

116TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4931

To require the Secretary of Energy to establish a grant program to reduce the risk of wildfires caused by power lines, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

DECEMBER 1, 2020

Mr. WYDEN (for himself and Mr. MERKLEY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Energy to establish a grant program to reduce the risk of wildfires caused by power lines, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Wildfire Resilient
5 Power Grid Act of 2020”.

6 **SEC. 2. MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM.**

7 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

8 (1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term “eligible enti-
9 ty” means an electric utility, including—

- 1 (A) a publicly owned electric utility;
- 2 (B) a municipal electric utility;
- 3 (C) a cooperatively owned electric utility;
- 4 (D) an investor-owned electric utility; and
- 5 (E) a Federal agency or federally owned
- 6 corporation that is an electric utility (as defined
- 7 in section 3 of the Federal Power Act (16
- 8 U.S.C. 796)).

9 (2) POWER LINE.—The term “power line” in-

10 cludes a transmission line or a distribution line, as

11 applicable.

12 (3) PROGRAM.—The term “program” means

13 the program established under subsection (b).

14 (4) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means

15 the Secretary of Energy.

16 (b) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 90 days after

17 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall es-

18 tablish within the Office of Electricity Delivery and En-

19 ergy Reliability a program under which the Secretary shall

20 make grants to eligible entities to carry out activities

21 that—

22 (1) reduce the risk of any power lines owned or

23 operated by the eligible entity causing a wildfire;

24 (2) are designed to enhance public safety; and

1 (3) are supplemental to the existing wildfire
2 risk mitigation efforts of the eligible entity planned
3 for any given year.

4 (c) APPLICATION.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—An eligible entity desiring a
6 grant under the program shall submit to the Sec-
7 retary an application at such time, in such manner,
8 and containing such information as the Secretary
9 may require.

10 (2) REQUIREMENT.—As a condition of receiving
11 a grant under the program, an eligible entity shall
12 submit to the Secretary as part of the application of
13 the eligible entity under paragraph (1) a wildfire
14 mitigation plan.

15 (d) USE OF GRANT FUNDS.—An eligible entity may
16 use a grant provided under the program—

17 (1) for the undergrounding of new and existing
18 power lines and circuits;

19 (2) to harden overhead power lines with fire re-
20 sistant equipment, such as steel poles and covered
21 wires;

22 (3) to install underground circuits;

23 (4) to install fast-tripping protection systems;

24 (5) to construct and operate 1 or more weather
25 monitoring stations;

1 (6) to install fault location equipment;

2 (7) for the relocation of power lines to road-
3 ways;

4 (8) to carry out vegetation or fuels management
5 activities in accordance with Federal, State, and
6 local laws (including regulations);

7 (9) for installation of cameras, sensors, or other
8 technology that provides real-time information about
9 conditions; and

10 (10) for other, related electric grid upgrades to
11 reduce the risk of wildfire ignition.

12 (e) PRIORITY.—In making grants under the program,
13 the Secretary shall give priority to projects that, in the
14 determination of the Secretary, will generate the greatest
15 community benefit in reducing the risk of wildfire ignition
16 from power lines or equipment relative to the cost of the
17 project.

18 (f) SET ASIDE.—In making grants under the pro-
19 gram, the Secretary shall ensure that not less than 20 per-
20 cent of the amounts made available to eligible entities
21 under the program are made available to eligible entities
22 that sell not more than 4,000,000 megawatt hours of elec-
23 tricity per year.

24 (g) MATCHING REQUIREMENT.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in para-
2 graph (2), as a condition of receiving a grant under
3 the program, an eligible entity shall provide match-
4 ing funds in the form of cash or an in-kind contribu-
5 tion in an amount equal to not less than 100 percent
6 of the amounts made available under the grant.

7 (2) EXCEPTION FOR SMALL UTILITIES.—With
8 respect to an eligible entity that sells not more than
9 4,000,000 megawatt hours of electricity per year, as
10 a condition of receiving a grant under the program,
11 the eligible entity shall provide matching funds in
12 the form of cash or an in-kind contribution in an
13 amount equal to not less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the amounts
14 made available under the grant.

15 (3) EXISTING EFFORTS.—On approval by the
16 Secretary, amounts expended by an eligible entity on
17 wildfire risk mitigation efforts during the 1-year pe-
18 riod ending on the date on which a grant is received
19 under the program shall count toward the matching
20 requirement described in paragraph (1) or (2), as
21 applicable.

22 (h) BIENNIAL REPORT.—Not later than 2 years after
23 the date of enactment of this Act, and every 2 years there-
24 after, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on En-
25 ergy and Natural Resources of the Senate and the Com-

1 mittee on Energy and Commerce of the House of Rep-
2 resentatives a report describing the quantity by which the
3 risk of wildfires caused by power lines has been reduced
4 under the program during the year covered by the report.

5 (i) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is
6 authorized to be appropriated to the Secretary to carry
7 out the program \$1,000,000,000 for each of fiscal years
8 2022 through 2031.

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