

“rubberstamping” that results in “a lack of accountability and overspending for little actual prevention.” The author argues for the third-party audits required by this by asserting “It’s time for energy corporations to answer for the money they are being given by ratepayers. We shouldn’t be paying the highest rates and in return getting some of the worst safety and reliability.”

The bill is supported by a large coalition that describes itself as “consumer, health, environmental, labor and civic organizations,” which contend:

Wildfire mitigation spending is one of the primary drivers of rising utility rates in California, where residents already pay some of the highest electricity costs in the nation. Yet current oversight mechanisms have allowed utilities’ wildfire mitigation plans to be routinely approved without sufficient scrutiny, resulting in excessive spending with limited evidence of improved safety outcomes. This lack of accountability has contributed to skyrocketing costs for consumers without delivering the level of wildfire prevention Californians deserve. Independent audits are a common-sense solution to ensure that funds collected from ratepayers are being used effectively and as intended, and the need for strong oversight is clear.

The bill is opposed by the state’s three largest IOUs, two of which—Pacific Gas and Electric and Southern California Edison—together write:

AB 1774 is unnecessary given the extensive statutory and regulatory controls already in place—and risks delayed mitigation, conflicting oversight and higher costs—without improving wildfire safety outcomes. It could result in unintended consequences that could ultimately harm customers and communities.

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