
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

SB 868 (Wiener) - Electricity: portable solar generation devices

Version: April 7, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: April 20, 2026

Policy Vote: E., U. & C. 14 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would exempt portable solar devices, as defined, from state law and electric utility rules regarding requirements to connect to the electrical distribution system, known as interconnection.

Fiscal Impact:

- Ongoing costs of approximately \$200,000 to \$500,000 annually (ratepayer funds) for the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to establish any necessary implementation guidance, administer the customer notification system, handle complaints, provide compliance oversight, and potentially promulgate rulemaking for the interconnection exemption framework.

Background: Plug-in solar, also called balcony solar or portable solar, refers to a solar power system that is generally not permanently mounted to a customer roof or the ground, and can be plugged into a conventional power outlet rather than being permanently wired to the electrical system of the building. Plug-in solar energy systems are currently available for retail sale in some markets [including via Amazon and from Bright Savers, a supporter of this bill]. These units are referred to as “balcony solar” given their use by residents living in high rise multi-housing units in some countries in Europe, particularly popular in Germany. Proponents for plug-in solar systems contend that these systems can be purchased by a resident and plugged in to a standard electrical outlet without involvement from the utility, an electrician, or local building code officials. This is counter to the treatment of rooftop and ground-mounted solar energy systems which are installed with code compliance, hard-wired to the building’s electrical system, and checked for safety.

Instead, plug-in solar systems consist of two or more PV (solar) panels equipped with a microinverter, a cord that can plug into a standard electrical outlet (110/120V), and a tripod or mounting hardware (such as to place on a balcony). Some systems may also come with an energy storage battery. The microinverter converts the direct current (DC) electricity generated by the solar panels into alternating current (AC) electricity and feeds it back into the home’s existing branch circuit. That electricity is then used by appliances on the same circuit or elsewhere in the home, reducing the amount of power drawn from the electric distribution grid. These systems can be daisy chained together to make a larger solar system. A single solar panel at peak output could generate enough electricity to power a standard refrigerator, computer, and some lights. With more panels, the systems can also operate a window-unit air conditioner. The unit’s small size and portability makes them ideal for smaller homes and apartments.

Proposed Law: This bill would:

- 1) Make several findings about the rising cost of electricity and the costs of interconnection fees and processes for the installation of customer-sited solar and energy storage projects.
- 2) Declare it is the policy of the state to promote and encourage the use of solar energy systems and to limit the obstacles to their use, including minimizing the costs of those systems.
- 3) Define a “portable solar generation device” to be a moveable photovoltaic (PV) energy generation device as specified.
- 4) Exempt a portable solar generation device from all interconnection requirements imposed by state law, the CPUC, electrical corporation rules, or local POU rules, as specified.
- 5) Prohibit an electrical corporation or a local POU from requiring a customer using a portable solar generation device to take specified actions, including, among other things, paying any fee or charge related to the device or the electricity the device feeds into a building’s electrical system.

Related Legislation:

AB 2612 (Schultz, 2026) would require the Building Standards Commission, commencing with the next triennial edition of the Building Standards Code, to adopt, approve, codify, and publish mandatory standards for building electrical circuit features to enable qualified PIPV systems to function as an energy source within a residential dwellings or nonresidential development’s electrical circuit, as specified.

AB 2861 (Ting, Chapter 672, Statutes of 2016) authorized the CPUC to establish an expedited distribution grid interconnection dispute resolution process to resolve disputes within 60 days, unless it determines more time is needed.

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