



PURPA Defends Homeowners with Solar from Utility Abuses

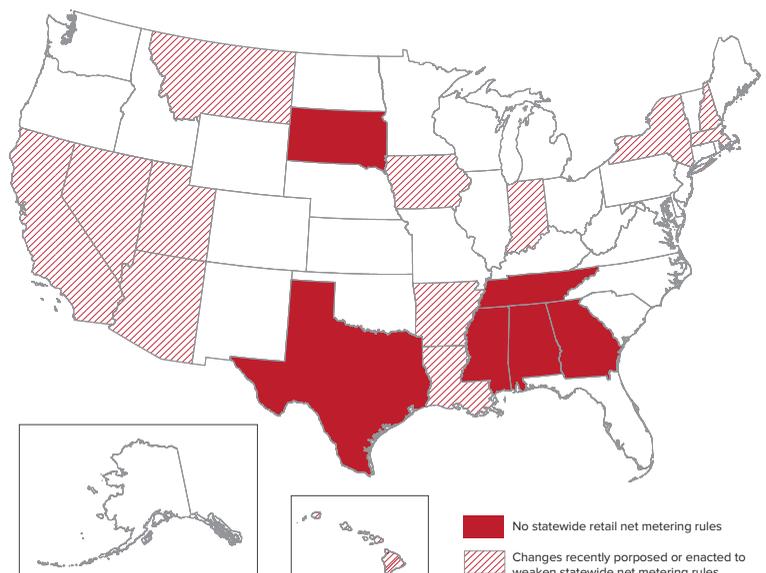
Americans are increasingly turning to homegrown, affordable solar power to meet their energy needs. But what protects Americans' right to go solar from utilities that feel threatened by solar's emergence as a viable alternative for their customers?

The Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) provides critical protections for local solar-generating homes, school, farms and small businesses across the country:

- The right to go solar without unfair charges¹
- The right to choose how much energy to purchase and how much to self-produce using solar; utilities must base rates on the actual cost to serve you²
- The right to connect your solar system to the grid without discrimination³
- The right to fair compensation for any solar energy you send on to the grid; utilities must give customers credit for solar power at a fair price⁴

Before PURPA was enacted, utility monopolies could refuse to buy excess solar from their customers and could impose extra fees on customers with solar. PURPA levels the playing field for utility customers who invest in solar power, by requiring a utility to buy and sell power at non-discriminatory rates based on the cost it would have paid to generate that electricity itself.

Some states have imposed “net metering” policies, which allow customers to get credit for excess solar power. However, these policies are under threat in many jurisdictions, making PURPA a critical backstop for Americans who have invested in solar. For those states that have not adopted net metering, PURPA may be the sole legal protection in place.



Georgia

Brandon Carter lives in North Georgia, where he buys power from North Georgia Electric Member Cooperative, which does not allow net metering. Without PURPA, it is unclear that he would be able to obtain any value for solar power that his home sends to the grid during sunny days. Brandon's utility sells his solar power to his neighbors at full retail prices.



Tennessee

Without PURPA, solar-generating homeowners in TVA's territory would be forced to sell all of their solar power to their utility at arbitrary prices, allowing TVA to take away Tennesseans' right to invest in solar to offset their electricity needs.

Congress should strengthen PURPA's protections, not weaken them, to preserve all Americans' solar rights.



Sources

¹16 U.S.C. § 824a-3(c); 18 C.F.R. § 292.305.

²*Id.*

³18 C.F.R. § 292.306.

⁴16 U.S.C. § 824a-3(b); 18 C.F.R. § 292.304.