

# SILICON VALLEY CLIMATE ACTION NEWS

*Silicon Valley CAN!*

Newsletter of the Silicon Valley Climate Action Alliance, Issue 10, May-June 2018

*"A publication dedicated to the sharing of good climate news throughout the Silicon Valley"*

## STATE

### All New Homes in California Starting in 2020 Required to have Solar Panels

by Holly Lindquist

The California Energy Commission made history this month by unanimously approving a first-ever state mandate to require new homes built starting in 2020 to have rooftop solar panels. The solar rules will apply to new single-family homes and new multi-family housing of three stories or fewer with construction permits issued on Jan. 1, 2020 or later. The rule will exempt homes where panels are infeasible, such as when a roof is in the shadows of another structure and taller housing structures where there is not enough rooftop space to handle residents' electric needs. Some critics of the bill have noted that the rule will add \$8000 to \$12000 to new house construction when California is experiencing a housing affordability crisis. However Energy Commission spokeswoman Amber Beck noted that the agency estimates that the typical monthly mortgage payment could rise by \$40 as a result of a higher home prices, but the solar power will lower monthly utility bills by about \$80.



**What you can do:** *Silicon Valley Power (Santa Clara) customers are still eligible for California solar rebates (PG&E rebates have been exhausted). Learn more [here](#).*

*Eligible Sunnyvale residents: Save Money and Energy by signing up for the free [Green@Home program](#). The program offers a free online energy audit and customized recommendations for lowering energy usage. Must have lived in your home for the past 12 months and NOT have solar to be eligible.*

## NATIONAL

### Congress Approves Renewable Funding and Anti-Pipeline Protesters Found Not Guilty

by Holly Lindquist

The \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill passed by Congress in late March [increases spending on clean energy](#) despite calls from the White House to make drastic reductions. The White House's proposed budget eliminated the Department of Energy's research incubator, the Advanced Research Projects Agency-Energy (ARPA-E)



and gutted the DOE's Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) office by \$1.3 billion. Instead, the spending bill allocates an additional \$47 million to ARPA-E and gave a 15% increase to EERE. Despite this good news and the fact that the EPA's budget was not cut, there is continuing concern that grant applications and research programs may be screened for references to climate change and that required funding for specific programs may be delayed.

A [huge victory for environmental activism](#) came recently when a Massachusetts District Court judge found thirteen protestors "not responsible" for the civil infraction for which they had been charged ("not responsible" being the civil trial equivalent to "not guilty" in a criminal trial). They had originally been charged with a criminal infraction after being arrested for trespassing and disturbing the peace while protesting the pipeline in West Roxbury, a neighborhood of Boston, in 2015. Their charged were subsequently



downgraded to a civil infraction. The most positive aspect of this story is the [defense strategy used by the protesters](#) – Judge Mary Ann Driscoll dismissed the charges based on the protestors defense that their actions were out of necessity. The protestors argued that the dangers posed by this pipeline and the climate change it would contribute to were so dire, they had not choice but to commit a crime to stop its construction. This is the first time the so-called "necessity defense" has been successful and could set a precedent for further defendants to sue the same argument.

*What you can do: Not sure who to vote for in this year's elections? [Sierra Club California endorses state a local candidates.](#)*

## INTERNATIONAL

### **Kinder Morgan Halts Non-Essential Work Pipeline, Shell Oil in Court, and Costa Rica to Ban Fossil Fuels**

*by Holly Lindquist*

In early April, energy infrastructure company Kinder Morgan announced that it was [halting all non-essential activities](#) and related spending on the Trans Mountain pipeline project in British Columbia, Canada. The company cited "uncertainty" created by the B.C. government. While the project has the support of the Canadian federal government and the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, the province of British Columbia has opposed the project. CEO Steve Kean has said that if the company cannot reach an agreement with stakeholders by May 31, it is unlikely they will proceed with the project. In addition, financial giant [HSBC announced](#) in late April that it will no longer finance new developments with Canadian tar sands, Arctic drilling, or coal projects in developed countries.

Royal Dutch Shell and Italian oil company Eni, and senior executives and both companies, are facing [trial for corruption](#) related to a \$1.1 billion deal for a Nigerian oil block in Milan. The prosecution alleges that much of the money for the deal was converted to cash to be paid directly to Nigerian government

officials and funnelled to Eni and Shell executives. These charges come after years of work by anti-corruption groups Global Witness, The Corner House and Re:Common.

Costa Rica plans to become the [first fully decarbonized country](#) in the world. President Carlos Alvarado announced his plan to ban fossil fuels at his recent inauguration. The country already generates 99% of its electricity from renewable sources, but the country now plans to implement a plan to end fossil fuel transport by 2021.

***What you can do:** [Learn more about the Kinder Morgan Pipeline and support the movement at Wilderness Committee and 350.](#)*

*Support anti-corruption groups [Global Witness](#), [The Corner House](#) and [Re:Common](#).*

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