

SENATE THIRD READING
SB 868 (Wiener)
As Amended August 20, 2026
Majority vote

SUMMARY

This bill exempts specified portable solar generation devices from state law and electric utility rules regarding requirements to connect to the electrical distribution system, known as interconnection, until January 1, 2030. Beginning on January 1, 2030, this bill bans the sale of portable solar generation devices *in the State* that fail to meet the safety qualifications and definition outlined in the bill.

Major Provisions

- 1) Defines a "portable solar generation device" as a photovoltaic energy generation device, or combination of devices, that meets the following conditions:
 - a) Has a maximum aggregated AC output of no more than 1,200 watts per dwelling.
 - b) Is designed to be connected and disconnected to 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 (Part 3 of Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations).
 - e) Is certified as a plug-in photovoltaic system by Underwriters Laboratories or an equivalent nationally recognized testing laboratory.
 - f) Includes a feature, certified by Underwriters Laboratories or an equivalent nationally recognized testing laboratory, that isolates the portable solar generation device from the building's electrical system to prevent the portable solar generation device from backfeeding electricity to the electrical grid during a power outage.
- 2) Exempts portable solar generation devices, as defined, from all interconnection requirements imposed by state law, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), electrical corporation rules, or local publicly owned electric utility (POU) rules, including any requirement to enter into an interconnection agreement.
- 3) Prevents an electrical corporation or POU from requiring the user of a portable solar generation device from doing the following:
 - a) Obtaining the electrical corporation's or POU's approval before installing or using the portable solar generation device.
 - b) Paying any fee or charge related to the portable solar generation device or the electricity the portable solar generation device feeds into a building's electrical system.
 - c) Installing any additional controls or equipment beyond what is integrated into the portable solar generation device.

- 4) Allows an electrical corporation or POU to require a customer using a portable solar generation device to register the device, providing the address, make, model, and size via a simple online registration form.
- 5) Sunsets the exemption from interconnection requirements on January 1, 2030, and starting that date, prohibits the sale *or offering of* devices in the State that do not meet *the qualifications outlined in (1)(d-f)*.

COMMENTS

Plug-in solar, also called balcony solar or portable solar, refers to a solar power system that is not permanently mounted to a customer's 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 nonprofit focused on making plug-in solar more accessible. These units are referred to as "balcony solar" due to their use by residents living in high-rise multi-housing units throughout Europe, especially in Germany, where the residents often drape the systems over their balconies.

In a late 2025 white paper, "Interactions of Plug-in Photovoltaic with Protection of Existing Power Systems," Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Solutions outlined safety concerns regarding plug-in solar. UL notes the risks of overload current produced from these balcony systems that can pose a risk of fire or shock through damaged conductors, insulation, and/or equipment connected to the circuit. The white paper contemplated various solutions to address the overcurrent risk, including a dedicated circuit with a unique plug-in solar receptacle (therefore, not a standard electrical wall outlet). In January 2026, UL Solutions debuted a "Testing and Certification Framework for Safer Plug-In Solar Across the United States." The framework provides a pathway for manufacturers to certify and test their plug-in solar systems using the UL 3700, which defines construction, performance, and labeling criteria tailored to plug-in solar systems. These include considerations such as requiring a qualified professional, generally an electrician, to do some additional work to protect buildings' wiring systems from potential shock.

In the U.S., there has yet to be widespread adoption of plug-in solar systems. Utah was the first state to adopt legislation authorizing the use of plug-in solar without utility approval. Roughly half of the states in the country had or have pending legislation modeled after Utah's law. In some states, the efforts for similar legislation have faltered due to safety concerns, including in Washington and Arizona. However, other states such as New York and Virginia have recently passed legislation that is largely similar to Utah's. And while Utah's effort is seeking to enable the adoption of plug-in solar equipment, the law does require devices to meet full system-level certification from a nationally recognized testing organization (like UL). No commercially available plug-in solar system has achieved that certification to date.

