

# TURN ON POWER!

A Newsletter of TURN — The Utility Reform Network

Summer 2023



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**TURN believes we can and should live in a society where electricity, broadband and phone services are treated as basic rights for all families.**



Holding Utilities Accountable

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TURN believes we can and should live in a society where electricity, broadband, and phone services are treated as basic rights for all families.

## INSULATED POWER LINES: FASTER. SAFER. CHEAPER.

Did you know that PG&E's proposal to bury 10,000 miles of power lines will take 10+ years and comes with a price tag of \$18,000 per customer over the next 50 years!

That is why TURN has been working overtime for you to fight for an alternative approach to eliminating utility wildfires that is faster, safer, and cheaper.

### FASTER!

Replacing 10,000 bare steel electrical lines with triple insulated lines can be completed in a fraction of the 10+ years that PG&E has scheduled for burying their power lines.

Quite frankly, I have heard from many communities that they don't have 10 years to wait.

### SAFER.

Taking 2–3 years to insulate lines, instead of a decade to bury them, increases safety for residents of high fire zones, in addition to reducing health hazards from smoke for all residents.

Overhead insulated wires are easier to repair than buried lines after earthquakes and floods.

### CHEAPER.

Insulating 10,000 miles of power lines will save PG&E customers 75% of the costs of burying them. The cost of burying lines is on top of a mountain of other proposed PG&E rate hikes.

TURN members tell me every week they can't afford continued increases to their monthly bills.

We need your support on this! Join the TURN campaign to support a Faster, Safer, Cheaper solution and Stop Wall Street

from pocketing \$60 billion in profits and investment fees.

The CPUC is expected to issue a decision choosing between the faster, safer, cheaper TURN proposal to stop wildfires through insulating power lines and the far slower, less safe, and more expensive PG&E proposal to bury 10,000 miles of power lines.

Visit page 4 to learn how you can take action to control costs and stop wildfires more quickly.

In partnership,



Mark Toney,  
Executive Director





## celebrating our **LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS**

### **SENATOR ANNA M. CABALLERO**

#### DIGITAL EQUITY CHAMPION 2021

Thank you for advancing equity for California video customers! SB28 (2021), which requires the CPUC to collect data on the locations served by cable and broadband providers of TV service, adopt customer service requirements, and adjudicate customer complaints.

### **SENATOR LENA GONZALEZ**

#### DIGITAL EQUITY CHAMPION 2022

Thank you for supporting broadband access for communities that have been left behind! Opposed AB2749 in the Senate Utilities Committee and supported CPUC strategies to invest \$2B of federal dollars in broadband facilities for the communities and individuals it was intended to help.

### **SENATOR JOHN LAIRD**

#### CLIMATE CHANGE CHAMPION

Thank you for accelerating state carbon reduction targets! SB1020, which reduces California's dependency on fossil fuels by increasing the state's green energy consumption to 90% by 2035, to 95% by 2040, and to 100% by 2045.

### **SENATOR MIKE MCGUIRE**

#### PUBLIC SAFETY CHAMPION

Thank you for protecting public safety by requiring real-time reporting of 911 outages! SB670 (2019) and SB341 (2021), require telecom providers to notify 911 and other emergency alert outages to state and local public safety authorities.

### **ASSEMBLYMEMBER REBECCA BAUER-KAHAN**

#### RATEPAYER PROTECTION CHAMPION

Thank you for protecting ratepayers from paying for wildfire or other settlement agreements! AB2083, which prohibits regulated utilities from recovering from ratepayers any costs related to direct payments, fines, or penalties paid as a result of a settlement resolving criminal or civil cases.

### **ASSEMBLYMEMBER CHRISTOPHER WARD**

#### SOLAR EQUITY CHAMPION

Thank you for expanding the benefits of solar and storage to low-income residents! AB2316, which provides all families with the choice to save on monthly bills, reduce their dependence on fossil fuels, and join the fight against climate change.



## Insulated Power Lines: Faster. Safer. Cheaper.

PG&E UNDERGROUNDING: SLOWER. DELAYS SAFETY. HIGH PROFITS.

Insulating power lines to prevent wildfires can be accomplished far more quickly & safely, for 75% lower cost, than the PG&E scheme to bury power lines. PG&E's plan would ultimately cost \$18,000 per customer & pour \$60 billion into Wall Street pockets.

PG&E CEO Patricia K. Poppe last year announced a scheme to bury 10,000 miles of power lines, that will take over 10 years, as a strategy to prevent wildfires. But PG&E's proposal courts disaster for both PG&E customers, already suffering an affordability crisis due to skyrocketing rate increases, and for California's climate strategy that depends upon electricity rates that are cheaper than fossil fuels. There is a faster, safer, cheaper way to preventing wildfires: Insulating overhead power lines.

### Key fact #1: Faster: Insulating power lines is faster than burying them.

Southern California Edison was able to install 3,800 miles of insulated power lines in high fire risk zones in three years. PG&E proposes to take four years to bury the first 1,525 miles of power lines. No matter how you look at it, stringing insulated power lines overhead is far faster than burying power lines underground.

