

May 10, 2025

**Position on Bills at 2025
Session of Oregon Legislature:
SB 926A: Support**



The Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) is a coalition of over 50 local Indivisible groups throughout Oregon that cooperate and amplify their joint efforts to advance important federal and state legislation and engage with elected officials to promote causes for the benefit of all Oregonians.

COIN supports SB 926A, which would prohibit a regulated electric utility with more than 25,000 retail customers in Oregon (PGE, PP&L) from charging ratepayers for certain costs, if a court or jury finds that a wildfire resulted from the negligence or a higher degree of fault on the part of the electric company. The disallowed costs include costs associated with:

- fines or penalties based on judicial findings of utility negligence or gross negligence or misconduct that resulted in a wildfire
- a judgment or settlement of a civil action based on allegations of utility negligence or misconduct that resulted in a wildfire
- wildfire litigation costs
- costs to repair or replace the utility's own property damaged in the wildfire

Note that the opposition testimony filed by Portland General Electric Co. (PGE) on March 7, 2025, stated that the bill would preclude the utility from charging to ratepayers the costs of voluntary settlements with those harmed by wildfires, which the PGE testimony states could be “the most responsible decision for all parties.” This potential downside was removed from the bill in the -3 amendment, adopted on April 8. As amended, SB 926A does not prohibit charging those costs of settlements to ratepayers, unless “a court or jury finds that a wildfire resulted from the negligence or a higher degree of fault on the part of an electric company.” If the utility settles claims against it quickly, before a court or jury makes such a finding, SB 926A does not prohibit charging those costs to ratepayers. It would be up to the Oregon Public Utility Commission to decide whether ratepayers should bear those costs.

SB 926A also prohibits electric utilities indebted by wildfire-related judgments from distributing dividends, income, interest, profits, or any other value to those with an ownership interest in the electric or a related company, until the utility pays the debt. It applies to all wildfires ignited after January 1, 2020. It also requires any electric

company with an outstanding wildfire judgment against it, issued between January 1, 2020 and 2025, not paid as of January 1, 2026, to pay all taxes owed by the prevailing party upon the electric company's satisfaction of judgment.

Utility ratepayers should not be required to pay the costs of a wildfire resulting from utility conduct that has been found by the courts to have caused the wildfire due to conduct that was negligent or less responsible. Under current law, the Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) is not required to exclude those costs from rates.

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