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California bid for 100% clean energy stalls

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Resistance from utilities and unions blamed after legislature fails to bring clean energy bill to a vote



California, the US' biggest market for rooftop solar energy, has failed to vote on a 100% clean energy law (Photo: elenathewise/Deposit Photos)

By [Karl Mathiesen](#)

A law that would have set California on the path for an entirely non-fossil fuel based electricity system has suffered a set back after resistance from utilities and unions.

Senate Bill 100 (SB100) would have forced utilities to speed up the decarbonisation of the grid, with an overall aim of 100% clean energy by 2045.

But the legislature failed to bring the bill to a vote after interventions from the state's biggest utilities and the electrical workers union. Friday was the deadline for all legislative activity for 2017. Democrats in the utilities and energy committee could not get the votes to push the bill to a full vote in both houses.

California has huge Democratic margins in both houses and a governor in Jerry Brown who is increasingly taking on climate change as a legacy issue. The bill was also written and championed by Kevin de León, the state senate president from Los Angeles.

Despite this, representatives balked at bringing the vote. In a joint letter, California's biggest utilities Pacific Gas & Electric Company, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric Company argued the bill failed to protect consumers from potential price rises.

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NBC reported that the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers also refused to support the bill.

Green groups responded with disappointment, but noted that the bill had been delayed, not defeated. Michelle Kinman, clean energy advocate with Environment California said they would now focus on getting the bill passed at the next opportunity, in January.

“We’re disappointed that special interests short-circuited the opportunity to pass SB 100 today,” she said. “Californians – and all Americans – are demanding a cleaner, healthier future.”

Laura Wisland, a senior energy analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists, said: “Setting a goal to completely decarbonise California’s electricity sector by 2045 is bold and aspirational, and it should not be a surprise that a big new energy policy will take multiple legislative sessions to hammer out some of the details.”

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