



2023 Year-End Review

In 2023, Local Clean Energy Alliance (LCEA) faced many challenges and continued its important work to ensure equitable access to local, clean energy resources.



In August 2023, LCEA lost its longtime Coordinator Al Weinrub. Al's life was celebrated by hundreds of people, family, friends, current and former colleagues. Many in attendance learned how long and varied Al's commitment to justice on all fronts had been. Just before his passing, we also learned that Al's collected writings would be housed at UMass Amherst in the [Al Weinrub Justice Papers Collection](#). Donations to help digitize Al's writings to make them more accessible are requested at the [Al Weinrub Justice Fund](#).

Al Weinrub's legacy for energy democracy carries on through LCEA's work.



Local and Regional Work

Advocacy at Ava Community Energy – formerly East Bay Community Energy (EBCE)



LCEA continues to focus its advocacy on the local, public not-for-profit electricity agency, now called Ava Community Energy (formerly East Bay Community Energy). LCEA and East Bay Clean Power Alliance (organized and led by LCEA) were critical for the formation of Ava Community Energy back in 2016. Local elections in 2022 resulted in a mostly new Ava Board of Directors, who have seemed more open to proposals LCEA and allies have argued for.

Our focus areas for 2023 have included follow-up on the \$15 million in surplus rate-payer funds, which Ava staff originally proposed as a gift to a local hospital in exchange for getting the agency's name on a hospital program to research and treat asthma. LCEA and allies were able to convince the Board that such a gift would violate the agency's mission and that the funds should be used instead to directly address asthma triggers by replacing gas stoves with electric ranges in low income communities, in households with asthma sufferers a program the agency calls, Health E Communities. Though we achieved that victory, the agency still lacks full transparency despite calls by LCEA and allies for Ava staff to report on the project before the Board and public.

Our victories with Ava Community Energy in 2023 include getting the Board to agree to re-examine how to spend \$14.5 million in surplus funds anticipated from the 2023-2024 budget. Staff had earmarked that money to be applied as a one-time \$5 bill credit. We argued that the bill credits have only fleeting and limited benefits, whereas investing those funds in local clean energy resources (as one of the stated goals of the agency) could provide lasting economic, health and climate benefits. Questioning by Board members also revealed that the bill credits for residential customers would be small compared with those slated for commercial and municipal customers. As a result, the Board voted not to apply the \$14.5 million for bill credits, but to consider the fate of that money closer to when the actual surplus could be predicted.

LCEA is continuing to build a case for using those surplus funds toward solar and battery installations on community-driven resilience hubs, especially in low-income communities of color. These communities suffer disproportionately from power outages, both planned and unplanned. We provided feedback to the existing [Resilient Critical Municipal Facilities Program](#), asking for more community input for site selection. Sites in phase one were not community-trusted nor community-driven spaces. However, in phase two many types of locations were included such as schools, community centers and senior centers to name a few. During discussions of the budget our advocacy led to a fund of \$2 million for technical assistance for community-based organizations (CBOs) applying for federal funds for resilience projects. This fund was itself the result of successful LCEA advocacy and has been paired with a 3-year community innovation grant program for CBOs to help the agency identify potential locations. We will continue to advocate for such funds for communities across Ava Community Energy service territory. LCEA also succeeded in getting Ava to reinstate a Community Innovation Grants program, which had been inactive for some years. We also got the budget for that program increased by \$1.4 million for a total of \$5.6 million for grants over a 4-year period. Grants will be for as much as \$100,000 per year for three years totaling \$300,000.

In the Fall of this year LCEA rejoined working with the *CCA Workforce Development and Environmental Justice Standards Alliance* to get Community Choice agencies to commit to higher workforce development standards. Most recently the alliance targeted Ava Community Energy to get the Board to adopt good standards. It has been challenging to get agreements on just what workforce development standards are to be included in a resolution, as union and environmental forces worked together to create a unified resolution. The end product included calls for Ava to agree to 30% local hire, 10% of those hires to be equity hires from communities with high unemployment figures. It also calls for 20% of project value to be done by small, local and emerging businesses (SLEB).

