

April 8, 2021

**Re: We Can't Let the Power Companies
Burn Us Up Again**



Thank you Senator Golden and members of the Committee:

My name is Sam Drevo. I am from Gates. Powerlines ignited fires all over our town and burned it down. My family and I lost our home my business lost two properties including the first house built in Gates, and three other families living there were displaced as a result.

My mom and I fled with just the shirts on our backs. Many of us had to flee from these fires. Hundreds of homes burned to the ground. Our roads, water system, and utilities were impacted.

We were devastated. Insurance, FEMA assistance, state grants, and lawsuits will never make us whole. I lost World Championship medals, and a lifetime of professional photography. My mom lost a precious loom and all her most prized family history.



According to recent reporting by the Oregonian, power line ignitions caused or contributed to fires on over 500,000 acres in our State. People in our community heard transformers popping, saw flashes and witnessed powerline brush fires & downed powerlines across town after the fire.

We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes that allowed electric utilities to ignore a predicted extreme fire weather event. Ignoring the

electric utilities' responsibility and their inaction in not shutting down the grid would be like saying to a serial arsonist - we accept your promise not to do it again.

The utilities had their chance to prove their plans would protect the communities they serve. Most of the utilities failed us. If we look to California's history of powerline failures and fires, we see repeated failures in the face of extreme risk.

Here in Oregon, PacifiCorp's inaction put thousands in danger and upended entire communities. As the 911 audio reveals, even when PacifiCorp was notified by local residents and firefighters that powerlines were starting fires, the electric power remained on in Gates. These electric utilities chose not to protect the public.

If a utility cannot be trusted to act when there are known continuing ignitions from powerline failures, they certainly cannot be trusted to be proactive in shutting down their system when there are predicted high fire risks.

I note that SB 762 has a provision in it for regulating utilities and requiring mitigation plans. Will these plans require public safety power shut offs in time for the 2021 fire season? Does involving the state in reviewing them reduce the responsibility that power companies might have for ensuring they don't burn us down again?

I ask that you not leave our future to chance. I submit that you need to prescriptively regulate the utilities' response to predicted high fire danger. The time has come and gone to allow the utilities to be fiddling while we burn. The lack of clear state regulation allows this to continue.

Our communities need their homes, businesses, and environment protected from fire. We need the peace of mind to know our electric

utility will be a state regulated part of that effort. We need to know we are going to be safe from power line ignited fires as we rebuild.

Sincerely,
Sam Drevo