



## Net Metering as a Tool for Energy Democracy

### *Current State Struggles*

#### **1. Arizona**

- Arizona is in the midst of a very contentious battle over net metering. AZ is currently evaluating net metering, and will likely seek to change the policy. The state's largest utility - APS - pushed for a \$50-\$100/month fee but advocates pushed back hard. Now there is a \$4.90/month fee to utilities for grid maintenance, which is still not good but it is better than the alternative. Another major utility - SRP - has proposed its own solar fee that would amount to at least \$50 per month. Advocates are actively working to oppose this fee.

#### **2. California**

- In March, the California's utility regulators voted to allow customers who go solar under the current program to keep their net metering rules for 20 years. This rule applies to the state's 200,000 existing Investor-Owned Utility (IOU) solar customers plus any others who go solar before July 2017 or before their utility hits the current 5% program cap. By the end of next year, the Public Utility Commission (PUC) will decide what the net metering rules will be for customers who go solar after the current program ends. The utilities are pushing to make solar a bad deal for future solar customers, and advocates are fighting hard for continued fair net metering credit.

#### **3. Colorado**

- There is a contentious battle in Colorado where state regulators are holding a series of workshops to assess the costs and benefits of the successful net metering program. The main utility, Xcel, is using this process to try to weaken net metering and instead push for utility scale (and utility owned/controlled) solar while advocates are pushing to maintain support for ratepayer-controlled distributed generation.

#### **4. Florida**

- Florida has a strong net metering policy that should be fiercely defended against potential attacks. Unfortunately, in late 2014 the Commission voted 3-2 to cut the state's efficiency and renewables goals by 90%, and in a second unanimous vote agreed to end the existing solar rebate program, continue support for net-metering and hold a workshop in the new year to discuss all things solar.

#### **5. Georgia**

- Georgia currently does not have net metering and there isn't an active campaign to advance net metering. However, last year Georgia Power was defeated in its attempt compel the Public Service Commission to impose a fee on customers who install solar energy systems, and there is currently a campaign underway to expand solar financing options for energy consumers in the state.

#### **6. Hawaii**

- Hawaii recently opened a super docket with the Public Utilities Commission to look at solar, including net metering. Currently, the Hawaii utilities have written a limit into the net metering policy saying that once there is 10% saturation, they won't accept further applications.



**7. Iowa**

- The Iowa Utilities Board is investigating net metering. As of today, the inquiry has been information gathering, with the latest call for comments having ended on October 24<sup>th</sup>. Future action in regard to net metering is pending

**8. Illinois**

- Legislation in 2007 permitted utilities to offer meter aggregation for community-owned energy, including solar, where multiple individual customers are served by the same renewable generating facility. Net metering and dual metering are not authorized for systems larger than two megawatts in capacity. A docket has been opened in the Public Utilities Commission stemming from changes to the law per the Smart Grid bill and net metering clean-up bill in spring 2012.

**9. Indiana**

- State legislators have introduced Indiana House Bill 1320, which contains a number of provisions that seriously undermine net metering and solar choice in the state. It would replace true net metering with a buy-all, sell-all arrangement that puts a worrisome amount of control in the utilities' hands. And it would set the stage for the utilities to adopt unjustified fixed charges that would hurt all energy customers, but especially low-income customers and those who want to reduce their utility bills with energy efficiency and solar power.

**10. Kentucky**

- Kentucky's net metering policy caps the size of renewable energy systems at 30kW. Advocates are pushing to raise the cap to 1,000 kW and allow virtual net-metering, but have been met with strong resistance from utilities. At the same time, the two largest investor-owned utilities recently filed a notice of intent to raise their customer charges by 67%, a move that would harm low-income customers and create disincentives anyone investing in energy efficiency and grid-tied renewables.

**11. Louisiana**

- Louisiana currently caps net metering participation at just 0.05% of each utility's peak demand, one of the most restrictive net metering limits in the nation. Many parts of the state have hit the cap, which is slamming the brakes on continued rooftop solar growth. Now utility companies are fighting to keep it that way or even do away with the crediting program all together! Advocates are urging the Public Service Commission (PSC) to raise the restrictive cap and protect fair net metering credit so Louisiana can keep going solar.

**12. Massachusetts**

- In 2014, lawmakers passed S.2214 which raised the net metering cap slightly to keep the state's solar market from grinding to a halt in the near term – but with strong solar growth ahead, there is no question that the state will again run into that cap. Given that need, S.2214 also established a solar task force to review the long-term viability of net metering and to develop recommendations for policies and programs that will support continued solar adoption. Comprising a diverse mix of stakeholders, the task force is required to report its findings, along with any recommendations for legislative or regulatory reforms, back to the legislature by March 31, 2015.



### **13. Maine**

- Maine is currently investigating the “value of solar.” In March 2014 Maine's largest electric utility, Maine Central Power, entered a petition seeking permission from state regulators to impose a new “standby” rate that would add roughly \$13 to the monthly bill of a residential customer with a grid-tied renewable energy system.

### **14. Mississippi**

- The state currently does not have a net metering program. Mississippi recently commissioned and received a report on the potential costs and benefits of net metering which shows that the benefits would be very worthy of the costs. The state is now determining how to proceed with the results of the study. In the meantime, advocates are working to support legislation to establish a new net metering program for the state.

### **15. Nevada**

- A recent study on the costs and benefits of net metering determined that the benefits are well worth the costs. However, the state’s largest utility, NV Energy is working to impose fees on those engaging in net metering. The state is also nearing its current net metering program cap, and so it is likely that solar advocates will work to raise the cap this year.

### **16. New York**

- The Empire State has an aggressive agenda for rebuilding the state’s energy system around consumer participation in clean energy. In order to meet its impressive goals, the in late 2014 the Commission doubled the amount of solar and renewable energy eligible for the major utilities’ net metering programs from 3 to 6 percent. The future of net metering is likely tied to the state’s pioneering Reforming the Energy Vision (“REV”) proceeding.

### **17. North Carolina**

- Though NC is one of the nation’s top states for solar potential, the utility companies largely control local solar development. The state's largest utility, Duke Energy, has stated publicly that it wants to weaken the state's net metering program for rooftop solar. Advocates are preparing to defend net metering while at the same time they are working to advance new policies and programs that create opportunities for customers to go solar.

### **18. Oregon**

- Oregon regulators are internally evaluating net metering and there is an open docket on this with the Public Utilities Commission.

### **19. South Carolina**

- In late 2014, South Carolina became the 44th state to offer net metering. As a result of an agreement between local utilities, environmental groups and solar companies, local energy customers will now have access to net metering and the utilities will not be able to impose solar-specific fees through 2020.

### **20. Vermont**

- As the battle over net metering policy is being fought in state legislatures across America, one small state has given solar advocates a big win – Vermont. In April 2014 Governor Peter Shumlin signed legislation into law that will nearly quadruple the net metering cap utilities have been using, from 4% to 15% of peak load. The bill enjoyed bipartisan support, passing 136-8 in the state house and unanimously in the state senate. The Department of Public Service is now writing a report in regard to net metering. The report will update the previous cost and benefits



study done by the Department of Public Service, and explore best practices around the country. Once the Department of Public Service completes the study, they will file the report with the VT Public Service Board. The early expectation is that the PSB will open a proceeding on the net metering report.

**21. Washington**

- o In 2014, utilities tried to pass HB 2176 which would have given utilities companies control of “leased energy” programs, but this effort was defeated. The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission is currently examining the costs and benefits of net metering and will proceed based on the findings of their research.