

**Testimony of
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Washington DC, 20001**

**Before the House Natural Resources
Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee
Bureaucratic Delays and the Costs to Ratepayers and Electric Power Systems
1324 Longworth House Office Building
10:15 a.m.
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(TESTIMONY FOR DELIVERY)

Chairwoman Hageman, Ranking Member Hoyle, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is George Arhos. I am a Journeyman Lineman and serve as an International Representative for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the largest electrical union in the country with nearly 887,000 members both active and retired, including vegetation management professionals—line clearance tree trimmers and inspectors. IBEW local 1245 is one of the largest IBEW local unions in the country. they represent nearly 30,000 members, including 5,000 vegetation management professionals—line clearance tree trimmers and inspectors—working for energy providers across central and northern California and northern Nevada, including Pacific Gas and

Electric Company, Sacramento Municipal Utility District,
Northern California Power Agency, and NV Energy.

I am a nearly 30-year IBEW member and a trained journeyman
lineman. I Chair the Main and Executive Sub-committees for the
National Electrical Safety Code, Sit

on the Steering and Executive Committees for the Electrical
Transmission and Distribution Partnership with OSHA, Preside
over the National Cable Splicing

Certification Board, sit on the Electrical Industry Certification
Association and several other Industry committees and groups

I am here to speak about wildfire prevention, grid reliability,
worker safety, and energy affordability. These issues are directly
connected.

Every day, IBEW line clearance crews work in high-risk
environments removing trees and vegetation that threaten power
lines—often on federal lands. When vegetation contacts
energized lines, the result can be an outage or a wildfire.

Utilities need a clear, consistent, and timely process to remove
hazardous vegetation. Instead, routine maintenance on federal
lands faces overlapping regulations, permitting delays, seasonal

restrictions, and inconsistent standards. Projects are frequently halted by regulatory red tape or conflicting requirements.

These delays are not just bureaucratic inconveniences. They increase wildfire risk and drive up electricity costs.

Wildfires destroy infrastructure, interrupt service, and require expensive emergency repairs. According to RMI, wildfire-related costs account for roughly 16 percent of total electricity costs for California customers. Delays in permitting also increase workforce costs. When crews must repeatedly mobilize and demobilize due to uncertainty, recruitment expenses rise and temporary labor shortages can occur. Those costs ultimately reach ratepayers.

IBEW Local 1245 supports using every available tool to mitigate and prevent wildfires. That is why we support the Fix Our Forests Act. Coordinating grid hardening and vegetation management across federal lands will reduce wildfire risk, improve grid reliability, and enhance worker and community safety.

Training and workforce standards are equally important. Working near energized lines requires highly skilled professionals. Mistakes in this environment can result in loss of life, property destruction, and disruption of essential services. Yet training standards often vary by contractor or may not exist at all.

The IBEW strongly supports minimum training standards. California's SB 247 provides a strong model by establishing training requirements, worker qualifications, and prevailing wage protections. Since its implementation, the industry has experienced lower turnover, fewer injuries, and stronger career pathways.

Delivering electric power is hazardous work. IBEW members understand the systems and the risks better than anyone. Union-backed training prepares them to expect the unexpected and respond safely.

Protecting the health and safety of the line workforce has been a founding principle of the IBEW for more than 130 years.

Allowing utilities to proactively remove hazardous trees before they cause fires is common-sense public policy. The devastating wildfires we have seen across California and the West make clear that prevention, coordination, and workforce standards are not optional—they are essential.

Thank you for your time and attention. I look forward to your questions