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THE BEAR FACTS

SUMMER 2025 NEWSLETTER

CUB Celebrates legislative Wins with the Governor

In August, Governor Tina Kotek hosted a ceremonial signing that featured all four of CUB's priority energy affordability bills.

"We're going to pay attention to what the costs are for low-income households and working households. We're going to make sure that our big companies are held accountable, so customers know what to expect and when to expect changes that are fair."

- Gov. Kotek in a statement to OPB



This year's success is a massive contrast to 2024, marked by record shutoffs and high energy bills. The new laws will reduce energy bills, add emergency assistance funds, and center customers in utility regulation.

THE BEAR FACTS

DEAR CUB MEMBERS

As summer comes to an end, CUB staff are gearing up for a very busy fall and winter. This season change marks the end of an era in utility regulation. We're closing the chapter on prioritizing corporate profits and entering into a new, better era focused on the people utilities serve—people like you.

When we win big, like we did this legislative session, the next challenge is making new policies into new realities. With the new FAIR Energy Act (HB 3179), the **rate increases from NW Natural and Avista** are the last of their kind. Utilities can no longer ask for back-to-back bill increases, slowing the energy affordability crisis.

We are also close to finalizing **permanent disconnection protections**. As energy bills have continued to get more expensive, we've seen record numbers of households shut off for past due bills. Our staff is hard at work to get the strongest rules to protect you.

But it is not all good news, sadly. After more than a year of fighting, **CUB is going toe-to-toe with CenturyLink once again**. We have heard the complaints from landline customers who have consistently been let down by this company. And we're not backing down. Landlines are lifesaving for many rural Oregonians.

None of this work can be done without members like you. Thank you for your support to make utilities affordable, accessible, reliable, and clean.



Bob Jenks

Bob Jenks
Executive Director, Oregon CUB

JOIN US IN ORGANIZING OREGON COMMUNITIES

This year, CUB gained a new Community Organizer who has been empowering people all over Oregon speak out about the utility issues impact them the most.

David Beltrán Barajas is working with communities from Ashland to Ontario to make sure that your voice is heard.

David wants to meet you! Tell us about your experiences, what you want to see from your utilities, and the community groups you're involved with. Work like what we're doing on CenturyLink (read more inside!) is only possible when our communities take a stand against corporate interests.

Set up a meeting with our Community Organizer!
david@oregoncub.org or (503) 482-6853

Ruchi Sadbir from ODOE spotted David at the Hawthorne Street Fair!





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

THE BEAR FACTS

2025 RATE INCREASES END OF AN ERA IN UTILITY REGULATION

NO MORE BACK-TO-BACK BILL INCREASES COMING SOON

Soon, customers of Oregon's for-profit utilities will no longer see the same big, annual increases to their energy bills. October 31, 2025 will be the last time that utilities can ask for major rate increases year after year.

NW NATURAL (4%)

Starting October 31, NW Natural customers will see a modest increase of 4% or about \$3 per month on their bills. This is significantly less than the company originally requested. NW Natural first asked regulators for a 7%. The largest cut was in profit increases.

CUB also won stronger protections and benefits for low-income customers, including **funding for bill payment assistance in the face of federal cuts**.

Over the last five years, NW Natural has asked regulators four times to increase rates. As a result, customers' bills will have increased by 42% since 2021. **Now, NW Natural cannot ask for another big increase until April 31, 2027.**

AVISTA (2% OR -1%)

Avista gas customers in Oregon saw a small change in their rates starting September 1, 2025. Average single-family customers will see an increase of 2% (\$1.36/month) while multi-family customers will see a small decrease of -1% (-\$0.30/month).

Avista originally requested a 7% increase in rates for household customers. **CUB advocates helped cut the requested amount by nearly 50% for all customers.**

The agreement saves customers money, introduces stronger consumer protections, and moves the gas utility toward reducing emissions with fewer pipeline investments. **Avista cannot ask for another big increase until March 1, 2027.**

NEW LAW OF THE LAND: FAIR ENERGY ACT (HB 3179)

The **FAIR Energy Act (HB 3179)** empowers state regulators to help families avoid big increases in energy bills. This law limits how often utilities can ask for bill increases to every three years and stops winter rate hikes. Regulators also have more flexibility to consider economic impacts on customers.

The process of implementing this law will take some time. From now until 2027, utilities must wait 18 months from their last rate increase before asking for a new hike in customers bills. There are some exceptions, like fuel costs, but we do not expect to see any major increases until at least 2027 for all utilities. Starting in 2027, utilities will have to wait three years before their next big request.

WHAT CUB MEMBERS ARE SAYING



"CUB FIGHTS FOR ALL OF US, WHETHER WE ARE SERVED BY AN ELECTRIC UTILITY, GAS UTILITY, PHONE COMPANY, CABLE COMPANY, OR ALL OF THE ABOVE. THEY ARE SMART AND TRULY CARE ABOUT THEIR MEMBERS. BOB IS AN INSPIRING LEADER AND MASTER NEGOTIATOR. GO CUB, GO!"

- DAVE ROBERTSON
CUB MEMBER, PORTLAND



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CENTURYLINK'S BROKEN PROMISES THE FIGHT FOR RELIABLE LANDLINE SERVICE



One Call Can Save a Life

CUB knows that providing quality telephone and internet service is crucial for health, safety, and connecting the community. In a medical emergency or during a fire, reliable phone service can mean the difference between life and death.

CenturyLink must be held accountable for its poor service.

Holding CenturyLink Accountable

CenturyLink, also known as Lumen, has a problem. For years, CenturyLink has failed customers, especially seniors and rural communities, by not delivering on its promise to provide quality landline telephone service.

This is especially true in Jacksonville, Oregon, where, last year, regulators at the Public Utility Commission investigated reliability issues with CenturyLink's landline phone service. Despite orders to fix their faulty service, chronic issues remain, such as dropped calls and service outages, poor customer service, and unreliable landline service.

CenturyLink's poor service quality is part of a larger pattern. **In Washington state, regulators recommended CenturyLink be fined \$15.5 million, one of the largest penalties ever recommended by state regulators**, for violating state law. These fines were levied after a big uptick in complaints by CenturyLink customers.

No more broken promises. We need to hold CenturyLink accountable for fixing its unreliable service, especially when they're asking to increase customers' bills. CUB, along with CenturyLink customers, demand that CenturyLink be **held financially responsible** if they don't fix their faulty service, and that **regulators don't raise rates** until its service is safe and reliable for all Oregon customers.

ARE YOU A CENTURYLINK CUSTOMER?

TELL US YOUR EXPERIENCE AT OUTREACH@OREGONCUB.ORG OR (503) 482-6853



NEW PROTECTIONS AGAINST SHUTOFFS COMING!

Fewer Disconnections with Stronger Protections

This summer, CUB helped secure temporary new rules that limit disconnections during extreme heat and air quality alerts, expand support for those with medical certificates, and more. This comes in addition to expanded temporary customer protections during the winter that CUB helped win last year.

By the end of the year, customers will have stronger permanent rules that will protect people who have fallen behind on their gas and electric bills. Additional rules will help manage utility bill debt before a shutoff.

What is Being Considered:

- Debt Relief Programs:** all utilities will have programs to manage past due amounts
- Extreme Weather Protections:** keeping the heat and power on during extreme temperatures and poor air quality can save lives
- No Reconnection Fees for Low-Income Customers:** when known low-income customers are disconnected, they will not have to pay an additional fee

