

Oregon CUB

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CUB Mission:

As directed by Oregon voters in 1984, Oregon CUB represents the interests of Oregon's residential utility customers before administrative, judicial, and legislative bodies.

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The Bear Facts

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
OREGON CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARD

Spring 2022

CUB Fights Against Utility Rate Hikes

Oregon's three largest utilities, Pacific Power, NW Natural, and Portland General Electric are asking for significant rate increases. These are among the largest rate hikes we have seen in the last 20 years. If not stopped, these increases will make it difficult for many households to afford to heat and cool their homes.

NW Natural Asks Customers to Pay for Bonuses and More Profits

NW Natural is asking to increase customers' bills to fund shareholder profits, executive bonuses, and pro-gas advertising. This proposed 12% rate hike comes on top of last November's 13% increase. This would be more than a 25% increase since 2020. The request includes \$11 million for bonuses, with \$4 million for top executives. NW Natural is asking for more profits annually for its shareholders and wants customers to foot the \$1.1 million bill. And it is asking customers to cover an estimated 30% increase in advertising.



Pacific Power Wants Customers to Take on Risk Instead of Shareholders

Pacific Power just filed a request to raise rates by 14.3%. The increase includes millions of dollars for additional profits for its parent company, owned by the famously wealthy Warren Buffett. Pacific Power is also asking to shift a great deal of risk from shareholders to customers. CUB does not believe that shareholders should get higher payouts while customers shoulder more risk.

Portland General Electric (PGE) Overcharges Customers \$100 Million

PGE is asking to keep \$100 million that it collected from customers for the Boardman power plant since the plant closed in 2020. Unlike the other electric utilities that serve Oregon, PGE refused to take Oregon's only coal plant out of rates when it closed. Customers should not be paying for a power plant that is not serving them. CUB is asking regulators to refund this overcollection to customers over the next three years.

In Other Regulatory News:

CUB Works to End Customer Deposits

CUB was able to get PGE to agree to permanently stop collecting deposits from residential customers. Like most utilities, PGE charged deposits to customers with poor credit to support utility operations. Deposits were equal to two months of expected utility bills for customers who could least afford this cost. CUB argued that this creates an additional barrier to finding housing. On top of fees and deposits from landlords, utility deposits created an added barrier for those already most at risk for housing insecurity. CUB is now seeking to create a similar policy for utilities statewide.

(Regulatory News Cont'd on Pg 3)

CUB Members Are Making a Difference

a letter from Bob Jenks

Dear Members,

We are coming out of another very successful legislation session (see below).

This success is due in large part to CUB members. You told legislators that expanding rural broadband is necessary, that ensuring that households have access to lifesaving cooling is essential, and that the state must take essential steps to decarbonize buildings.

You spoke up. You made a difference. Thank you.

CUB members make all our voices stronger. The CUB team has residential customer advocates with strong technical expertise. However, it is easy to ignore experts. That's why we need you, CUB members. When legislators hear from constituents who are calling to advocate for utility consumers, it makes a huge difference. Your voice helps tell the story of how utilities impact families and communities.

We all still have work to do. Oregon is facing some of the largest rate increases we have seen in 20 years (see Page 1). Utilities are seeking to boost shareholder profits and executive bonuses at customers' expense. CUB's experts are working hard to fight these rate hikes. We appreciate every CUB member who is telling regulators why these increases are unfair. Already, many of you turned out for the public hearing to oppose NW Natural's requested bill increase.

Thank you for your support. Thank you for your advocacy.

Sincerely,



Bob Jenks
Executive Director, Oregon CUB



2022 Short Legislative Session Report

The 2022 Oregon Short Legislative Session wrapped up with passage of three CUB-supported bills that now await Governor Brown's signature. The new laws protect Oregonians' access to cooling resources, support broadband expansion and equity, and direct Oregon to take a closer look at building decarbonization statewide. Your advocacy helped make these policy victories possible, so thank you.

SB 1536 - Emergency Heat Relief for Oregonians

The 2021 heatwave left many people, especially renters, without life-saving access to cooling in or near their homes. This bill allows renters and low-income households to more easily access cooling devices, like air conditioning. Originally two bills, SB 1536 (Emergency Heat Relief for Communities), and HB 4058 (Emergency Heat Relief for Renters) merged into SB 1536 before they passed out of the Legislature.

The new law provides funding for emergency air conditioners, high efficiency heating/cooling systems (heat pumps), targeted home upgrades, and warming and

cooling centers. It requires landlords to provide cooling in new and renovated rental properties, incentivizes landlords installing heat pumps, and provides renter protections around installing portable air conditioners. It also directs the Department of Energy to study the barriers and opportunities to equipping Oregon's older rental housing with cooling.

