



Californians for Energy Choice

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During 7th International Clean Energy Ministerial, Advocates Insist CA Governor Brown Stop Utilities Commission Attacks On Community Based Clean Energy

San Francisco, CA, June 1, 2016 – Today, at the opening of the 7th international Clean Energy Ministerial being held in San Francisco, community and clean energy advocates urged California Governor Jerry Brown (who will speak at the ministerial on June 2nd) to demand that his appointed California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) end its attacks on community based clean energy, and reverse its biased support of fossil fuel based monopoly electrical utilities.

The ministerial is being convened by 23 countries (including the U.S., China, Brazil, and Saudi Arabia) and the European Commission, to discuss concrete actions to implement climate agreements reached in Paris, France.¹

Environmental and community groups decried the fact that Michael Picker, Brown's recently appointed CPUC President has promoted skewed rules strongly favoring a corporate sponsor of the ministerial, Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E).^{2 3} PG&E is a fossil fuel based monopoly electricity provider that has spent tens of millions of dollars over the last two decades pushing for ballot measures, legislation, and CPUC decisions, that attack community based clean energy programs which are competing with PG&E and other fossil fuel energy providers.

In a March 16, 2016, "Fireside Chat" interview with Greentech Media, President Picker disparaged California's emerging not-for-profit municipal Community Choice energy programs, which are providing a cleaner and price competitive energy alternative to monopoly utilities like PG&E. Picker misleadingly dismissed the Community Choice alternative as "forced collectivization" when by law, all Community Choice programs allow customers to freely choose between their current monopoly utility and the new alternative.⁴

Community Choice programs are currently providing a cleaner, less expensive electricity supply to California residents in Marin, Sonoma, Napa, and Contra Costa counties, and in the cities of San Francisco and Lancaster; with scores of other California communities lining up to follow suit.

Ed Mainland of Californians for Energy Choice, which advocates statewide for Community Choice, said, "With a majority of California's monopoly utility electricity customers now poised to adopt cleaner and less expensive Community Choice programs, it is an outrage that President Picker is using reactionary rhetoric to attack these programs, and that he has led the CPUC to enact policies that force unfair anti-competitive fees and regulations on both Community Choice and solar panel owners. We insist in the strongest possible terms that Governor Brown take immediate action to discipline President Picker and the CPUC. The Governor must reaffirm Community Choice as a top priority for California's low carbon energy transition and demand that the CPUC start serving a true clean energy future, not the interests of polluting energy monopolies entrenched in the past."

Speaking on behalf of 350 San Francisco, an organization working to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote clean energy solutions, Sara Greenwald said, "Our organization supports Community Choice, both locally and statewide, as a crucial part of freeing us from climate-destructive fossil fuels. PG&E is a monopoly utility that relies heavily on fossil fuel based electricity generation and has spent millions of dollars opposing Community Choice because it might reduce PG&E profits. Governor Brown appointed the members of the CPUC as well as President Picker; we therefore call on the Governor to direct them to use their regulatory authority to strongly encourage community based clean energy instead of blocking it."

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¹ <http://www.cleanenergyministerial.org/Events/CEM7>

² <http://ww2.kqed.org/news/2015/12/17/cpuc-approves-fee-hike-for-opting-out-of-pge-service>

³ <http://www.desertsun.com/story/tech/science/energy/2015/07/01/last-minute-drama-major-electricity-rate-changes/29603131>

⁴ *California's Distributed Energy Future, Fireside Chat, March 16, 2016: 10:32 to 13:10* at <http://www.greentechmedia.com/multimedia/view/fireside-chat>