



October 31, 2019

President Marybel Batjer  
California Public Utilities Commission  
505 Van Ness Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94102

**Subject: PSPS Events are tearing the fabric of California's most vulnerable communities, and residents are unable to plan their lives: when will the Commission intervene?**

President Batjer and Commissioners:

As you are aware, no County is better able to understand the threat of wildfire and disaster than Lake County. Prior to recent weeks, we had suffered ten cumulative natural disasters in a four-year period. Those disasters threatened many things that we hold dear. Through no fault of their own, a generation of Lake County's young people will grow up with less security in their environment than any of us would like due to our repeated natural disasters, leaving them less available to benefit from formal education at a critical stage. That reality rightfully frustrates and enrages many of our residents at a core level.

Lake County residents have endured enough. Natural disasters, brought in unheard of frequency in part due to Global Climate Change, informed by human decisions made continents away from Lake County; those were enough.

Decades of State and Federal policies that isolated, rather than strengthening our communities in our times of need, deepening the human and economic suffering of our people, were enough.

Our struggles to recover from the Great Recession of 2008, and the effects of our host of deep rooted and systemic educational and economic challenges, leading to an above average violent crime rate and simultaneously underfunded public agencies, were enough.

All of these hardships were more than enough to more than frustrate the sense of normalcy of countless people in our County, and the compounding effects have already shortened lives and led to some of the worst statistical health outcomes in the United States.

Now, however, our friends and neighbors are facing a very particular and wholly unacceptable kind of human-informed disaster, and the California Public Utilities Commission has accepted, even authorized this destructive, frankly abusive, pattern.

Our 11<sup>th</sup> disaster in four years was brought not by wildfire, not by flood, but by the negligence and abuse of authority of the Pacific Gas & Electric Company and the California Public Utilities Commission.

Take Marian, for example, an 83-year-old Clearlake resident who fractured multiple bones in her ankle just prior to the October 9 Public Safety Power Shutoff. Despite the fact winds were not severe in her area, she was left without power for more than 48 hours. Living alone and unable to move around her house, Marian was left without ability to contact the outside world. Her iPhone didn't work because of the inappropriately broad footprint of that PSPS event, caused by woefully inadequate grid management. Disruptions to the phone system

of her medical provider, also caused by the PSPS, delayed her access to medical care for a full week. Enough is enough!

What about Jess, a struggling Lake County resident, who uses every dime she has to attend to the needs of her young grandson? They lost everything in their refrigerator due to the 10/9 PSPS, and were without many basics, such as hot water. Jess, like so many in our communities, reported to our Board, "It would be nice to have a generator, but we barely make ends meet as it is." Jess is no complainer. Jess is resilient, even grateful in the face of challenge, but she is facing severe circumstances, brought by decisions of your Commission. Enough is enough!

What about family-owned businesses, like the Lake County espresso shop that lost \$6,000 during the 10/9 PSPS Event, and reported, "If this goes on, it will come to a breaking point where I will not be able to pay my bills and/or my tax obligations, which are very high in the month of October."

What about the highly popular Lakeport-based restaurant and ice cream shop, regionally famous for their outstanding burgers, that lost more than \$8,000 in food and ice cream, not to mention lost sales, during the 10/9 PG&E outage? They are facing very serious decisions about how to proceed, and the owner, also a local high school teacher and engaged member of the community, said, "I employ 25 individuals who have families of their own, four with babies at home. As a small business owner, I'm all in, we count on daily sales to survive... it's now 8 days [in October] with no power."

What about the employees of all such California businesses, once robust, now teetering in the face of a PSPS-created unknown?

Enough is enough, but what about the innumerable low income County residents whose ability to meet even their most fundamental needs was severely threatened by loss of work and wages? We all heard of these cases through friends and family, and we helped where we could, but where was PG&E, and where was the Commission, when rent came due, and a lack of power had left these individuals subject to undue stress, late fees, credit card debt and fear of eviction, through absolutely no fault of their own? Enough is enough!

Our County government, already faltering from the many types of disasters we have recently faced, was not spared by the PSPS. We prepared in advance, and we fought with everything we had to respond once the PSPS came, spending \$672,700 on generators and installation, not mention the unsustainable organizational financial and other costs associated with loss of at least 800 staff working hours in anticipation and during the 10/9 PSPS Event, alone, at a time when our departments are understaffed by greater than 20%.

Lake County's fiscal crisis is well known, well publicized. Senator McGuire, Assemblymember Aguiar-Curry, our Board, and County staff have brought our financial condition to the attention of the State Legislature and your Commission. Did PG&E or the CPUC extend an appropriate and affordable opportunity for us to prepare our residents and governments prior to hitting us with wave after wave of outages? No. Enough is more than enough!

So many of the people affected, so many of our friends and neighbors are anonymous in their suffering. It is not an option for PG&E's leadership and your Commission to remain anonymous while California's most vulnerable deal with the effects of your misconceptions and wrong-headed decisions. We will not stand by, as Lake County residents continue to bear the cost!

PG&E's horrifically maintained electrical infrastructure has been found responsible for some of the largest wildfire events in recorded history, quite possibly including the Kincade Fire, which in fact broke out during a PSPS. Those wildfire events caused financial devastation, and tore at every fiber of social fabric in California's communities and resulted in dozens of wrong and highly preventable deaths. Yet, despite these obvious, unfathomable failures of insight from their highest leadership, your Commission has enabled the Pacific Gas &

Electric Company to hold Californians hostage by initiating crippling power outages in the name of “Public Safety?”

What has been the result? Decision after decision, clearly made toward the end of protecting PG&E’s own legal interests, and their own bottom line, at thoroughly unwieldy expense to California’s utility rate and taxpayers. Clearly, PSPS Events are not the solution, and cannot be allowed to become our new normal.

The public depends on the CPUC to stand up to abuse by our Public Utilities, and they deserve much, much better.

Enough is enough, for Lake County, and all residents of California.

Sincerely,

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