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Utilities Must Stop Blocking Solar Growth

As solar power becomes rapidly more affordable, all Americans should have access to this abundant resource, which will help us create stronger, cleaner and healthier communities. Unfortunately, the right to go solar is coming under attack across much of the country, hindering families and businesses from choosing cheaper, cleaner solar power.

Despite the incredible potential for homegrown solar power in the sunny Southeast, some utilities are working to erect barriers and create restrictive rules that protect their monopoly instead of allowing Americans to choose their energy source on an open market.

These utilities take advantage of outdated monopoly protection laws to prevent independent solar companies from offering customers financing options to lower or eliminate upfront costs of installing solar panels – options that would make solar available to lower income families that are most in need of stable power bills.

Many solar customers also face punitive fees and fines from utilities who claim they are entitled to charge customers for not using their product or for using less of it – to the tune of as much as \$85 each month.

Other utilities are trying to block fair compensation for excess electricity that solar customers provide to the grid, which often is generated on hot, sunny days when demand and stress on the grid is highest. Solar customers have little recourse when their utilities undervalue this solar electricity, telling homeowners it's only worth 3 or 4 cents and then turning around and selling that same electricity to another customer (often their next door neighbor) for three times that amount.

These unfair practices deserve closer scrutiny by public utility commissions and state legislators, who should not put entrenched interests of powerful utility companies above the interests of their customers.

We can harness the value of local solar power for the good of all Americans by ending energy companies' punitive solar taxes on customers, opening the market to solar financing companies, and establishing fair compensation for solar electricity.

But the regulators will need to keep the fox from guarding the henhouse.

Some utilities take advantage of outdated laws to prevent solar companies from offering customers options to lower or eliminate upfront costs of installing solar panels.



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