LCEA presents webinar: Local Advocacy Sets the Standard for Community Choice agencies on Workforce Development and Environmental Justice

On December 6th, 2023, LCEA hosted a webinar on our current advocacy with the CCA Workforce Development and Environmental Justice Standards Alliance, pushing Ava Community Energy to implement rigorous standards that protect workers including union, family sustaining wage, priority equity hires and apprenticeship programs, while also prioritizing benefits to environmental justice communities and protecting ecosystems. At this moment where millions of dollars are being slated for the renewable energy transition, it is vital that disinvested communities see these benefits. We were grateful to hear from Alexis Sutterman of the California Environmental Justice Alliance, bringing in analysis from [CEJA's Framework for CCAs to Power Equity and Democracy in California](#), from Jason Gumataotao, organizer and member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 595, Anne-Olivia Eldred of the Community Advisory Board of Ava Community Energy and Eric Veium, coordinator of the CCA Workforce Development and Environmental Justice Alliance. The webinar was moderated by Ratha Lai, founder and executive director of Critical Impact Consulting who initially helped lay the groundwork for this collaboration.

A robust discussion simultaneously highlighted both the importance of passing a resolution and the shortcomings of Ava's current proposal. Alexis spoke to the omission of clear commitments to meaningful community engagement and transparency, vital components of any attempt to instill workforce and development standards. Jason Gumataotao provided valuable insight as to the importance of equity hires, apprenticeship programs and pathways to union labor. Anne-Olivia empowered us all to push Ava Community Energy board members towards equitable programs. Finally, we heard from Eric Veium about the history of bringing these standards to CCAs across the state. We are hopeful that the board will respond to community feedback and adopt the full resolution with all necessary adjustments.

WEBINAR

Local Advocacy Sets the Standard: Community Choice Energy Agencies, Workforce Development & Environmental Justice



Wednesday December 6th, 2023
12pm PT 1pm MT 2pm CT 3pm ET

- What are important **workforce development standards** and how can they contribute to environmental justice?
- How are our **local community choice agencies** uniquely positioned to set standards on key justice issues such as environment and labor?
- How can **community groups and individuals** support this effort for clean energy jobs?

RSVP HERE: [TINYURL.COM/EJANDWORKFORCE](https://tinyurl.com/EJANDWORKFORCE)

PANELISTS



ALEXIS SUTTERMAN
Energy Equity Manager,
California Environmental
Justice Alliance



JASON GUMATAOTAO
Lead Organizer, International
Brotherhood of Electrical
Workers Local 595



ERIC VEIUM
Coordinator,
CCA Workforce and
Environmental Justice
Alliance

FACILITATOR



RATHA LAI
Founder/Executive
Director, Critical
Impact Consulting

Collaboration with the City of Hayward on Building Electrification

LCEA is collaborating with the city of Hayward to support revising their Climate Action Plan. Specifically, we are helping them create an equitable home electrification policy roadmap by educating and engaging their residents about home electrification. About 30% of Hayward residents are Spanish speakers. In 2023, we expanded our equitable building electrification work with the City of Hayward Environmental Services to include Spanish community outreach in collaboration with Cal State East Bay Public Health department to build leadership with students and monolingual Spanish community members. As part of the Hayward collaboration, LCEA recruited bilingual Spanish/ English speaking Public Health students at Cal State East Bay who LCEA will train about home electrification. The students will conduct Spanish outreach by surveying community members and recruiting for an all Spanish focus group. The data will be used to inform the city's roadmap for equitable electrification. Our youth and fellows created and designed creative outreach materials on building electrification in English and Spanish to be used in this work.

Bay Area Sierra Club and Emerald Cities Collaborative on Equity in Gas Appliance Phase-out

Our collaboration with the Bay Area chapter of the Sierra Club and Emerald Cities Collaborative was specifically to advise the Bay Area regional Air District on equity issues in a proposed “No NOx (nitrous oxides)” rule, which would effectively ban the sale of gas appliances in the Bay Area. LCEA participation included enumerating threats to low-income customers in the enforcement of that rule. In 2023, that work contributed to the Air District forming an equity advisory board, which will convene prior to the implementation of the rule to guard against harmful consequences of the NoNOx rule and the banning of gas appliances in low-income communities of color. Additionally, LCEA participated in a cohort led by Emerald Cities Collaborative. Many organizational allies came together to successfully advocate to the Air District board and pass the ban on gas appliances.