SB 1518 – REBuilding Task Force

Buildings are the second largest and longest-lasting source of climate pollution in Oregon. More efficient buildings mean lower energy bills now and less pollution for future generations.

(2022 Legislative Report Cont'd on Pg 4)

CUB Needs Your Help Opposing Unreasonable Bill Increases

Two years into a global pandemic, Oregonians are still hurting, and many households continue to find their utilities unaffordable. Despite this, Oregon utilities are asking to significantly increase your bills.

We need your support to stop these unreasonable bill increases in 2022.

With many customers struggling to make ends meet, Oregonians, especially low-income households, shouldn't be on the hook for increasing utility shareholder profits. **Your donations will help CUB continue to fight against these raises to your bills.**

NW Natural: 12 percent rate increase for residential customers

CUB is opposing NW Natural's request to increase customers' bills to fund shareholder profits, executive bonuses, and pro-gas advertising. On top of 2021's 13 percent rate increase, NW Natural wants to raise rates again by nearly \$57 million this year. That's more than a 25 percent increase since 2020, even as we have seen widening wealth disparity across the state.

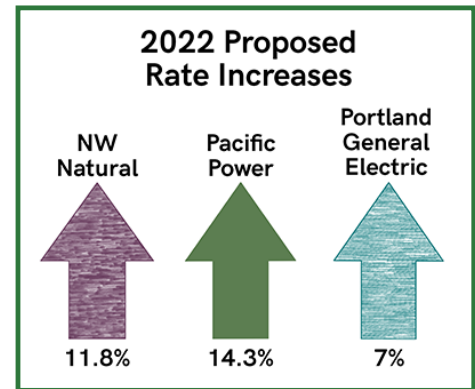
Pacific Power: 14% rate increase for residential customers

CUB is opposing Pacific Power's ask for the largest bill increase in over a decade. The utility is requesting more money to boost profits and push financial risk onto customers. Even as Pacific Power faces several lawsuits from the 2020 Labor Day fires, the company is hoping to push wildfire prevention costs onto Oregonians. Oregon households should not foot the bill to protect Pacific Power's bottom line.

Support CUB's advocacy today to fight for affordable utilities.

Whether you give \$5 or \$500, your membership contribution makes a difference for Oregon consumers. We rely on our members to fight to make Oregon utilities affordable, accessible, reliable, and clean.

Thank you for supporting Oregon CUB!



(Regulatory News Cont'd from Pg 1)

Low-Income Bill Discounts Help Energy Affordability

Last year, CUB helped pass legislation that allows utility regulators to implement programs that help low-income customers afford utility service. While it will take a full year to develop a program for all utilities, some are stepping up with interim proposals for 2022. PGE has proposed a discount of 15-25% off bills, depending on household income levels. Cascade Natural Gas proposed grant programs to help income qualified customers pay for current or past due bills. CUB is eagerly awaiting interim proposals from other utilities.

Correction to CUB 2021 Annual Report

In the Financial Reporting section (Page 2) of CUB's 2021 Annual Report, the income and expenditures graphs were incorrectly labeled as "FY 2021" - **they were in fact from Fiscal Year 2020.** You can view the corrected version of our 2021 Annual Report online at bit.ly/CUB21AR.



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(2022 Legislative Report Cont'd from Pg 2)

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SB 1518 was originally drafted to create a specialty energy efficiency code, the Reach Code, that local governments could voluntarily adopt for their communities. This bill was amended to create the Resilient Energy Efficient Building (REBuilding) Task Force. The task force will examine building greenhouse gas reduction policies, including building codes, and recommend policies for 2023 to make new and existing buildings more climate friendly. And it includes a seat for a residential utility customer advocate, like CUB.

HB 4092 – The Oregon Broadband Bill

Many Oregon households do not have adequate access to broadband. Some people live in rural areas without broadband access and others are not able to afford broadband service. HB 4092, the Oregon Broadband Bill, directly addresses both issues.

This new law sets up Oregon to maximize the \$200 million available federal funds for rural broadband development and establishes a strategic framework for broadband investment. The funds will also support new infrastructure projects, libraries providing free internet access, and expanded bill assistance programs for customers.



HB 4092 will prepare Oregon to receive funding to support libraries providing community internet access.

Thank you for all your help during the 2022 Session! CUB is also incredibly grateful to the legislators and committees that worked to pass these bills, as well as our many coalition partners for their tireless advocacy.