Protecting Clean Energy and Economic Growth in the Southeast

In the Southeast, where solar developers lack access to organized energy markets, the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) has outsized importance and is a significant market driver.

North Carolina and South Carolina are two of the top PURPA markets in the country.¹

- PURPA helped North Carolina become #2 nationally in solar capacity.
- North Carolina has over 2,500 MW of solar facilities covered by PURPA currently operating, with more than 2,200 MW of PURPA solar projects in its contracted pipeline.
- The PURPA solar market has grown North Carolina’s economy:²
  - A 2016 Clean Energy Census showed there are over 330 solar energy firms operating in North Carolina.
  - The solar industry in the state supports over 5,400 jobs, and generated over $1.4 billion in revenue in 2016.
- Renewable energy projects are widely distributed across North Carolina, bringing investment to many rural counties.
- North Carolina’s robust PURPA market also led Duke Energy to support energy legislation that will bring over 6 GW of new solar onto the grid.

- From 2015 to 2017, South Carolina jumped from #36 to #13 nationally in solar capacity.³
- South Carolina has over 265 MW of solar projects operating, with more than 1,500 MW in the contracted pipeline.
- South Carolina’s solar economy is growing quickly, with at least 70 solar energy firms and more than $430 million total solar investment in the state.⁴
- At least $1.5 billion of investment in solar projects throughout South Carolina is expected over the next five years.
- One solar company, Cypress Creek Renewables, anticipates the need for 10,000 new solar construction jobs to meet future demand and recently launched a solar workforce training initiative to help train the next generation of solar industry workers in the state.⁵

Even with this progress, solar still makes up only a small percentage of the energy mix in the Southeast—less than 4.5% in North Carolina and less than .02% in South Carolina.⁶ Congress should not threaten to stop this growth in its tracks and stifle an important market driver. Congress should strengthen PURPA, not weaken it.
Sources
¹Todd Glass, SEIA, Written Testimony before the United States House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, (Sept. 6, 2017) at page 18.