Advancing Energy System Literacy and Democracy

Workshops on Energy Democracy, with Youth and Monolingual Spanish speaking Adults

Thanks to increased capacity in Spanish proficiency amongst staff and new written materials in Spanish, LCEA has held the organization's first

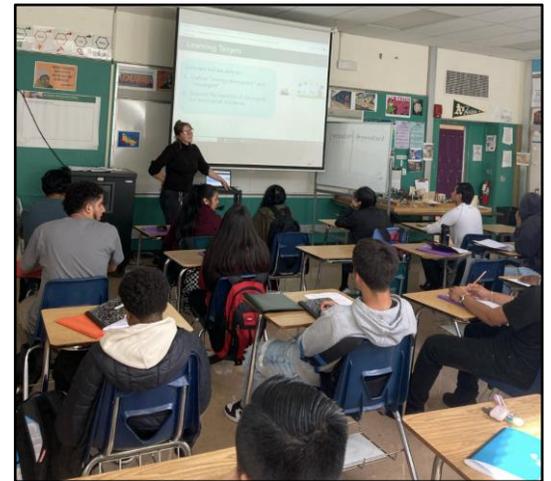
series of monolingual workshops on energy democracy in San Francisco, Oakland and regionally via Facebook live. Workshops covered a broad range of Energy Democracy topics, including utility debt relief and home electrification, and included an induction cooktop demonstration. Participants expressed understanding, enthusiasm and appreciation for the information that was shared in their language for the first time.



Energy Resilience Work with Youth at Oakland's Castlemont High School

Building on last year's collaboration with [New Voices are Rising](#), [East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation \(EBALDC\)](#), and Castlemont's [Sustainable Urban Design Academy \(SUDA\)](#), this year LCEA organizers Nyah Tisdell and Elsa Wefes-Potter taught 11th grade SUDA students about energy democracy, microgrids and resilience hubs. Expanding on the existing curriculum, they introduced the students to topics like PG&E power shut offs, publicly owned utilities and the ecological impacts of lithium extraction. In a client interview, Jessica Tovar talked to the students about LCEA's work pushing Ava Community Energy to fund resilience hubs in the East Bay, and the need to protect solar on schools from a potentially devastating CPUC decision on Virtual Net Energy Metering.

With this background on sustainability, community needs and advocacy issues, the students created resilience hub designs for Lion Creek Crossing, one of EBALDC's multi-family affordable housing complexes, located near the colosseum. In mid-October, Nyah and Elsa helped facilitate a field trip to the site. After surveying the resilience features at Lion Creek Crossing to inspire their design ideas, the students also visited the RYSE Center, a beautiful example of a community resilience hub in Richmond, which has many community spaces and sustainable design features. The Asian Pacific Environmental Network is currently working to get a microgrid installed at the Center as well.



Towards the end of the month of classroom activities, LCEA organizers led the students in an activity, walking around Castlemont High School's campus, looking at all of the sustainable features that are already present and how they can be improved. It has been so inspiring to see these youth think about where and how to build resilience in their community. LCEA will continue supporting the learning of East Oakland youth and community on microgrids, resilience hubs and energy democracy and will continue working with our community partners and advocacy allies to turn their ideas into a reality.

2023 LCEA Externs and Interns - Building New Leaders for Energy Democracy

Energy Democracy Organizer, Nyah Tisdell, worked consistently with interns Danny Huynh of the Rising Sun Center for Opportunity, Cristie Fok of New Voices are Rising and Julienne Vinculado of the People Solar Energy Fund to develop popular education materials on resilience hubs, utility debt, electrification and community solar. The interns helped put together community workshops and participated in public comment to Ava Community Energy to further Local Clean Energy Alliance's advocacy goals.

Local Clean Energy Alliance presents; Webinar - Lithium Mining Behind the Curtain: What is Equity in an Extractive Energy Transition?

On May 24, 2023, LCEA broached a new and important topic, the tension between needing a swift and complete phase in of renewable energy technologies, including storage, and the reality that these technologies, particularly the widespread introduction of lithium batteries, has devastating effects on frontline communities and ecosystems. We held a panel discussion with Johanna Bozuwa, Executive Director of the Climate and Community Project, which has published a report titled [More Mobility, Less Mining](#), Leslie Quintanilla of the Center for Interdisciplinary Environmental Justice (CIEJ) which advances research and popular education on the

impacts of mining in Chile and Argentina, and Mariela Loera of the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, which is working to implement protections for residents of Imperial and Coachella Valley where lithium extraction is set to begin.

