



Rooftop solar panels in Austin, Texas.

# Blocking Rooftop Solar

## The companies, lobbyists and front groups undermining local clean energy

*Fossil fuel and utility interests are working across multiple states to block the growth of rooftop solar. In an effort to blunt the popularity of locally generated renewable energy, opponents have developed a set of tactics to undermine rooftop solar by removing existing incentives or imposing new charges.*

### Solar power is on the rise

- From 2010-2019, total nationwide solar installations increased from 100,000 to 2 million, and solar power generation increased 30-fold.
- Current U.S. solar capacity can power 17.7 million homes and avert carbon emissions equivalent to taking 24 million cars off the road for a year.
- Solar technology is improving and prices are falling.

### Supportive policies boost the growth of solar

- **Net metering** allows solar owners to sell excess electricity back to the grid, helping solar installation pay for itself.
- **Renewable electricity standards** – state commitments to specific amounts of renewable energy generation by certain dates – encourage utilities and governments to incentivize the growth of solar.
- **Third-party ownership** programs allow utilities to finance solar installations and pass many of the benefits on to consumers.
- **Tax credits, tax incentives, rebates and Property Assessed Clean Energy loans** reduce upfront cost of solar installation.

### Utilities and fossil fuel interests are fighting rooftop solar

- **Edison Electric Institute** trains utility executives to run advocacy campaigns, funds friendly political entities, and has helped create model anti-solar legislation.
- **Consumer Energy Alliance** has deployed resources and lobbyists across the country to promote an anti-solar agenda.
- **American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)** has introduced anti-solar legislation working with local special interests and ALEC-affiliated legislators around the country.



Installing solar panels on a roof.

- **Koch Industries** and Koch-funded **Americans for Prosperity** have coordinated a network of secretive nonprofits to carry out anti-solar campaigns and directly fund utilities' anti-solar efforts.
- **New England Ratepayer's Association** tried to challenge states' authority to enact net metering policies.
- Former subsidiaries of **FirstEnergy** are accused of engaging in a \$61 million bribery scheme to remove Ohio's renewable energy incentives.
- **Florida Power & Light, Duke Energy** and **Tampa Electric Company** have donated money, hired lobbyists and pushed a deceptive anti-solar ballot initiative, all to hold back rooftop solar in Florida.
- **Ameren** fought to reduce net metering payments in Illinois and then misrepresented net metering statistics in a bid to end the program in their service territory.
- **PG&E, SoCal Edison** and **SDG&E** are pushing for the highest fixed charges for solar customers in the country and are trying to slash net metering payments in California.
- **Energy** has fought to eliminate Kansas' net metering policies and imposed a solar demand fee that was ruled illegal.
- **Dominion Energy South Carolina** proposed rates that would have raised costs for solar owners by about \$750/year.

## Policy recommendations

### State legislators and utility regulators should reject anti-solar efforts, including:

- Restrictions on or elimination of net metering;
- Rollbacks or elimination of state renewable energy standards;
- Discriminatory charges or tariffs on solar power system owners;
- Utility rate structures that discourage solar installation; and
- Other unneeded regulatory burdens on solar energy.



### Decision makers should support the growth of rooftop solar by:

- Taking into account the full benefits of distributed solar energy to the grid, to ratepayers and to society in solar energy ratemaking or policy decisions;
- Implementing strong net metering and interconnection standards;
- Supporting community shared solar projects and virtual net metering to expand public access to solar power;
- Enacting or expanding solar carve-outs and renewable electricity standards;
- Enabling financing mechanisms to increase access to solar energy for businesses and individuals;
- Allowing non-utility companies to sell or lease solar power; and
- Investing in making the electric grid more intelligent to allow easier incorporation of renewable energy sources like solar power.