

Jami Cate
State Representative
House District 11



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 22nd, 2025

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, Members of the Committee:

I'm writing to express **deep concern regarding the proposed -A5 and -A4 amendments to Senate Bill 926A**. These amendments are a sharp deviation from the bill you heard ample testimony on from our wildfire victims, and drastically weaken the provisions of the bill those victims spoke in such powerful and heartbreaking support of.

At a time when countless **Oregonians are facing a decades-long wait for the courts to administer any meaningful justice**—largely due to the economics favoring Pacific Power's continued delay tactics, and with **our own regulatory mechanism of the Public Utility Commission having demonstrated their utter unwillingness to hold companies like Pacific Power accountable** when they have repeatedly failed to maintain safety measures as simple as vegetative clearances, I find it **an added failure to protect Oregonians if we as the Legislature were to adopt these amendments** and lessen the provisions in SB 926A.

SB 926A sought to remove the "please" that Pacific Power has continued to willfully ignore, and prohibit them from rewarding shareholders with dividends and profits before satisfying their wildfire liabilities. That was the heart of the bill. These proposed amendments abandon that core purpose and **leave victims again at the mercy of the PUC who has routinely failed to hold Pacific Power accountable**.

The -A5 also re-introduces the concept of so-called safety certificates. Let's be clear: granting a certificate of "safety" to a utility like Pacific Power—after it has been found grossly negligent by a jury for multiple fires and millions in damage—is a slap in the face to every one of their victims. These **certificates risk giving the appearance of having acted "reasonably" without any meaningful change being required of Pacific Power**, and despite claims otherwise, could be used as an example in court that the monopoly acted in accordance with all expectations and shouldn't then be found liable.

Equally concerning is the establishment of a Wildfire Recovery Fund in the -A4 with a \$100,000 cap, which must be paid back to the state from victims' insurance payout or lawsuit settlement—whichever comes first—and the amount of which **doesn't even scratch the surface for what these victims have proven to need in order to rebuild their lives** while also **effectively removing any sense of urgency to expedite trials to receive the monies they deserve**. This isn't justice—it's a poor attempt at triage. And worse still, it **shifts the burden away from the negligent party**.

We must not allow monopolistic, grossly negligent utility companies to continue business as usual: bullying victims, delaying justice, ignoring safety mandates from PUC, and doling out profits to shareholders while **victims are forced to continue living in limbo**. If we are to rebuild trust and make survivors whole, SB 926A must remain true to its original intent: real accountability, real financial responsibility, and real consequences for negligence.

You heard their stories of unfathomable trauma in this committee last week. **Please don't ignore victims' courageous pleas from you for help**. I urge this committee to reject these amendments and preserve the core mission of Senate Bill 926A.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jami Cate".

Jami Cate
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