

# How to Work With Utilities to Change Policies

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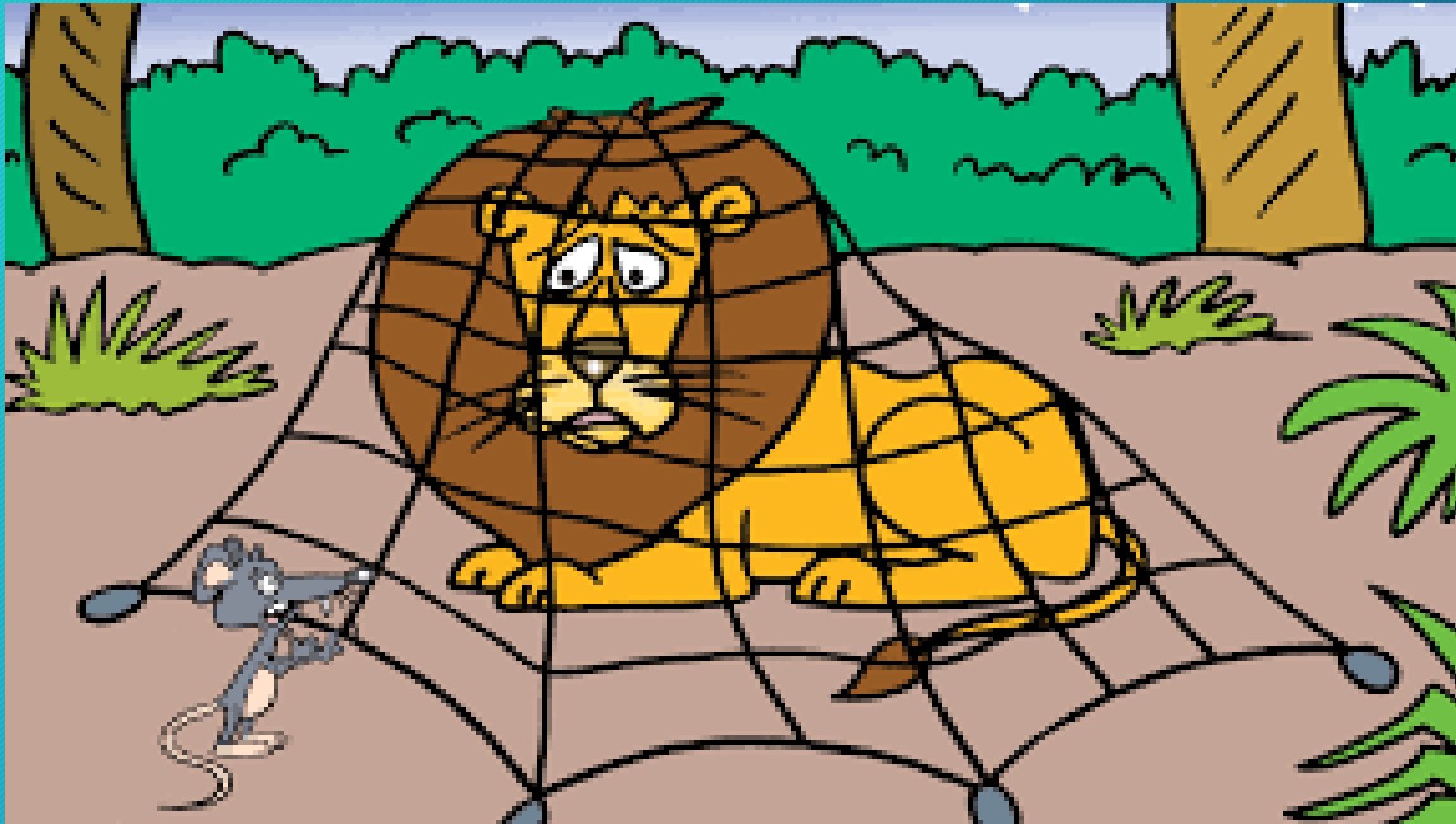
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The relationship with utilities is often adversarial.



There are ways to work more constructively with utilities.





## Look for common ground; win-win situations.

- Utilities are profit-making corporations.
- Find approaches that advance the goals of clean, resilient, local energy that also enable the utility to make money (or save money.)
- The Clean Coalition is working with utilities on a proposal for community microgrids that would be operated by a utility. They would they provide resilience and reliability, but also enable the utility to make money by continuing to sell energy after the grid goes down. –Ben Schwartz

## More examples of win-win scenarios.

- Utilities earn profits based on capital investments but not on their operating budgets. Initiatives that reduce operating costs benefit both ratepayers and the utility. —Sahm White
- If the regulators have imposed a new mandate on utilities, offer a solution that also advances your goals.—Mike Florio
- Grants and demonstration projects.—Larisa Dobriansky



## Find the right utility staff member to advocate internally.

- To find a sympathetic staff member, start with the regulatory affairs team and work your way up.
- Mike Florio wanted to address dilapidated, unsafe energy systems at mobile home parks. He found a PG&E employee who had grown up in a park. They developed a program where PG&E could take over the operation of a park's energy system. Initially a pilot program, now the utility has taken over the operations at many mobile home parks.
- Safety has improved, PG&E makes money.

# Regulatory proceedings provide opportunities.

- Regulatory proceedings can facilitate communication, understanding, clarity. Participate as a party. Contribute to the scoping process—identifying issues and objectives, defining terms, establishing ground rules, procedures, schedules.
- Workshops are opportunities for face-to-face dialogues, sharing objectives, proposals.
- Working groups provide forums for negotiations, clarifying positions, identifying common ground, each side's highest priorities, possible areas of compromise.



# Legislation and Regulatory Action

- Regulators are supposed to restrain the utilities—stop them from taking harmful actions, compel them to take positive actions. Get involved to encourage regulatory intervention.
- Legislation and regulators can impose mandates, requiring utilities to work with other parties. Examples—utilities must provide real-time or short-interval customer usage data to CCAs; and must work with CCAs on formatting customer bills to show generation charges.  
--Todd Edmister.



# When all else fails.

- Sometimes regulators fail to require utilities to act in the public interest. On some issues, trying to work cooperatively with the utilities simply fails. Bob Perry's suggestion to force change: build a community that is entirely off the grid. Demonstrate its resilience--the highest priority loads continue to receive uninterrupted service during emergencies that shut down the grid. This should compel the utilities and the regulators to take notice and change their positions.
- Another approach: municipalities can create their own utilities. IOUs will respond when threatened with losing customers, assets and revenues to public entities.

# CONCLUSION

## Top takeaways:

- Look for win-win situations where the utility's interests are served but you can also achieve your objectives.
- Participate in the regulatory process—workshops, working groups, proceedings—as opportunities to engage with utilities and force them to act in the public interest.



Thank you!

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