



MEDIA RELEASE

Coalition Delivers 130,000+ Signatures to CPUC In Support of California's Successful Solar Net Metering Program

Labor, Consumer, Justice, Faith, Environmental, Business & Health Organizations Join Together to Save Solar Consumer Choice and Jobs

San Francisco, November 5, 2015 – Pushing wheelbarrows full of signed postcards and petitions from residents throughout the state, a diverse coalition of consumer, environmental, faith, public health, environmental justice, and business organizations gathered on the steps of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to deliver more than 130,000 signatures in support of net metering, a critical solar policy that gives the state's energy consumers the opportunity to generate their own energy with solar power. This solar petition delivery marks the largest number of public comments ever recorded at the CPUC on any issue.

“Once again, Californians all across the state are making clear that access to clean solar energy is a top priority,” said **Dan Jacobson, program director with Environment California Research & Policy Center**. “Eliminating the primary policy that has made California the #1 solar state in the country would fly in the face of public opinion, our newly minted 50% renewables law, and California's ability to be a strong leader at the United Nations climate change summit in Paris next month.”

Over the past few months, there has been a growing outcry from pro-solar voices throughout the state calling on the Brown Administration and the CPUC to reject proposals by the state's investor-owned utilities – PG&E, SCE and SDG&E – that would eliminate net metering and add new discriminatory fees, effectively making solar 2-3 times more expensive than it is today. If approved, the proposals would halt consumer solar adoption and would put local jobs, public health benefits and climate progress at risk. They would also make California the first major solar state to abandon net metering, a cornerstone policy of consumer energy choice and solar market growth across the country.

“Against the backdrop of record drought and a devastating fire season fueled by climate change, the potential for growth in rooftop solar is a huge bright spot for California,” said **CREDO Climate Campaigns Director Elijah Zarlin**. “After everything Governor Brown has done to support clean energy, it would be unthinkable for our CPUC to go along with utilities' desperate ploy to block Californians from going solar.”

The price of going solar has dropped by half over the past five years, giving families, schools, businesses and others an affordable option for lowering their electricity bills and investing in a brighter California.

"Solar on my rooftop has lowered my energy bills to \$4.19, and more solar helps our community avoid building new power plants. We need to do everything we can to take toxins out of our communities," said **Dr. Espanola Jackson**, the first low-income homeowner to take advantage of San Francisco's landmark GoSolarSF program and Godmother of Bayview-Hunters Point, a community that has faced many environmental injustices.

Advocates note that consumer investment in local solar power reduces the need for expensive and polluting utility infrastructure, which delivers community-wide cost savings and health benefits throughout the state.

"To end our dependence on polluting fossil fuels, California needs vastly more solar energy than we have today. Students care about net metering because we envision a future in which solar panels are on every roof across California. Consumers need to be paid fairly for the solar electricity generated on their homes in order to achieve this vision," said **Nicole Walter, a campus organizer at the University of California-Berkeley with the California Public Interest Research Group (CALPIRG)**.

"The American Lung Association in California supports net metering to expand rooftop solar opportunities for renters and disadvantaged communities," said **Olivia (Gertz) Diaz-Lapham, President and CEO of the American Lung Association in California**. "Expanding solar power generation will build a cleaner, healthier energy future for all Californians."

Rooftop solar is also making California a national leader in climate action and the clean energy economy. The utility proposals threaten the jobs of more than 54,000 people employed by the solar industry statewide, which is more than the state's five largest utilities combined. These jobs are inherently local and create real opportunity for California workers to be part of a growing industry that is also making the world a better place.

"Net metering can be a win-win for the solar industry and our members coming from local low-income communities," said Diego Hernandez of Laborers Local 261, which organized over a dozen members alongside Laborers Local 304 for a May 21 CPUC rally in support of net metering. "Up and down the state, we've seen solar create good-paying clean jobs for our members, and our training facilities are skilling up our members accordingly."

In place in 44 states, net metering is a policy that fairly credits solar consumers for the surplus electricity they export to the grid. The program has helped fuel the transformational growth of solar and democratization of energy across California. A diverse and growing set of stakeholders is urging the CPUC to protect net metering in order to continue to expand solar access to more Californians. The CPUC is expected to determine the fate of net metering by the end of the year.

The 130,000+ petitions were gathered from the general public and delivered to the CPUC today via several boxes and wheelbarrows. A diverse group of organizations participated in the petition drive, including: 350 Bay Area, California Interfaith Power & Light, California League of Conservation Voters, CALPIRG Students, CalSEIA, CEJA, Courage Campaign, CREDO Action, Environment California Research & Policy Center, Greenpeace, Sierra Club, SolarCity, Sunrun and Vote Solar.

Additional Quotes:

"After the signing of AB 693 (Eggman), which creates the nation's largest solar program for low-income renters, it's more important than ever to ensure our rooftop solar programs support our state's climate and clean energy goals and ensure access to solar for all. Weakening rooftop solar programs will only give utilities the power to build more dirty energy, which will hurt our climate, health, and economy," said **Strela Cervas, co-director of the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)**. "CEJA strongly urges the California Public Utilities Commission to continue to make net metering available to build upon California's thriving rooftop solar industry that will help more low-income families and communities of color participate in and benefit from a growing equitable energy economy for all Californians."

"Every major religion has a mandate to care for Creation. We were given natural resources to sustain us, but we were also given the responsibility to act as good stewards and preserve life for future generations. We may be many different faiths and even none at all, but we are living on one earth – and so we are all called to act on climate. Rooftop solar is empowering Californians to do just that," said the **Reverend Will Scott, program director for California Interfaith Power & Light**.

"Net metering and more solar has resulted in lower bills and clean environments for our neediest communities," added Leah Pimentel, third-generation resident and community leader of Bayview-Hunters Point who has personally helped over 70 low-income families go solar. "Long ago, only the wealthy could afford these panels, but today solar does so much in creating sustainability throughout all communities."

"Since working with community activists in Bayview-Hunters Point to shut down the Hunters Point Power Plant in 2006, Brightline has looked to residential solar to empower traditional environmental justice communities to create their own clean energy," said **Dilini Lankachandra, Legal Fellow at Brightline Defense**. "Progressive net metering policies will benefit these communities by reducing the demand for dirty power sources, which are disproportionately housed in low-income and ethnically diverse communities while at the same time providing dignified jobs for local residents."

"For too long, polluting utilities have advocated for new and expensive polluting power plants that sicken the most vulnerable people in California and contribute to climate change. At the same time, they're attacking one of our best alternatives to dirty power plants: rooftop solar. We urge the CPUC to support rooftop solar and the cleaner air, healthier communities and more livable planet that come along with it," said **Evan Gillespie, Director with Sierra Club's My Generation Campaign**.

"Rooftop solar is critical to our transition to clean renewable energy in California. We need to protect rooftop solar, encouraging its adoption as the market continued to develop and making sure the benefits of solar are available to all California families," said **Lisa Altieri, organizer with the 350 Bay Area 100% Renewable Clean Energy Campaign**.

For more information, visit: <http://www.oursolarrights.org/state-campaigns/california/>

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