



California Public Utilities Commission

Legislative Update – Office of Governmental Affairs

*Bills of Interest to the Low-Income Oversight Board
Meeting – Thursday September 17, 2020*

The legislature wrapped up business for this session on Monday August 31st. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the huge budget shortfalls facing the state the legislature passed significantly less bills this legislative session. For example, this year the legislature sent over 391 bills to the Governor compared to 1,042 last year. Due to the significant reduction in bill load and tightening of the state budget, legislation affecting low-income ratepayers and other CPUC programs was also very limited this year. In fact, no legislation that reached the Governor's desk this year is specifically regarding low-income ratepayers. However, because many proposals were left on the table at the end of the year it is very likely we will see continued focus on those issues next year as summarized below:

1. California Lifeline Program

- Legislation was introduced this year that would have made significant changes the Lifeline program, including changes to the recertification and renewal process, and expanding the subsidy to include a broadband internet offering. The most substantive piece of legislation on this program (AB 3079, E. Garcia) was held in the Assembly Appropriations committee.

2. California Advanced Services Fund

- The California Advanced Services Fund provides subsidies to internet companies to build broadband infrastructure in unserved areas, which are almost exclusively low-income and rural communities. However, all the grant funding will likely be awarded by the end of this year effectively ending the program.
- AB 570 (Aguiar-Curry) proposed to extend the CASF program and funding however the legislation was held in committee.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and more students distance learning without adequate access to the internet, this is one of the biggest proposals left unfinished this session.

3. Energy Procurement

- Recent blackouts, the cause of which is still being investigated, has caught the attention of legislators across the state. We expect more legislation next year directing the CPUC, or some other entity, to procure additional energy at huge costs to ratepayers despite it currently being unclear if a lack of procurement is actually the issue.
- For example, AB 1720 (Carrillo), would have required the procurement of additional long-term duration bulk storage costing ratepayers billions in unnecessary costs. The bill was held in committee.