

2021 Highlights

In 2021, the [Local Clean Energy Alliance](#) (LCEA) was active on a number of fronts in promoting the democratization of energy and energy justice. This was largely in response to the private utilities' efforts to more aggressively assert their failing centralized energy model—in opposition to the rising popularity of community energy solutions. LCEA was engaged in critical struggles at a local, regional, statewide, and national level in a general political terrain marked by intensified racial strife.

Below are a number of critical issues and related accomplishments.

Countering Utility Attacks on Community Energy



In response to the growth of on-site solar generation in California, notably in the form of rooftop solar on homes, businesses, schools, churches, and government buildings, California's monopoly utilities launched an effort in 2021 to roll back the Net Energy Metering (NEM) policies under which this growth has taken place. Claiming that rooftop solar customers are shifting infrastructure costs onto non-solar customers, the utilities have used this false “cost-shift” argument to push for drastic reductions in on-site solar benefits. This has taken the form of AB 1139, a bill to gut Net Metering, and similar proposals in a NEM 3.0 proceeding at the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC).

LCEA and the [California Alliance for Community Energy](#) played an active role in the broad coalition that defeated AB 1139 in the State Assembly in June. We exposed the threat posed by on-site solar to the utilities' business model and the many benefits that distributed, community-based solar provides to our communities. We published a [paper critiquing the Avoided Cost Calculator tool](#) used by the CPUC to justify its undervaluing of on-site solar and other distributed energy resources. And we have called for an expansion of on-site solar into low and moderate-income.

Demanding Accountability for PG&E's Safety Failures

LCEA has been working within the [Reclaim Our Power Campaign](#)—the main organized force in California demanding that the CPUC take action to protect the people of California by holding PG&E accountable for its wildfire safety failures.

The CPUC has done little to enforce measures in PG&E's bankruptcy exit plan meant to address the utility's neglect of safety, a neglect that continues to cause devastating wildfires in California. Despite a PG&E [Safety and Accountability Scorecard](#) issued by the Campaign in April, petitions and mobilizations directed by the Campaign at CPUC since then, and continued PG&E culpability for causing wildfires, the CPUC has failed to act.

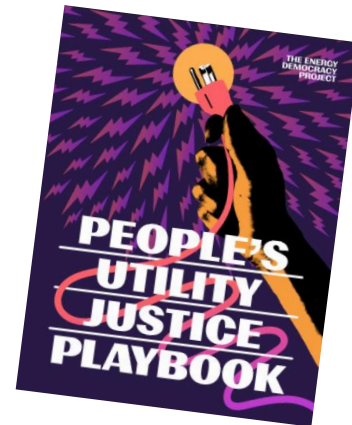


The Campaign is calling on Governor Newsom to deny PG&E the safety certificate (the “License to Burn”) which allows the utility to cause wildfires while bearing no financial liability for the billions of dollars of damages that result.

People’s Utility Justice Playbook

LCEA collaborated with other organizations in the [Energy Democracy Project](#) to create the [People’s Utility Justice Playbook](#). This new, comprehensive guide exposes utility tactics to defeat community opposition. It also shares the methods communities have used to fight back. The Playbook is meant to support community and ratepayer advocates, energy democracy activists, and others confronting energy utilities.

The Playbook was released in October and is being used to arm activists fighting against utilities across the country.



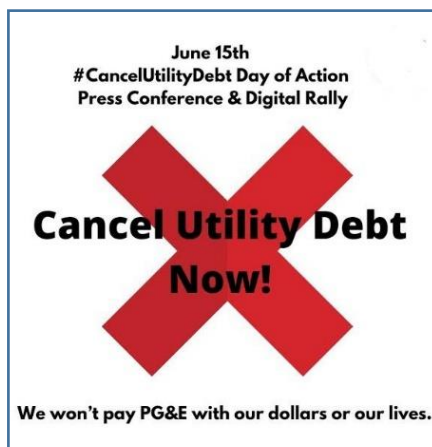
Community-Driven Energy Resilience

In light of the increasing frequency of power outages caused by both climate disasters and utility shutoffs, many communities now see the value of community resilience hubs—critical facilities that utilize solar and battery storage to remain in operation when grid power shuts down. These microgrid-enabled facilities are urgently needed by our most vulnerable populations.

