

# Coalition opposing Marin Clean energy has strong ties to PG&E

Richard Halstead

Posted: 02/26/2010 06:31:29 PM PST

Five mailers sent to Marin residents opposing the Marin Clean Energy initiative bear the name of the Common Sense Coalition, but in fine print the mailers all state: "This information was provided by Coalition for Reliable and Affordable Electricity, a coalition that includes Pacific Gas and Electric Co."

Besides having PG&E as a member, the Coalition for Reliable and Affordable Electricity has a number of other ties to the investor-owned utility.

The clean energy initiative is a program of the Marin Energy Authority. The authority, a group consisting of the county of Marin, San Rafael, Mill Valley, Sausalito, Tiburon, San Anselmo, Fairfax and Belvedere, is competing with PG&E as a retailer of electricity in Marin with the aim of cutting the emission of greenhouse gases by boosting renewable energy use.

A mailer sent to Marin residents this week invited recipients to attend a meeting with other opponents of the Marin Energy Authority at 10 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 27 at the San Rafael Community Center, 618 B St.

Former San Rafael Assemblyman Joe Nation, who will emcee Saturday's meeting, confirmed Friday that the Common Sense Coalition and the Coalition for Reliable and Affordable Electricity are the same animal.

"The broader Coalition for Reliable and Affordable Electricity is the umbrella organization," Nation said. "They're funding what we're doing in Marin, and they're also funding other things."

Nation acknowledged being paid a retainer by the coalition but declined to say how much he is receiving.

"It will be disclosed at the appropriate time," Nation said.

The Coalition for Reliable and Affordable Electricity is a nonprofit that was formed in 2005. According to the organization's 2008 tax returns, the most recent information available to the public, the president of the organization is Dan Richard, PG&E's former senior vice president for public policy and government relations. Also listed as a director is Nancy McFadden, a senior vice president and senior adviser to PG&E's CEO Peter Darbee. Steven S. Lucas is listed as the coalition's principal officer.

None of the officers could be reached for comment Friday. Nation said he didn't

know if the organization has the same officers today.

Lucas, a partner in the Sacramento law firm of Nielsen, Merksamer, Parrinello, Mueller & Naylor, is also listed as treasurer of the Yes on 16 political action committee. Proposition 16, which will appear on the June 8 ballot, would require two-thirds approval from local voters before cities or counties could choose an alternate energy provider.

All of the Yes on 16 committee's contributions, \$3.5 million, have come from PG&E, which has told its shareholders it plans to spend \$25 million to \$35 million backing the initiative.

In December, a mailer warning against programs similar to the clean energy initiative went out to San Francisco businesses from a group calling itself the Common Sense Coalition. The mailer stated that, "In 2008 our Common Sense Coalition organized more than 50,000 San Franciscans to defeat Proposition H."

Proposition H would have directed the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to study the best way to provide clean, sustainable, reasonably priced energy to residents. It also would have required that 51 percent of the city's electrical needs be met by clean energy suppliers by 2017 and 100 percent by 2040.

According to its tax filing, the Coalition for Reliable and Affordable Electricity spent more than \$9 million in 2008. Of that amount, more than \$4 million was spent on advertising/promotion and about \$1.8 million on printing and publications.

So far, the Marin Energy Authority has sent out just one small mailer urging recipients not to opt-out of the clean energy initiative and suggesting that they instead opt to pay a bit more each month in order to get energy produced from 100 percent renewable sources.

"It's tough taking on somebody who can spend \$25 million on a statewide campaign and \$10 million to crush us," said Supervisor Charles McGlashan, who serves as chairman of the Marin Energy Authority's board.