

Women's Energy Matters
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 8/17/03

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INDEPENDENTS CHALLENGE UTILITY CONTROL OF CONSERVATION
All-Party Meeting Tues. 8/19, 10 am, CPUC Vote Thurs., 8/21/03, 10 am
California Public Utilities Commission Auditorium, 505 Van Ness Ave., SF

Women's Energy Matters (WEM), Local Power, and the Community First Coalition are mobilizing forces to influence a critical vote Thursday, August 21, 2003 by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) on the future of Energy Efficiency in California.

Commissioner Susan Kennedy, a recent appointee of Gov. Davis, proposes to give most or all of ratepayers' Energy Efficiency (EE) money back to utilities (\$250 m statewide, from the "Public Good Charge" on utility bills). CPUC Judge Kim Malcolm took the unusual step of issuing an Alternate Draft Decision, stating that the "Community Choice of Electricity" law (AB117) of 2002 makes it ILLEGAL to set aside EE funds for utilities. From now on, "any party" has the right to apply to administer the funds.

Barbara George of Women's Energy Matters stated: " The investor-owned-utilities (IOUs) admit that they have a conflict of interest with EE, since they make the highest profits and stock prices by selling more, not less electricity. That is why former Pres. of the CPUC, Loretta Lynch gave non-utility EE providers their first-ever opportunity in 2002, to bid for \$50 m/yr of the funds. Now we have proof that ratepayers get a better deal when non-utility EE providers are in charge. In their very first year, the fifty independents winners are running rings around utilities in residential EE programs, and are as good as utilities in commercial/industrial programs, according to a recent study ranking the cost-effectiveness of all programs (attached)."

Many non-utility businesses are seasoned experts who have performed EE work for years as subcontractors to utilities. Now they can run programs on their own, without the extra layer of bureaucracy and expense that the utilities impose. At risk of utility retaliation, many have spoken up in this proceeding for independent administration.

Paul Fenn of Local Power stated: "WEM and Local Power are prepared to go to Court to defend the rights of Community Choice cities and other non-utility EE providers to bid for 100% of the funds, but we would prefer to avoid a long Court battle." Commissioner Brown, a former San Francisco Public Defender, is the swing vote.

Maurice Campbell of SF's Community First Coalition commented, "The East Coast blackout is another warning to get these programs into the hands of those who really care. If conservation had been comprehensively applied over the past decades, the load on the grid and power plants would have been more manageable, and we would have been less vulnerable to manipulation during the energy crisis. Comm. Kennedy wants us to build more power plants instead of relying on conservation, solar and wind. Her solution will increase congestion on the grid — like putting more cars on the highway. If consumers want higher electricity prices, less reliability and more environmental damage,

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they'll be happy with her proposed decision. Otherwise, they should call Commissioner Brown (415-703-1407) and ask him to support Judge Malcolm's Alternate Decision."