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BY GUEST COMMENTARY 

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## How California can wake from the wildfire-blackout nightmare



**By Nat Kreamer and Mark Ferron, Special to CalMatters**

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The wildfires and blackouts that have blighted our state are causing many Californians to question utility motivations, the effectiveness of regulators to protect citizens' interests,

and, ironically, the clean energy and grid investments that mitigate wildfire risk and improve electricity system reliability.

To break the cycle of wildfires, blackouts, and electricity rate hikes, we need determined leadership by Gov. Gavin Newsom and help from an industry that California uniquely has at its disposal.

Gov. Newsom took a necessary step when he named an internal team, headed by Cabinet Secretary Ana Matosantos, to lead the charge on the PG&E bankruptcy and a future plan for the utility. Now we must enlist California's world-leading energy experts to help.

The governor should appoint an external task force with the right business and technology expertise to support his internal team. The task force should make utility business model, corporate finance, and technology investment recommendations that can be implemented quickly, so we can abate further destruction and disruption, and create an electricity system that is reliable, safe, and clean. Specifically, the task force should advise the governor on:

- Concluding the PG&E bankruptcy so that investment commences immediately to create a reliable, safe, and clean power grid. The solution to PG&E should address uncertainty around wildfire victim claims and restore the faith of capital markets, as well as customers, in California's electricity system.
- Developing a utility business model that aligns the state's climate and energy priorities with strengthening grid resilience and community interests.
- Identifying the technologies and investments needed to minimize climate risk and modernize the electric grid for a 100% clean energy and transportation future.

Fortunately, California is home to an advanced energy and grid technology industry that is a global leader and innovator.

Our local businesses, investors, and employees created much of the smart grid, battery, distributed generation, and software technologies needed to run a reliable, safe, and clean electricity system.

Today, more than half a million Californians work in the advanced energy industry, which makes the products and services required to power economies with 100% clean, reliable, safe electricity.

Partnering with this industry will provide Gov. Newsom and his team expertise and resources to help solve the problem now.

We still can set a course for our electricity system to better serve ratepayers, utility workers, fire victims, the state's economy, and our fragile environment. How we solve this crisis will have an impact on global efforts to control climate change.

By combining California's advanced energy expertise with strong government leadership, we can resolve this crisis and power the world's fifth largest economy with clean, reliable, safe electricity.

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