

HELP WYOMING SAVE ROOFTOP SOLAR (AGAIN!)

Public comment needed to kill upcoming draft bill on net metering

BACKGROUND

Net metering is a policy that allows owners of small, on-site renewable energy systems (homes, schools, and businesses) to get credit for the extra power they supply to the electricity grid. For example, when a homeowner's rooftop solar panels generate more power than what is needed on sunny days, the excess electricity is sent to the grid and can be used by neighbors. Net metering allows the owners of the solar array to get credit for this extra energy supplied to the grid, which they can use later in the year, covering the cost of future electricity needs. Currently, Wyoming law only allows small residential-sized systems — 25 kilowatts or less — to be eligible for net metering credit.

The Wyoming State Legislature's Interim Corporations, Elections & Political Subdivisions Committee is considering a bill that would dramatically overhaul the existing net metering statute governing rooftop solar and other distributed energy sources. The bill contains amendments to existing net metering law that will make small scale renewable systems much less affordable for Wyomingites by reducing the amount they are paid for the energy these systems produce.¹ To be clear, altering the viability of net metering means **killing businesses like rooftop solar companies in Wyoming** by eliminating important financial incentives and adding considerable economic uncertainty for existing and future net-metered customers. Additionally, if this bill were to pass, it would make net metering optional and give utilities the ability to set unfavorable terms for those with net-metered facilities.

WHAT WYOMING STANDS TO LOSE

This bill threatens to destroy an emerging industry at a time when **Wyoming should be diversifying its economy** and creating new employment opportunities in the energy sector. There are currently 13 solar businesses in our state, and about 159 jobs in the solar industry.² **According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, solar jobs are the fastest growing occupation and solar energy is one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the country.** We should be encouraging the growth of rooftop solar businesses — not destroying them! Finally, this bill would threaten the long-term investments made by nearly 1300 net-metered customers across Wyoming and would make it more difficult for residents, schools, and local governments to save money by producing local, renewable power onsite.

Tell the committee to stop attacking our current net metering law and start focusing on the real job and cost-saving opportunities that Wyoming desperately needs.

A BILL DEVELOPED WITHOUT PUBLIC INPUT

As if these concerns weren't enough, we are seriously alarmed at the lack of transparency around the development of this bill. **Last year, hundreds of Wyomingites submitted letters or provided public testimony defending net metering to this very committee.** Despite that outpouring of public support, this year's bill was brought up only *after* the public comment period in the final minutes of the committee's last meeting in September. In fact, the first publicly available version of this bill was only made available 2 weeks prior to the November committee meeting and was written without any significant effort to engage stakeholders who will be negatively impacted by the change in policy.

¹ Although this bill could impact all types of distributed energy generation it would mostly impact rooftop solar customers and companies. Solar energy makes up 83 percent of the total net-metered generation in Wyoming.

² Solar Energy Industries Association. Wyoming State Spotlight. 2019.

KEY TALKING POINTS

- **Wyoming can grow the rooftop solar industry without harming other utility customers.** Net metering is responsible for less than 6/100th's of a percent of all retail electric sales of Wyoming. For context, the total amount of net-metered capacity installed in Wyoming is 7.69 MW – roughly the capacity of 2-3 averaged sized utility-scale wind turbines. The best available research suggests that net metering does NOT have a noticeable impact on the rates of other power customers until it reaches 5–10 percent of retail electric sales. Wyoming could grow the amount of energy produced by net metering nearly 100 times and just barely be within this threshold!³
- **Unfairly targeting net-metered consumers limits energy choice for Wyomingites.** Net metering is an important tool that gives Wyomingites the ability to choose how they get power. This policy provides for a fair deal between folks who have invested in these systems and the utility company, ensuring that small-scale energy systems are accessible to a range of Wyoming homes and businesses.
- **Wyoming should not limit the growth of the fastest growing industry and job market in the United States.** Wyoming ranks 43rd in the country for solar jobs per capita, yet has the 8th best solar resource in the nation. We need to diversify our economy and support innovation in the private sector to close this gap. We also need policies that help grow jobs and keep Wyoming as a viable place to make a living in a 21st century economy.
- **Legislators should consider the many additional values of producing local, clean, renewable energy.** Rooftop solar has health, social, and environmental benefits that far outpace other forms of energy production. When excess energy is provided to the grid, it provides cost benefits to other customers by preventing utilities from overbuilding unnecessary capacity and avoiding distribution losses since energy is produced at the same location where it is used.
- **If it's not broke, stop trying to fix it.** Hundreds of Wyomingites have made strategic, long-term investments into net metering facilities across the state. People who have invested in these systems are frustrated at repeated attempts in the legislature to curtail private investment in energy choice despite the lack of evidence that net metering is causing any harm to other utility customers.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

The Corporations committee will discuss the bill at its meeting on Wednesday, November 11. Please contact these members and urge them to keep Wyoming's net metering law the way it is, and oppose any new bills. *In your comments, please be respectful and concise, and speak from your experience and values. If you have a solar installation on your property, please talk about the direct impact you will feel.*

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³ U.S. Department of Energy and Association of Utility Commissioners