

SUNSOLAR SOLUTIONS Discusses Recent News Regarding AZ Energy Buyback Regulations

Arizona Could Upend the Program For Homeowners Going Solar

PEORIA, AZ, UNITED STATES, November 7, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Here's the bad news first: Arizona's utility regulators voted 3-2 last month to reopen their investigation into how best to strike a sustainable economic

balance between electric companies and customers with rooftop solar, whose unused energy those companies buy and resell elsewhere on the grid. That investigation had originally ended in 2017 after three years of deliberation. It resulted in a deal whereby the state's utilities would pay homeowners a government-set rate for the energy that they export to the grid.



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changes are made. That's a precedent that the commission had established and intends to respect.

Commissioner Nick Myers, who pushed for the vote, has insisted that a more drastic decrease in payments to solar homeowners is warranted due to the solar industry's increased size and strength since 2017. His stance against the current payment model (Resource Comparison Proxy export rate or RCP) that he refers to as a "subsidy." His stance has been echoed by other conservative commissioners, including the chairman, Jim O'Connor.



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The good news concerns the public-comments segment of the meeting, during which supporters of the state's most economically and environmentally promising industry pushed back against the threatens to keep Arizonans stuck in the past.

The many Arizonans conveyed the dangers posed by this backwards trend very eloquently and persuasively. Commenters addressed what is most directly threatened by a potential overhaul of the state's solar economics: regulatory certainty, an intangible but vital asset for any business community.

"How is anyone [...] supposed to know what decisions to rely on if they're going to be scrapped every few years?" asked Autumn Johnson, executive director of the Arizona chapter of the Solar Energy Industries Association. "We have a different commission every two years. No one — not the utilities, the ratepayers, or ancillary industries like solar — will know what to do if you can't make up your minds."

Robert Bulechek, an energy-efficiency consultant who advises companies on solar energy, testified from personal experience to the destructive effect of capricious regulation. In Tucson, there have been long wait times for installations because of low staffing levels, and business owners have attributed their lack of hiring to fears that the regulatory environment will change, he said. And the Arizona Corporation Commission's (ACC's) decision to reinvestigate pricing for distributed solar power is an example of government actions that cause such apprehension. "What solar company is going to hire new crews when they're not sure if the Corporation Commission is going to severely damage the solar industry?" he asked.

The effects of a potential alteration to the solar industry's ground rules are unlikely to stay isolated to their intended targets. Sam Friedberg, a solar consultant, solar-system owner, and



Power Grid



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customer of APS, explained. "We all know that a proposal that enables a lower RCP rate abruptly and unpredictably would be devastating for future solar adoption. The whole industry here seems to be aware of that," Friedberg said.

"Mr. Chairman, you said earlier that contracts signed will be honored," Friedberg said. "There are contracts that have been signed by businesses for leases, for employee training, other costs and investments that simply wouldn't be honored if this changes this business model."

Louis Woofenden, owner of Net Zero Solar in Tucson, attributes his success as an independent solar entrepreneur partly to a stable business environment and "staggering [technological advances](#)," which were fostered by good policy at the federal and state levels. Other policies, however, have created problems. He urged the commissioners to consider how their decisions could affect Arizona's ability to live up to its pro-business ideals.

Friedberg did not mince words about what was ultimately at stake in a future discussion over rate changes. "It is a business killer; It is a job killer," Friedberg said.

Commissioners who support revising the payment model for exported solar power consistently describe that model as a "subsidy" to homeowners who have invested in solar. This erroneous idea was the subject of impassioned criticism. Arizonans who spoke to the commission exposed the absurdity of this notion, especially in the surrounding economic context.

Court Rich, an attorney who represents solar entrepreneurs in Arizona, stressed the incongruity of that description and the financial reality. APS's own data shows that the utility pays solar homeowners less for their surplus energy than it pays for energy from other sources. "That's not a subsidy," Rich said. "That's a great deal for ratepayers."

Burechek highlighted the crucial context missing from this discussion: the subsidies enjoyed by the energy industry's entrenched interests. "The utilities are already being subsidized by not having to pay the cost of the health and climate harm that their pollution causes," he said. "That's a cost on the entire population. Solar, and renewables in general, don't have those health and climate costs."

Arizona's solar community might be in for a bumpy road with these commissioners driving it toward an uncertain future. Thankfully, members of this community have shown up to serve them notice that their constituents will be there to keep them from driving into a ditch.

It's not too late to secure your energy future. Homeowners can [call SUNSOLAR SOLUTIONS to have a design prepared for their home](#) free of charge. 623-562-9009

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