PACIFIC POWER

After a lot of public pressure, Pacific Power is **now trying to raise rates by 14.9%** for Oregon households, down from its initial ask of 21.6%. **A typical household could see an average increase of \$20.33 each month.**

Pacific Power has taken out a controversial wildfire fund that would have cost customers \$77.7 mill per year. It also lowered its ask to increase profits.

While this reduction is a big win for Oregonians, it is certainly not enough. **Since 2021, Pacific Power has raised rates by 35%.** CUB will continue to advocate for lower bills for customers.

### NW NATURAL

NW Natural customers will see new billing rates starting November 1. While the final number won't be decided by regulators until October, we expect it to be lower than the initial request of 18%. **CUB and environmental advocates signed an initial agreement with NW Natural that could result in a 7% increase** in household gas bills. There are still remaining issues regulators must rule on, so the final number is still uncertain.

The remaining issues are major CUB priorities: capping rate increases to 10%, eliminating customer-paid subsidies to grow the gas system, and expanding bill discount programs for low-income customers. Eliminating these subsidies not only saves customers money now but also has positive environmental impacts for decades.

### IDAHO POWER RATES CHANGE OCTOBER 15

This year, Idaho Power is raising rates for the first time in over a decade. Thanks to the work of many advocates, including CUB, customers in Eastern Oregon will only see a **3.68% increase** in 2024. **That's an added \$4.13 per month for an average household.** New rates start October 15.



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

THE BEAR  
SUMMER 2024  
FACTS

## NEW RULES FOR UTILITIES WILDFIRE MITIGATION PLANS



### What is a Wildfire Mitigation Plan?

Wildfire mitigation plans are meant to show how electric utilities plan to handle wildfire danger in their service areas. Utilities are required by law to file these plans every year. Plans must show strategies to reduce wildfire risk and collaborate with communities.

### New Rules Must Include Community Input

This wildfire season, communities like Talent were left without power in 100+ degree heat. While the intent was to reduce the risk of wildfires, these planned shutoffs created new safety issues. **Preventing wildfires should not make us less safe.** Our communities need to be consulted and informed of how our utilities plan for wildfires.

This summer, regulators are beginning to address the issues with utilities' wildfire mitigation plans. CUB, NW Energy Coalition, and other advocates are asking regulators to improve the process and tighten requirements for utilities' wildfire mitigation plans. We are working to make sure that these plans are made to support community needs and solutions, and do so affordably.

**CUB and the NW Energy Coalition are calling on regulators to center people in wildfire mitigation plans.** We are asking that utilities:

- Include communities' input on strategies when creating plans
- Detail plans for comprehensive outreach to communities after plans are created
- Expand access and coordination for resources, such as Community Resource Centers, for public safety power shutoffs



## NOTES FROM OREGON COMMUNITY MEMBERS

“ I AM CONCERNED ABOUT UTILITY RATE INCREASES THAT MAY STEM FROM THE COST OF CORPORATE NEGLIGENCE IN THE CREATION OF WILDFIRES.

I AM ALSO FOND OF CUB BECAUSE I WORKED TO ESTABLISH A CUB IN MISSOURI IN 1981-82. [...] THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND CUB WERE AS SOLID THEN AS THEY ARE TODAY.

- ARTHUR TOWERS  
CUB SUPPORTER

“ I AM A SENIOR CITIZEN, ON A VERY FIXED INCOME. I ALSO HAVE A CHRONIC RESPIRATORY DISEASE ALTHOUGH I WAS NEVER A SMOKER.

THE HEAT WAVES IN OREGON EXACERBATE MY LUNG DISEASE. I AM BLESSED TO HAVE AIR CONDITIONING BUT I CAN'T USE IT BECAUSE OF PGE'S EXORBITANT UTILITY RATES.

- KATHRYN CHAMBERS  
PGE CUSTOMER