This bill allows plug-in solar devices that meet the specified safety qualifications to be exempt from any interconnection rules imposed by state law, the CPUC, electrical corporations, or POUs until January 1, 2030. Interconnection agreements are a requirement of other PV systems such as rooftop solar and governed, at least for investor-owned utilities (IOUs), by the CPUC under Electric Rule 21. According to the CPUC, the goal of Rule 21 is to provide "a generating facility (i.e., customers wishing to install generating or storage facilities on their premises) with access to the electric grid while protecting the safety and reliability of the distribution and transmission

systems." This legislation seeks to circumvent this process, in part because these devices are intended to offset on-site consumption.

However, as noted above, the product safety standards and regulations are still underway in the U.S. The UL currently certifies many of the components to a plug-in solar device, but no commercially available product is available with UL, or any other nationally recognized testing laboratory, certification. Therefore, this bill seeks to address two issues at once – set the safety standards for devices that currently do not exist and exempt those non-existent devices from any utility oversight.

According to the Author

According to the author, "SB 868, the Plug and Play Solar Act, will give renters and homeowners a simple, low-cost tool to reduce their energy bills and reduce pollution. Because plug-in systems are small and portable, they expand the solar market, especially to renters, condo owners, and people with balconies, small backyards, or patios. California has roughly 14 million rental units – around 40 percent of households in the state – making this an especially powerful tool for expanding access to clean energy. As Californians struggle to pay their energy bills due to rising electricity rates and greenhouse gas emissions, SB 868 is the solution the state needs. By setting clear safety standards and clearing away unnecessary utility hurdles, SB 868 opens a new, low-cost path for families to take control of their energy use. In a state where high bills and climate risks fall hardest on those with the fewest options, plug and play solar offers something rare: a realistic, hands-on tool that lets Californians save money while reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Arguments in Support

The California Apartment Association, along with a number of other community groups including San Diego Community Power, write that this bill will help individuals offset high electricity bills and promote adoption of renewable technology at a more accessible cost. Specifically, the California Apartment Association writes that this bill "will help California bring this much needed technology to offset rising energy costs to households and housing providers." Nextgen California echoes this sentiment by sharing that this bill will "advance solar generation accessibility and affordability by reducing barriers for customers to install portable solar generation without having to go through costly and time-consuming state and local interconnection requirements."

Arguments in Opposition

The Southern California Rental Housing Association writes in opposition that this bill "could facilitate the addition of electricity-generating equipment to those [building] systems without ensuring that the owner is notified, that the existing electrical system can safely accommodate the equipment, or that the installation complies with reasonable building and lease requirements."

Additionally, Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) and San Diego Gas and Electric Company (SDG&E) states that this bill should ensure there is no export back to the electrical grid from these devices and clarify that these devices are not eligible for net energy metering (NEM) or net billing tariffs (NBT). Moreover, PG&E and SDG&E share that existing NEM and NBT customers should be prohibited from using these devices to prevent circumvention of existing interconnection agreements.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Assembly Committee on Appropriations, the CPUC estimates annual costs of \$200,000 to \$500,000 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.

VOTES**SENATE FLOOR: 35-1-4**

YES: Allen, Alvarado-Gil, Arreguín, Ashby, Becker, Blakespear, Cabaldon, Caballero, Cervantes, Dahle, Durazo, Gonzalez, Grayson, Grove, Hurtado, Laird, Limón, McGuire, McNerney, Menjivar, Ochoa Bogh, Padilla, Pérez, Reyes, Richardson, Rubio, Seyarto, Smallwood-Cuevas, Stern, Strickland, Umberg, Valladares, Wahab, Weber Pierson, Wiener

NO: Jones

ABS, ABST OR NV: Archuleta, Choi, Cortese, Niello

ASM UTILITIES AND ENERGY: 18-0-0

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

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-0-4

YES: Wicks, Arambula, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

ABS, ABST OR NV: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

UPDATED

VERSION: August 20, 2026

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