Nevertheless, there are currently many barriers to developing such microgrids in frontline communities. LCEA, has been working with both the California Alliance for Community Energy and the Reclaim Our Power Campaign on two fronts to remove those barriers. The first front is to promote and assist community-based organizations in the development of demonstration resilience hubs in frontline communities. An initial cohort of organizations has recently completed a ten-session series of presentations to learn what it takes to build such projects.

The other front is to engage in regulatory and legislative initiatives to create a policy environment that advances community-based microgrid development. This has included establishing and participating in a Microgrid Equity Coalition to advocate for equity in a 2021 CPUC microgrid proceeding. The group has endorsed [a Reclaim Our Power letter](#) to the CPUC calling on the Commission to include community voices in determining equitable rules for microgrid development and to support the needs of frontline communities for a sustainable and resilient energy future. The Coalition has also put forward equity-based proposals within the microgrid proceeding.

Utility Debt Relief



LCEA joined with Reclaim Our Power and collaborators from the national Energy Democracy Project and dozens of other organizations on June 15, 2021, in a Cancel Utility Debt National Day of Action! The event brought together the voices of low income, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color communities across the country who are facing massive utility bills and potential shutoffs, largely due to the economic impacts of the COVID pandemic.

Following this event, we sent over 350 emails and mobilized dozens of callers to demand that the CPUC extend its moratorium on shutoffs, cancel utility debt, and force the shareholders, not the ratepayers or the taxpayers, to pick up the tab. After this outcry, the

commission voted unanimously to extend the moratorium until September 30—a big victory. The fight continues to ensure that no one's power is taken away for lack of ability to pay.

In the East Bay as well, LCEA advocated for utility debt relief locally and succeeded in getting East Bay Community Energy, the East Bay's public energy services provider agency, to provide more information about existing debt relief programs and provide funds for non-profit organizations to assist in helping those with utility debt to navigate and enroll into such programs. In addition, the agency was to explore a possible utility bill relief credit program.

Promoting a Vision of Energy Democracy and Energy Justice

LCEA has been at the forefront of promoting a vision of energy democracy that is centered on environmental, economic, and social justice. These issues have come into stark relief in 2021. On the one hand, the Biden administration has explicitly recognized the importance of racial justice in announcing the federal Justice40 initiative—a plan to deliver 40% of the overall benefits of climate investments to disadvantaged communities. On the other hand, the growing power of white supremacy in the U.S. threatens to unravel progress toward energy equity and further entrench institutionalized racism in the energy economy.

Early in 2021, the LCEA led the East Bay Clean Power Alliance, which had been responsible for establishing East Bay Community Energy, in an effort to get the agency to follow the Biden Administration's equity lead. In June, the agency's Board passed a 2020-2021 budget that included a Local Development Business Plan (LDBP) budget in which less than 10% of proposed residential program investment was specifically targeted to low-income customers.



The Alliance argued that this allocation reinforced status quo disparities and a greater portion of the LDBP budget should go to programs that would address equity for customers in BIPOC communities. This effort included a [letter](#) signed by community-based organizations asking the Board to direct staff to allocate at least 40% of the LDBP budget for programs that would primarily benefit low income customers.

These efforts reflected an action at the federal level on April 20, 2021, in which the Energy Democracy Project hosted an [Energy Democracy Congressional Briefing](#) to educate congressional staffers and national movement allies by bringing together the Project's perspectives on energy democracy and energy justice solutions. This Congressional Briefing—attended by 140 people—brought critical community knowledge, leadership, and an energy democracy perspective to the numerous climate and clean energy legislative proposals being advanced at the U.S. Congress.

Mission of the Local Clean Energy Alliance:

To promote the equitable development and democratization of local renewable energy resources as key to addressing climate change and building sustainable and resilient communities.

Initiatives/Collaborations of the Local Clean Energy Alliance:

