

COMMITTEES
VICE CHAIR: APPROPRIATIONS
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ORGANIZATION
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HEALTH
WATER, PARKS AND WILDLIFE



STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0005
(916) 319-2005
FAX (916) 319-2105

DISTRICT OFFICES
460 SUTTER HILL ROAD, SUITE C
SUTTER CREEK, CA 95685
(209) 267-0500

730 NORTH I STREET, SUITE 102
MADERA, CA 93637
(559) 673-0501

2441 HEADINGTON ROAD
PLACERVILLE, CA 95667
(530) 295-5505

April 23, 2020

Ms. Marybel Batjer
President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3298

Dear President Batjer:

We write to urge you to direct electrical corporations to protect elections from public safety power shutoff (PSPS)-related complications.

California has suffered numerous catastrophic wildfires over the last decade, including many that resulted from electrical equipment. We do not underestimate the risk of wildfire danger, and we understand the role that expertly-informed, surgical PSPS events play in avoiding those risks. We appreciate the steps that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has taken to establish protocols for PSPS events and mitigate their impacts.

Last year's October PSPS events were unprecedented. Roughly two million Californians lost their electricity. Many of them experienced back-to-back multi-day events. The timing of those events raised a new threat for elections. County elections officials operate under tight timelines and can ill afford the confusion and delays that would result if a PSPS occurs at/near Election Day. If California experiences future PSPS events in scope and duration similar to the October 2019 events, there could be significant challenges in conducting elections and tabulating results.

Even though all of California's counties operate paper-based voting systems, the elections and voting process depends on electricity to serve voters. Counties utilizing the "vote center" model created by the Voter's Choice Act, for example, must provide one vote center for every 50,000 registered voters starting ten days before Election Day and one vote center for every 10,000 registered voters beginning on the Saturday prior to Election Day. Those "vote center" counties include Amador, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Fresno, Los Angeles, Madera, Mariposa, Napa, Nevada, Orange, Sacramento, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Tuolumne Counties. Vote centers will need uninterrupted power to fulfil their obligations to accept ballots, facilitate in-person voting, provide replacement ballots, register voters, and update voter registration information, among other things.

"Vote center" counties are not the only ones at risk of PSPS-related challenges. All election operations require electricity. While some voting machines may have batteries, their printers must be plugged in to operate. And post-election PSPS events could disrupt local efforts to process and count ballots and timely report results to the state. Even if this year's presidential election is conducted mostly by mail to reduce COVID-19 exposure, many integral operations

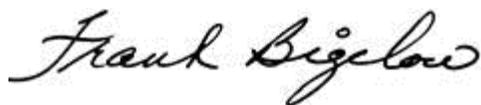
would still require electricity, including ballot printing, ballot sorters, electronic envelope openers, signature checking software, local election management systems, counting scanners, USPS mail centers, and electronic ballot delivery through Remote Access Vote By Mail programs.

To minimize the adverse impacts of PSPS events on this November's and future elections, we urge the CPUC to direct electrical corporations to do the following:

- Meet and coordinate with county elections officials for counties that are at risk of losing electricity during a deenergization event at least three months prior to any election.
 - The electrical corporation shall work with potentially impacted county elections officials to develop a contingency plan for conducting an election concurrently with a deenergization event.
 - The electrical corporation shall identify locations that are suitable to host vote centers, polling places, or other elections operations because those locations are on circuits less likely to be deenergized or because those facilities are already equipped with backup generation.
- Provide backup generators to local elections officials for counties at risk of losing electricity during a deenergization event, when necessary.
- Work with the owners of facilities that will be used as vote centers and polling places by local elections officials to pre-wire those facilities for backup generation if those facilities are not already pre-wired or equipped with backup generation.
- Notify a county's elections official of a potential deenergization event at the same time it provides advanced notifications to any critical facilities or public safety partners in that county pursuant to CPUC Decision D. 19-05-042 (and any subsequent modifications to that decision).

In conclusion, we thank you for your commitment to public safety and seeking to minimize the impacts of PSPS events. We urge you to additionally ensure that California's elections are not adversely impacted by PSPS events.

Sincerely,



FRANK BIGELOW
Assembly Member, District 5



STACY CORLESS
Supervisor, Mono County
First Vice Chair, Rural County Representatives of
California

cc: The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of the State of California
The Honorable Alex Padilla, Secretary of State
Commissioner Liane M. Randolph, California Public Utilities Commission
Commissioner Martha Guzman Aceves, California Public Utilities Commission
Commissioner Clifford Rechtschaffen, California Public Utilities Commission
Commissioner Genevieve Shiroma, California Public Utilities Commission