Local Clean Energy Alliance Presents:

Lithium Mining Behind the Curtain: What is Equity in an Extractive Energy Transition?

Wednesday
May 24th 2023
12pm PST

- How are we addressing the contradiction & tension?
- Can we ensure that meeting our energy needs becomes less extractive?
- What are the solutions to energy extraction?

JOHANNA BOZUWA
Executive Director at the Climate and Community Project

LESLIE QUINTANILLA
Co-founder of the Center for Interdisciplinary Environmental Justice

MARIELA LOERA
Policy coordinator with the Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability

Register Here: tinyurl.com/notoextraction May 24th 2023 12pm PST, 1pm MT, 2pm CT, 3pm EST

With over 300 participants on Zoom we had a great discussion grounded by a short clip from the forthcoming documentary on the resistance to lithium mining in Chile and Argentina to talk about the devastating social and ecological impacts of extraction on these communities. The panelists discussed how “lithium recovery,” the process of removing lithium from geothermal brine, is framed as a less intensive form of technology although its potential impacts have not been studied yet and there has yet to be a commitment to shut down other facilities where the impacts are known.

Mariela discussed the process communities are taking to try to ensure they receive workforce and direct monetary benefit from the new industry as well as funds and commitments to redress the environmental catastrophe of the Salton Sea.

Johanna introduced how shared opportunities may be found by linking the injustices against frontline communities at the beginning and end of the supply chain, understanding they come from the same source. Those who lack reliable access to power, experiencing multiple day power outages, skyrocketing rates and the myriad of additional inequalities that stem from this are affected by the same system that causes the injustices of extraction faced by frontline communities both on indigenous lands in the United States and in the global south whose water and land is being destroyed for energy technologies. The discussion ended with a reassertion by Leslie that we begin to see that technologies are not truly sustainable, renewable or clean if people are being displaced, water contaminated, and land stolen. This requires rethinking what energy uses should be prioritized and for whom. LCEA’s ongoing work of energy democracy, centering those communities traditionally kept out of energy conversations and without access to reliable power, attempts to grapple with this reframe.

Advocacy at the California State Level

Building Energy Equity and Power (BEEP)

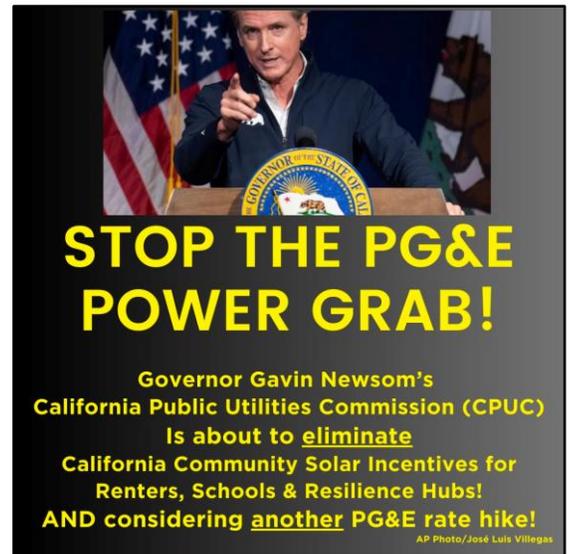
LCEA has been working with BEEP, a coalition of representatives of environmental justice groups throughout California, since late 2021. We came together to address possible threats to low-income communities of color that might result from building electrification and decarbonization policies being passed at the state level. In 2022 several listening sessions were held throughout the state to inform people of these threats and to hear from folks in low-income communities of color their responses, thoughts and fears. Information gathered in these sessions became a report: Preliminary Report: Community Priorities for Equitable Building Decarbonization released in 2022. In 2023 that report was shared with people in the California Air Resources Board (CARB). BEEP further submitted recommendations to CARB to address equity shortfalls in their scoping plan. Some of those recommendations have been partially adopted. But there is still much work to be done to ensure that building decarbonization policies will not harm communities historically discriminated against.

