

Date of Hearing: August 5, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

SB 868 (Wiener) – As Amended June 15, 2026

Policy Committee: Utilities and Energy

Vote: 18 - 0

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: Yes

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill exempts a portable solar generation (PSG) device from all interconnection requirements.

More specifically, this bill:

- 1) Defines a PSG device as one that (a) has a maximum aggregated alternating current (AC) output of 1,200 watts per dwelling, (b) is designed to be connected to and disconnected from a building's electrical system through a receptacle, (c) is intended to offset the customer's onsite electricity consumption, (d) meets the standards of the most recent version of the National Electrical Code and the California Electrical Code, as specified, (e) is certified as a plug-in photovoltaic system by Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or an equivalent nationally recognized testing laboratory and (f) includes a feature, certified by UL or an equivalent nationally recognized testing laboratory, that isolates the device from the building's electrical system to prevent the device from backfeeding electricity to the electrical grid during a power outage.
- 2) Exempts a PSG device from all interconnection requirements imposed by statute, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), electrical corporation rules or local publicly owned electric utility rules, including any requirement to enter into an interconnection agreement, and provides that any device that does not meet all of the conditions listed in the preceding item does not qualify as a PSG device and therefore does not qualify for the bill's exemptions.
- 3) Prohibits an electrical corporation (also known as an investor-owned utility (IOU)) or a local publicly owned electric utility (POU) from requiring a customer using a PSG device to do any of the following: (a) obtain approval before installing or using the device, (b) pay any fee or charge related to the device or the electricity the device feeds into a building's electrical system or (c) install any additional controls or equipment beyond what is integrated into the device.
- 4) Allows an IOU or a POU to require a customer using a PSG device to notify the IOU or the POU, using a simple online registration form.

FISCAL EFFECT:

This bill creates no explicit state costs.

Nonetheless, the CPUC contends it will face costs—\$200,000 to \$500,000 annually, which is roughly equivalent to one to two positions (Public Utilities Commission Utilities Reimbursement Account)—to determine whether a device qualifies for the bill’s interconnection exemption, respond to related complaints and disputes, and resolve whether an electrical utility acted properly in regard to generation devices.

COMMENTS:

A PSG device, sometimes referred to as “balcony solar,” is a portable solar panel that plugs into a standard electrical receptacle to provide electricity to a home’s electrical network. The cost to install a PSG device is typically much less than the cost to install a rooftop solar array, mainly because there is little or no labor costs associated with installation of a PSG device; rather, the user of a PSG device positions the device and plugs it directly into a wall receptacle, just as the user would with other common household appliances. And unlike many rooftop solar arrays, a PSG device is low powered, designed both to meet only a portion of on-site electrical demand and not to feed electricity back to the electrical utility’s distribution network.

PSG devices are widely used in several countries, especially Germany, and have received a great deal of popular attention in the United States. Until recently, no state explicitly authorized use of a PSG device, and using such a device typically requires an interconnection agreement with the incumbent electrical utility. This changed in 2025, when Utah enacted legislation to allow the installation of a PSG device without approval of the electrical utility. Many other states have followed suit, or are attempting to do so.

One objection to exempting PSG device installation from utility oversight has been concerns over safety—of individuals who come into contact with a building’s electrical system and of utilities’ electrical distribution networks. For this reason, the bill had been opposed by entities such as the California Professional Firefighters and electrical laborer organizations. However, the bill author amended the bill to address the safety concerns raised by those entities and none remain opposed to the bill.

Several electrical utilities have been, and continue to be, opposed to the bill. For example, the California Municipal Utilities Association (CMUA) describes the current version of the bill as raising concerns related to “safety, system reliability and utility operations.” CMUA notes the bill now requires a PSG device meet electrical codes and standards; nonetheless, CMUA objects:

those requirements do not eliminate the need for utilities to maintain reasonable oversight of devices that connect to a building’s electrical system. Interconnection requirements exist not only to evaluate equipment, but also to ensure that devices are safely integrated into local electric systems and operating conditions.

CMUA’s objections are echoed by several IOUs, such as Southern California Edison, which asserts “For the safety of our workforce and communities, utilities must have visibility into customers’ ability to back-feed energy onto the grid.”

In contrast, the bill is supported by a long list of supporters who describe the bill, and its benefits, in terms similar to those expressed by the bill’s author, who states:

By treating qualifying plug-in solar systems as simple, household appliances rather than full-scale power plants, the bill will unlock a new market for affordable, DIY solar among renters and apartment dwellers who are otherwise stuck with the high costs charged by their utilities.

Allowing access to these cost-saving clean energy devices will reduce peak demand especially on hot summer days when air-conditioning loads are high while also supporting California's efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions and protect public health.

Meanwhile, by establishing statewide safety standards, the bill will ensure consumers have access to safe, high-quality plug-in solar systems.

In sum, SB 868 lowers consumer energy bills, diversifies energy resources, reduces strain on the electric grid, and helps cut air pollution.

It is important to note that there is no PSG device available for sale in California today that satisfies the bill's requirements and that, therefore, is not subject to an electric utility interconnection agreement. Rather, the author intends this bill to spur development of low-powered plug-in products that, as required by bill, are certified as safe.

Several parties—municipal utilities, IOUs and the CPUC—have expressed concern that nothing in this bill prevents or dissuades a customer from stringing together several devices and that doing so would allow a customer to generate beyond the 1,200-watt limit. Similarly, these parties have expressed concern about the continued availability and use of devices that do not meet the bill's standards, and the consequent effects.

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