### Key fact #2: Safer: Insulating power lines is safer than burying them.

Between 2020 and 2022, zero wildfires have been ignited by Southern California Edison equipment in the high fire risk zones where they have already installed 4,400 miles of insulated power lines. Partnered with other low-cost fire mitigation technologies, insulating overhead power lines has proven as effective in preventing wildfires as burying them—for a fraction of the cost—in places like wildfire-prone Australia. Because this combination of mitigations can reduce risk in the most dangerous locations faster than burying lines, it is safer.

### Key fact #3: Cheaper: Insulating power lines is cheaper than burying them.

PG&E's current average per-mile cost to insulate power lines is less than 1/4 the cost

of burying the lines underground. Using an equivalent length of overhead line, the cost for insulating power lines is \$800,000/mile compared to a whopping \$3.5 million—or more—for burying insulated power lines.

### Key fact #4: Burying 10,000 miles of power lines will take more than 10 years.

In many high-fire-risk locations, where PG&E plans to bury power lines, the process threatens sensitive environmental habitat, requiring special approvals or mitigations. In remote areas many overhead lines were installed to span canyons and waterways, or to avoid drilling in rocky terrain. For these reasons, any PG&E undergrounding projects may be delayed for years, or may never be approved at all.

### Key fact #5: PG&E proposal is a \$60 billion gift to Wall Street investors, paid by customers.

Although the sticker price for burying 10,000 miles of power lines is \$30 billion—the highest amount ever spent in California on a single utility program—the full price will be closer to \$100 billion, due to Wall Street pocketing \$60 billion in profit and investment fees! That works out to over \$18,000 per customer account over the 50-year life

**PREVENT WILDFIRE:  
FASTER. SAFER. CHEAPER.**

**Insulated Power Lines**

# Prevent Wildfires

**Faster. Safer. Cheaper.**

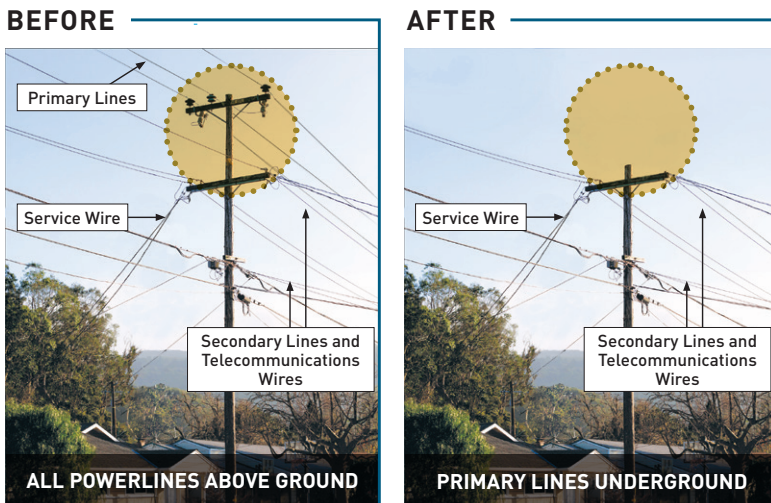


of the project. This cost is in addition to any other annual rate increases PG&E collects over that time. Wall Street makes an EXORBITANT profit, while PG&E customers are responsible for the bill!

**Key fact #6: “Undergrounding” won’t bury all of the wires or remove the poles.**

Even after burying the primary lines, many poles and lines will remain above ground, as PG&E’s own before and after photos show (see figure below).

In most locations, PG&E only plans to bury higher voltage “primary” lines, but generally not lower voltage “secondary” lines or service lines that connect to homes and businesses.



## ▶ TAKE ACTION!

The California Public Utilities Commission and the Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, are now considering the PG&E undergrounding proposal. Each is expected to issue decisions as early as July 2024.

1. Add your name to our TURN petition!



**SCAN HERE:**

[TURN.org/insulated-power-lines-petition](https://TURN.org/insulated-power-lines-petition)

2. Share your comments with the California Office of Energy Safety (Wildfire Safety)



**SCAN HERE:**

[EnergySafety.ca.gov](https://EnergySafety.ca.gov)

3. Share your comments with TURN by mail before August 15:

TURN, The Utility Reform Network  
268 Bush Street, #3933  
San Francisco, CA 941043





## CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN CALIFORNIA



### Affordable Connectivity Program Week of Action

This month, TURN participated in the nationwide Affordable Connectivity Program Week of Action! We joined with government and community-based organizations across the country to spread the word through social media about who qualifies and how to sign up to receive \$30 discount for broadband services, plus up to \$100 toward the purchase of a device.