BEEP also sent comments related to equity in building electrification to the California Energy Commission (CEC). BEEP has been meeting with members of that commission periodically this year with recommendations similar to those sent to CARB. It remains to be seen whether BEEP advocacy with the CEC will have more impact.

Joining Efforts to Defend Energy Democracy at the CPUC

Virtual Net Energy Metering

LCEA joined hundreds of other local energy advocates trying to defeat the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) decision to gut virtual net energy metering (VNEM), a program that provides benefits to owners of an onsite shared rooftop solar project. The fight to keep the CPUC from eliminating the possibility of VNEM for farms, schools and most renters drew scores of supporters to make comments about why the VNEM program should be retained because of the benefits of the program to users and California's climate goals. However, similar to the widely unpopular Net Energy Metering decision last year (NEM 3.0), which eliminated the benefits of rooftop solar for medium income users, the CPUC voted unanimously to eliminate VNEM for all but some renters. The NEM 3.0 decision resulted in a rush for solar projects before the opportunity for NEM 2.0 sunset April 14, 2023, and the year concluded with mass solar job lay-offs.



Fixed Charge Utility Tax

The CPUC is also deciding on details of a legislative mandated fixed, income-based charge on utility bills. The charge would benefit the corporate utilities, such as PG&E. LCEA has encouraged people to get active in opposition to the proposal. Analysis by opponents suggest that the proposed charges would mean a \$360/ year increase for the lowest income families other than CARE and FERA customers, who would be exempt. A decision on this proposal has been pushed to next year, in part because of widespread opposition.

Corporate Utility Rate Hikes

The Alliance also joined efforts to oppose CPUC approval of large rate increases for the corporate utilities like PG&E. The CPUC unanimous approval of the hikes means that utility bills will increase by 30% starting in 2024, and that leap doesn't include any utility tax that will be decided next year.

Pushing Back on Utilities

Former San Jose Mayor, Sam Liccardo, recruited a diverse coalition of California utility ratepayers, labor unions, consumer advocates, public safety, small business, and environmental groups who have had enough of rising utility rates and the lack of progress on wildfire prevention. The coalition includes LCEA and ally organization, Reclaim Our Power. We joined a press release event announcing the launch of *Fire Accountability Infrastructure for Ratepayers (FAIR) California*.



The coalition includes organizations from all over California who stand in opposition to the huge rate hikes by the corporate utilities and the proposed utility tax the CPUC is considering for next year. FAIR California is calling for the state to activate Golden State Energy which would be a nonprofit, public benefit corporation. Legislation was enacted in 2020 that would allow the creation of Golden State Energy as a fix in case PG&E did not

resolve its bankruptcy or failed to meet certain fire provisions imposed by the state after the catastrophic Paradise fire.

Statewide Solidarity

Over the course of the last year, we had engaged on several issues brought to us through statewide coalition platforms. Last year, the Microgrid Equity Coalition and Local Energy Equity Coalition submitted substantive comments on the Microgrid Incentive Program proceeding and the High Distributed Energy Resources Future proceeding. The legacy of this work, spearheaded by Al Weinrub in 2022, was continued through statewide organizational meetings, which brought together insight from community and technical experts on SB 100 comments, and a number of other CPUC proceedings, which we commented on and endorsed.

We have also participated in a year of community-based organizational learning sessions with the Healthy Homes Resilient Communities program of the Green New Deal Coalition. Centering our work on microgrids for resilience hubs, LCEA along with our allies at Reclaim our Power played a pivotal role in ensuring that this work was contextualized within the issues of the broader energy system and efforts to move towards energy democracy. This resulted in half a year of learning and strategy sessions being dedicated to energy: first on “Distributed and Community Scale Renewables” and second on “Visions for the Grid of the Future.” Speaking to a broad coalition of housing and environmental justice advocates in the Green New Deal Coalition, we were able to speak to the importance of both institutional accountability and promoting energy democracy in CCAs and the local clean energy solutions that become possible when these agencies are pushed by advocates.

While LCEA focuses on leading local work on energy democracy, we remain engaged and invested in aligned statewide efforts of our allies.



Thank you for your support in 2023 - Happy Holidays and Cheers to 2024!

