

ASSEMBLY THIRD READING
AB 1715 (Schiavo)
As Amended March 19, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

This bill requires the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to establish on its website a searchable database of public utility advice letters. Additionally, the bill establishes mandatory reporting and accountability requirements for investor-owned electric and gas utilities regarding their use of taxpayer funding including grants, loans, and bonds from federal and state entities.

Major Provisions

COMMENTS

Advice letters. Every year, the CPUC receives thousands of advice letters that are submitted by the regulated utilities and service providers under CPUC jurisdiction. Largely, these letters request approval of tariff changes, program implementation, or other regulatory actions. The advice letter process serves as a "streamlined" mechanism to process utility requests, often in response to implementing CPUC rules or decisions, or for compliance purposes such as resource adequacy filings. While some advice letters are posted onto the CPUC's docket in formal proceedings, many are submitted outside proceedings. There is a CPUC Energy Division advice letter database but unlike proceedings, it does not have a uniform/standardized format where all related information is located. This bill seeks to remedy that by requiring the CPUC to establish a database for advice letters that is standardized across utilities and includes all associated information, including protests.

Taxpayer funding. There were historic levels of federal spending on clean energy infrastructure during the Biden Administration, including more than \$62 billion to the Department of Energy through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). A significant amount of this funding has been awarded to California's investor-owned utilities (IOUs). The goal of that funding was to advance the state's clean energy and climate goals while minimizing the burden to ratepayers. This bill seeks to ensure that these taxpayer funds are used appropriately and that ratepayer funds complement, not duplicate, efforts by requiring regular and transparent disclosure of funding activities. The disclosure requirements in this measure largely mirror the reporting called for by the CPUC in Resolution E-5254, adopted in April 2023. The CPUC Resolution is mostly focused on specific federal programs (IIJA, Inflation Reduction Act, and Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors and Science Act), whereas this encompasses a broader range of potential taxpayer funding sources, including state-allocated funds. While the status of much of this federal funding remains uncertain, the bill seeks to increase transparency for ratepayers by creating more consistent and formalized reporting from utilities on for taxpayer funding awards. Moreover, this bill requires the CPUC to provide an annual report to the Legislature summarizing taxpayer-funded activities and associated ratepayer benefits.

According to the Author

According to the author, "Californians are suffering under high electricity rates that are only expected to grow in the coming years to pay for wildfire safety measures and needed grid infrastructure and resiliency projects. Alternative financing structures, such as the \$15 billion

Department of Energy loan to Pacific Gas and Electric, are key strategies to reducing the growth of customer energy bills. Lower financing costs projected from taxpayer funded loans or grants are savings that should be passed on to ratepayers. Assembly Bill 1715 will ensure frequent and transparent reporting on the use of public funds by investor-owned utilities, so Californians can be confident their dollars are going towards lowering their energy bills."

Arguments in Support

As the sponsor of this bill, The Utility Reform Network (TURN) writes that the advice letter database removes barriers and by "making these documents easily accessible on the CPUC website [it] will increase transparency and empower consumer advocates and the public to better understand and respond to rate increases." To the requirements regarding alternative financing and taxpayer funding, TURN states "safeguards to prevent IOUs from double dipping into ratepayer and other funding sources...are lacking" and therefore, this bill ensures "the savings provided by public financing is used to benefit ratepayers, not further enrich shareholders."

Arguments in Opposition

In opposition to provisions on funding reporting, San Diego Gas and Electric and Southern California Gas Company highlight challenges in complying with the bill, writing:

"...quarterly reporting mandate is operationally complex and would require detailed early-stage project forecasts that cannot be generated accurately. Grant funding often evolves as agencies adjust scopes, deadlines, and cost-sharing expectations. Producing granular projections on a fixed timeline would divert resources from project execution and compel premature disclosure of regulatory strategies. The bill also requires IOUs to "promptly" pass through benefits from taxpayer-funded programs, but these savings must first go through established regulatory processes, including public input and CPUC approval to ensure accuracy and protect customers."

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, the CPUC estimates costs up to \$10 million for the creation of a new online advice letter database. For the implementation of the taxpayer funding reporting and tracking, the CPUC estimates ongoing annual costs of around \$1 million.

VOTES

ASM UTILITIES AND ENERGY: 16-0-2

YES: Petrie-Norris, Patterson, Boerner, Calderon, Davies, Mark González, Harabedian, Hart, Kalra, Papan, Rogers, Schiavo, Schultz, Ta, Wallis, Zbur

ABS, ABST OR NV: Chen, Irwin

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 13-2-0

YES: Wicks, Hoover, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Ta

NO: Dixon, Tangipa

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