



SB 99 – DODD

Community Energy Resilience Act

SB 99 calls for the creation of a new technical assistance and grant program administered by the California Energy Commission to help local governments develop clean energy resilience plans, working in collaboration with utilities, prioritizing enhanced resilience for low-income communities.

Power outages during 2020 and 2019 cost the California economy billions and are expected to continue. In response, homeowners, businesses and utilities have been rapidly investing in new fossil fuel generators, primarily diesel, expenditures which run counter to California's environmental goals.

There is a better way to enhance energy resilience: local governments can partner with utilities to develop comprehensive plans for strategically building clean distributed energy resources (DERs), leveraging accelerating cost reductions of clean energy generation and storage. Expedited development of DERs through energy resilience planning, in collaboration with utilities, will create thousands of well-paying jobs supplied by a well-trained workforce, and will yield DERs located to maximize benefits to the existing grid.

Installation of DERs typically requires local permitting approval, including the siting of clean energy generation, storage, and EV charging infrastructure. Local governments, particularly in lower income communities, currently lack the staff capacity and funding needed for energy resilience planning. Absent state policy leadership, only the wealthiest individuals, businesses and communities will achieve clean energy resilience, leaving poor communities most exposed to diesel pollution or in the dark.

The California Office of Emergency Services has been funding local governments to help prepare and respond to power shutoffs, but that has not led to clean energy-based resilience planning and has instead typically resulted in state funding of fossil fuel back-up generation, which has lower upfront installation costs but higher lifetime operational and environmental costs. Unlike polluting diesel back-up generators, clean DERs can provide daily grid services (e.g. shifting daytime excess solar generation to serve evening peak demand) and can also provide back-up power during unanticipated grid outages such as August 2020 blackouts.

SB 1339, signed into law in 2018, called upon the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to initiate a proceeding to help commercialize microgrids. A CPUC Proposed Decision



issued in December 2020 called for development of a new incentive program to accelerate development of microgrids to support disadvantaged and vulnerable populations, but it left primary authority in the hands of investor-owned utilities and provided no planning support for local governments, which command greater local authority and are better able to effectively prioritize critical facilities.

The California Energy Commission (CEC) has been funding development of clean energy microgrids in low-income communities, including the [Blue Lake Rancheria](#) project, which is credited with helping to save lives of medically-dependent people during the 2019 power shutoffs.



SB 99 expands CEC-supported microgrid development statewide. It requires the CEC to develop and implement a technical assistance and grant program to support development of clean community energy resilience plans led by local governments, building upon and integrating previous related CEC and other state programs. The bill complements a CPUC Decision issued in June of 2020 which required investor-owned utilities to share information with and engage local governments in energy resilience planning, but which did not allocate resources to local governments to enable completion of energy resilience planning.

The bill prioritizes planning support for critical facilities serving low-income

communities. Local governments receiving planning grants would partner with utilities to identify areas most likely to experience a loss of electrical service and develop plans to help ensure that a reliable electricity supply is maintained at identified critical facilities, while also providing grid benefits under normal operating conditions. The bill leverages the fact that over a million California homes and businesses already benefit from solar PV generation, including 2,000 schools, and only need to add storage to enhance community resilience. The bill also complements the Governor's Zero Emissions Vehicle Executive Order. With proper planning, an expansion of electric vehicles could enhance grid resilience with mobile storage used as a grid asset.

SB 99 aligns local government energy resilience needs with state equity and decarbonization goals, addressing current market forces that are currently only enhancing energy resilience for the wealthy. Most importantly, the bill empowers local governments to determine how and where to site local energy resilience infrastructure, rather than having crucial planning decisions imposed upon them by a distant utility disconnected from local priorities.



The Climate Center
Clean Coalition
Vote Solar



None on File



[REDACTED]
Les Spahn: leslie.spahn@sen.ca.gov