



June 18, 2019

The Honorable Chris Holden  
Chair, Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5132  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Senate Bill 167 (Dodd) – SUPPORT  
As Amended April 8, 2019**

Dear Assembly Member Holden:

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), I am writing to express our support for Senate Bill 167, authored by Senator Bill Dodd, which requires electric utility deenergization protocols to mitigate impacts on Californians who rely on life-support equipment. RCRC is an association of thirty-six rural California counties, and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

RCRC member counties have suffered many of the State's most catastrophic wildfires over the last decade, including the Tubbs Fire in Sonoma County and the Camp Fire in Butte County. Last year's Senate Bill 901 (Dodd, Chapter 626, 2018) required utilities to establish protocols for deenergizing portions of the electrical distribution system to reduce wildfire risk. Importantly, SB 901 also required utilities to mitigate the impacts of those actions on public safety, including on first responders and health and communication infrastructure.

During the week of October 14, 2018, several RCRC member counties and residents located in Amador, Butte, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lake, Napa, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Sierra, Sonoma, and Yuba, were advised they would likely experience power shutoffs due to severe winds that could trigger wildfires. Some of those residents went several days before power could be fully restored, thereby making it difficult to perform even basic sanitary functions (because there was no power to operate domestic wells). While some were able to secure their own portable generators to offset the burdens created by deenergization, we recognize that many rural residents lack the resources to make that a real, viable option.

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ALPINE AMADOR BUTTE CALAVERAS COLUSA DEL NORTE EL DORADO GLENN HUMBOLDT IMPERIAL INYO LAKE LASSEN MADERA MARIPOSA MENDOCINO MERCED  
MODOC MONO NAPA NEVADA PLACER PLUMAS SAN BENITO SAN LUIS OBISPO SHASTA SIERRA SISKIYOU SONOMA SUTTER TEHAMA TRINITY TULARE TUOLUMNE YOLO YUBA

More recently, a PG&E deenergization earlier this month impacted over 22,000 customers in Butte, Napa, Solano, Yolo, and Yuba Counties. Some residents called 911 with emergencies ranging from requesting welfare checks on individuals whose care required electricity to requesting an ambulance because the caller's "husband was running out of oxygen."<sup>1</sup> These are the Californians SB 167 seeks to protect.

RCRC is a party to the ongoing CPUC deenergization rulemaking process. Phase 1 focused primarily on notifications; however, we understand that an upcoming Phase 2 will consider whether and how utilities should mitigate the impacts of deenergization events on impacted communities. Given the real world consequences for those customers relying upon electricity for life support systems, and the inherent uncertainty of the CPUC process, RCRC believes that it is essential for the Legislature to set a floor to ensure that utilities mitigate impacts of deenergization on Californians who rely on life-support equipment. Unfortunately, existing utility efforts simply are not enough to protect those constituencies. PG&E's current advice to customers relying on electricity for medical needs is that those customers "consider staying with a friend or relative during an outage."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this advice may not be realistic given potential mobility problems or the size of the planned shutoff.

Given RCRC member counties' recent deenergization experience, the fact that rural areas are often populated by a higher percentage of elderly persons that rely on electricity to sustain vital health care needs, and the lengthy delays before service restoration, we agree that these protocols should consider and mitigate the impacts of deenergization on those who rely on life-support equipment.

For the above reasons, RCRC respectfully requests your 'Aye' vote when this measure is heard before your Committee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Kennedy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and the last name "Kennedy" clearly legible.

JOHN KENNEDY  
Legislative Advocate

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<sup>1</sup> Gwendolyn Wu and Matthias Gafni, "PG&E restoring power after intentional shut-offs affect 20,500 customers," San Francisco Chronicle, June 9, 2019. <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/20-000-customers-without-power-in-Butte-Yuba-13963671.php#>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.pge.com/en\\_US/safety/emergency-preparedness/natural-disaster/wildfires/outage-readiness.page](https://www.pge.com/en_US/safety/emergency-preparedness/natural-disaster/wildfires/outage-readiness.page)

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cc: The Honorable Bill Dodd, Member of the State Senate  
The Honorable Jeff Stone, Member of the State Senate  
Members of the Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee  
Consultant, Assembly Utilities & Energy Committee  
Gregory Melkonian, Consultant, Assembly Republican Caucus