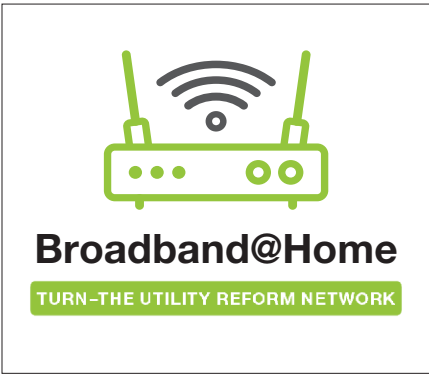
**For more information:** [affordableconnectivity.gov](https://affordableconnectivity.gov)



### Broadband for all

California Department of Technology's Broadband for All, Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD), and Digital Equity Tribal Consultation workshop series continues, with its final in-person event on Tuesday, June 27 in El Cajon. If you have not been able to attend a workshop, or simply want to attend again, there will be a virtual event on July 12, from 1pm-3pm.

**Event details:** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/broadband-for-all-bead-digital-equity-tribal-consultation-virtual-tickets-638464343037>



### Broadband@Home: Equity in San Gabriel Valley

With support from the California Community Foundation, TURN is launching a new campaign called Broadband@Home: Equity in San Gabriel Valley. TURN's digital equity team will be strengthening relationships with housing, legal and education community-based organizations throughout the San Gabriel Valley to spread the word about customer programs, like Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program, as well as broadband related grant programs, like the Federal Funding Account (FFA) and the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) grants.

## TURN ADVOCATES FOR YOU!

TURN is the only statewide organization taking on Wall Street and holding the big inventor-owned utilities accountable. TURN advocates for consumers, rate payers and California families.

We litigate, argue before the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), help shape policy in Sacramento, organize with allies and partners, and work with the Governor's office. We have your back!

### TURN Makes a Difference—one family at a time!

Marie Shell and Eric Lenchner contacted the TURN hotline, afraid that their electric service was in imminent danger of being shut off unless their outstanding utility bill was fully paid. Despite the fact they felt they had done all of the right things, they were given no options that would keep their power on.

Since 2018, the homeowners managed their PG&E, bill in good faith, through recurring auto payments; they were never notified of any service discontinuance or outstanding balance. PG&E's emails went straight to spam. Neither knew of any impending shut off.

Utility services are necessary for keeping Ms. Shell healthy (Ms. Shell suffers from Raynaud's syndrome and sleep apnea), and there are two minor children living in the home. When they enrolled in the Medical Baseline Program again, nothing was said about being in arrears on her account.

After the TURN organizing team (led by Alejandra Vargo) analyzed the situation, they reached out to Ms. Kacey Pipkin (PG&E Customer Relations). That day the shut-off was stopped, and now the family is enrolled in several programs that will help the family pay down the overdue balance and keep the power on! A win-win!

#### The Washington Post

JUNE 1, 2023

##### **If you live in California, your power bill will soon depend on your income.**

“In the last decade, electricity prices in California have skyrocketed.”

Matthew Freedman, TURN attorney

#### SiliconValley.com

MAY 5, 2023

##### **PG&E first-quarter profits jump as utility's revenue surges.**

“Christmas came early for Wall Street... PG&E is focusing far too much on profits and far too little on affordable monthly bills.”

Mark Toney, TURN Executive Director

#### San Francisco Chronicle

APRIL 13, 2023

##### **Californians' electricity bills could see huge change if PG&E proposal goes through.**

“The problem is the sky's the limit for how much PG&E can request for electricity and gas rates, and the sky's the limit for what the CPUC can approve.”

Mark Toney, TURN Executive Director

#### G.WIRE

APRIL 24, 2023

##### **PG&E Bills Could 'Easily' Triple in 5 Years. What Can Fresno Do About It?**

“Over the next four years (PG&E) is requesting a 50% increase, that is their request...They have put billions and billions of dollars on the table... to generate enormous profits and get a rate of return of 10%.”

Mark Toney, TURN Executive Director



THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK

Lower bills. Livable planet.  
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**TURN.org**

## 5 WAYS TO SUPPORT TO SUPPORT TURN'S ADVOCACY

Your support makes our work possible! TURN is dedicated to ensuring equity, accessibility, and affordability for utility consumers, and supporting a sustainable future for our planet.

**BECOME A "SPEAK OUT CHAMPION" MONTHLY CONTRIBUTOR**  
Make your voice heard loud and clear! Visit [TURN.org](http://TURN.org)

### ■ FAIR SHARE CHAMPION

Make a tax-deductible gift to TURN by donating stock  
*(you will need to provide to your brokerage account)*

**Firm Name:** First Republic Securities Company, LLC

**DTC #:** 0443 / **Account Name:** THE UTILITY REFORM NETWORK / **Account #:** 33L114866

### ■ PLANNED GIFT — THE SYLVIA SIEGAL LEGACY FUND

You can make a residuary or specific bequest to TURN by including language in your will or living trusts or by designating TURN as a beneficiary of your retirement account or life insurance policy.

### ■ CORPORATE MATCH

You can double or triple your end of year giving! Many employers sponsor matching gift programs and will match charitable contributions made by their employees. Check with your HR department to see if your company will match your donation.

### ■ GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

Introduce friends and associates to TURN by supporting our work in their name.

For questions or assistance, contact: Richard A. Perez, Chief Financial Officer  
(415) 954-8085 / [rap@turn.org](mailto:rap@turn.org)