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Advocates Reaffirm Rooftop Solar Net Metering Proposal's Benefits in NC

RALEIGH, N.C. – This week, in [comments](#) to the NC Utilities Commission, clean energy advocates, including North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA), the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), and the Southern Environmental Law Center (SEL) on behalf of Vote Solar and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, reaffirmed the benefits to be realized through the [Solar Choice Net Metering proposal](#) originally filed on November 29th. The proposal, if approved, along with a pending Smart \$aver Solar incentive, by the NC Utilities Commission would offer future net metering customers significant up-front savings when adopting clean solar energy. Included in the Solar Choice Net Metering proposal is a direct rebate, new solar pricing signals to reduce utility costs for all North Carolina customers, and the preservation of electricity bill savings for current net metering customers.

This agreement was reached as part of proactive negotiations prompted by the North Carolina General Assembly directives to the Commission to revise net metering rates. Per the requirements of HB589 and HB951 passed by the NC legislature, North Carolina is required to revisit the current net metering structure before 2027. The advocates sought a collaborative path forward to benefit solar customers and the grid as a whole in North Carolina, while avoiding battles over harmful proposals that rooftop solar customers have weathered in states like Nevada, Arizona and, more recently, California and Florida. While there has been some concern about the changes this agreement presents to the industry, it mitigates many of the worst-case scenarios seen in the aforementioned states, which can have devastating results for rooftop solar communities.

The clean energy advocates in this agreement came to the table with a desire to continue the strong long-term growth of clean solar energy in North Carolina, the sustainability of the industry and jobs that provide it, while also providing predictability and stability for existing and future net metering customers. While negotiations took place over the course of multiple years regarding solar policies in North Carolina and South Carolina, there was a sense of urgency to reach an adequate agreement, as the current rebate program in North Carolina is set to expire at the end of 2022. Overall, proactively engaging with the utility far in advance of the 2027 deadline helps to ensure solar customers have a well-defined path to financial savings with an adequate return on investment window. This agreement opens the door for additional clean energy technologies, such as electric vehicles and energy storage, while limiting dependence on polluting fossil fuel powered peaker plants during periods of high demand.

"The new solar pricing signals combined with incentives save money for all North Carolina ratepayers, reduce electricity demand on the grid when it matters most, and encourage greater adoption of electric vehicles and battery storage," according to Lauren Bowen, senior attorney and regional solar initiative leader at the Southern Environmental Law Center. "All elements of the proposal should be considered together, keeping in mind the state's pending Carbon Plan and with the aim to build on this initial framework in the near future to keep North Carolina a leader in clean solar energy. Crucial to our future are incorporating programs to increase solar access and further encourage solar paired with storage to lower heat-trapping carbon pollution."

"While NCSEA and our partners understand that this change may be difficult in the short-term, the long-term predictability affords the continued growth and sustainability of rooftop solar as a whole in North Carolina," according to Peter Ledford, General Counsel and Director of Policy, NC Sustainable Energy Association. "Further, this agreement encourages beneficial electrification, including high-efficiency heat pumps, electric vehicles, and residential storage to move us closer to the state's carbon reduction goals. We don't enter into these agreements lightly, and truly believe that Solar Choice Net Metering is the right choice to reach an affordable, accessible clean energy future for all."

"Price signals are important. The approach we support in the Carolinas includes net metering within time of use periods which appropriately values the energy solar customers contribute to the grid," said Bryan Jacob, Solar Program Director at Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. "The program incentivizes customers to shift their energy use, helping to reduce peak demand and prevent the need for generating new fossil-powered energy which would worsen the climate crisis. This reduces overall grid costs and saves money for all customers – those with solar and those without."

"Vote Solar is dedicated to expanding access to affordable, reliable solar energy for all North Carolinians. As a national organization, we have been part of the fight for fair net metering policies around the country. We believe this deal could set the initial stage for more programs aimed at increasing solar access while also helping the state reach its carbon reduction goals," says Lindsey Hallock, Southeast Senior Regional Director at Vote Solar. "We acknowledge that not everyone has signed onto the settlement in support of the proposal and we look forward to constructive dialogue – including through the upcoming North Carolina carbon planning process – to make an equitable clean energy future that works for everyone."

"Thousands of North Carolinians are taking control of their energy usage by going solar, and SEIA is committed to expanding rooftop solar programs in ways that create additional value streams for customers looking to reduce their electric bills," says Will Giese, Southeast Regional Director at Solar Energy Industries Association. "As we've done across the country, SEIA will continue to advocate for innovative solutions that spread the cost-saving benefits of solar to every community. This proposal is an important first step in a collaborative effort to secure a prosperous clean energy future in North Carolina."

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About North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association

North Carolina Sustainable Energy Association (NCSEA) is the leading 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that drives public policy and market development for clean energy. NCSEA's work enables clean energy jobs, economic opportunities, and affordable energy options for all North Carolinians. Learn more about NCSEA, its mission, and vision at www.energync.org

About Southern Alliance for Clean Energy

Southern Alliance for Clean Energy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that promotes responsible and equitable energy choices to ensure clean, safe, and healthy communities throughout the Southeast. Since 1985, SACE has tackled energy challenges and promoted equitable outcomes that help our region's communities harness the environmental and economic opportunities presented by clean, renewable energy. www.cleanenergy.org

About Southern Environmental Law Center

The Southern Environmental Law Center is one of the nation's most powerful defenders of the environment, rooted in the South. With a long track record, SELC takes on the toughest environmental challenges in court, in government, and in our communities to protect our region's air, water, climate, wildlife, lands, and people. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the organization has a staff of 170, including 90 attorneys, and is headquartered in Charlottesville, Va., with offices in Asheville, Atlanta, Birmingham, Chapel Hill, Charleston, Nashville, Richmond, and Washington, D.C. www.SouthernEnvironment.org

About Vote Solar

Vote Solar's mission is to make solar a mainstream energy resource across the U.S. Since 2002, Vote Solar has been working to lower solar costs and expand solar access. A 501(c)3 non-profit organization, Vote Solar advocates for state policies and programs needed to repower our electric grid with clean energy. Vote Solar works to remove regulatory barriers and implement key policies needed to bring solar to scale. www.VoteSolar.org

About Solar Energy Industries Association

The Solar Energy Industries Association® (SEIA) is leading the transformation to a clean energy economy, creating the framework for solar to achieve 30% of U.S. electricity generation by 2030. SEIA works with its 1,000 member companies and other strategic partners to fight for policies that create jobs in every community and shape fair market rules that promote competition and the growth of reliable, low-cost solar power. Founded in 1974, SEIA is the national trade association for the solar and solar + storage industries, building a comprehensive vision for the Solar+ Decade through research, education and advocacy. www.seia.org