

Mass Solar Coalition Applauds Progress on Solar Energy Policy Roadmap for the Commonwealth

Net Metering Cap Increase is a Key Priority for Keeping Solar Working for Massachusetts

May 1, 2015 BOSTON—The Mass Solar Coalition, an alliance of solar and clean energy industry organizations, businesses and solar and environmental advocates, commended the work of the Net Metering and Solar Task Force, which sent a final report to the State Legislature yesterday with recommendations on the future of solar policy in the Commonwealth. The Coalition now calls on the Legislature to act quickly to raise the net metering cap, a policy recommendation that was supported by the majority of voting members of the Task Force. The Coalition is coordinated by New England Clean Energy Council (NECEC), Solar Energy Business Association of New England (SEBANE), Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), Next Step Living, MassSolar and Vote Solar.

The Massachusetts Net Metering and Solar Task Force was created last session by S 2214, *An Act relative to credit for thermal energy generated with renewable fuels*, to develop recommendations on incentives and programs to encourage the continued growth of solar in Massachusetts. The Mass Solar Coalition supported many of the findings of the Task Force's report to the Legislature, including:

- The Commonwealth's solar policies and incentives are delivering benefits to the Commonwealth that far exceed the total costs to consumers, as shown by the analysis conducted through the Task Force.¹
- A wide variety of stakeholders in the Commonwealth want more solar development and recognize the value it provides to Massachusetts residents, businesses and municipalities,
- The costs of solar and other renewable energy resources constitute a very small portion of customers' electricity rates.²
- A scenario with no net metering caps would be the most cost-effective way to develop solar in Massachusetts and would ensure a diverse solar market.

Expanding the state's successful net metering program is a key policy priority for the Massachusetts Solar Coalition. Net metering gives renewable energy customers full, fair credit on their utility bills for the excess clean power they deliver to the grid. Existing Massachusetts law places a cap on net metering participation, after which utilities are no longer required to offer this important customer right to new non-residential solar energy customers. Unfortunately, the net metering caps for public and private projects over 25kw in National Grid's service territory have already been hit, halting the development of hundreds of solar projects in the 171 cities and towns in the area, including municipal, commercial, low-income and community solar projects that could provide ratepayers with significant cost-saving benefits. If the Legislature does not act to address the net metering caps quickly, most of these projects will not move forward.

¹ Consultant's 4/27/15 presentation of Task 3 results, Slide 20, available for download at <<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/doer/renewables/analysis-of-costs-and-benefits-final-results-4-27-15.pdf>>.

² Renewables/other charge is not even visible in graphs from "Analysis of Costs and Benefits – Update and Preliminary Results Draft (041515)," slide 27, presented at April 16, 2015 Task Force Meeting.

“With hundreds of jobs already at risk, the consequences of failing to provide near-term relief from the net metering caps are profound,” said Fred Zalcman, Managing Director of Government Affairs for the Northeast States at SunEdison and SEIA’s representative on the Task Force, “That said, SEIA also strongly supports a transition to a long-term sustainable net metering and solar incentive program and looks forward to continuing to work with the legislature and other stakeholders to responsibly manage that transition.”

“The actions of the Legislature have created over 12,000 jobs as part of a strong and vibrant solar industry that is helping achieve a low cost and clean energy future for the Commonwealth,” said Larry Aller, Director of Business Development and Strategy at Next Step Living. “Without immediate action on the caps, many of these jobs will be lost over the next year and a half. If nothing is done, the long-term policy will be implemented, the Commonwealth will ask for companies and workers to achieve those goals, and few will remain to answer the call.”

“The research and analysis conducted through this Task Force reinforces that solar energy is a worthy investment for the Commonwealth. Dollars spent on solar are an investment in the Commonwealth’s energy and economic infrastructure that stays in Massachusetts, that is earning a positive return in jobs, investment, and energy peak load and greenhouse gas reductions.” said Janet Gail Besser, Vice President of Policy and Government Affairs of NECEC and Task Force member. “Solar energy is clearly a critical and valuable component of an energy platter that will satisfy our appetite for electricity.”

While the report issued by the Task Force shows a number of areas in which there are differing perspectives of how to continue the Commonwealth’s sustainable and long term growth of solar, the Coalition is committed to working with the Legislature and the administration to craft legislation and implement policies to achieve the Commonwealth’s solar goals.

“Our positions throughout the Massachusetts Net Metering and Solar Task Force process have been guided by three principles: to ensure a stable and self-sustaining market for solar energy in the Commonwealth; to promote equal access to the benefits of solar energy for individuals, organizations, and communities; and to support development of utility rate structures whereby all customers pay equitably for their use of the electric distribution system,” said Bill Stillinger, President of PV Squared and SEBANE’s representative on the Task Force.

The Task Force report included individual statements from representatives of NECEC, SEBANE, SEIA and Next Step Living which were quoted in this release.

About Mass Solar Coalition

Mass Solar Coalition is an alliance of solar and clean energy industry organizations, businesses and solar and environmental advocates committed to working with the Massachusetts Legislature and other stakeholders to ensure the Commonwealth’s continued solar success. The Coalition aims to advance fair, long-term, sustainable, and

cost effective solar programs and policies that support strong solar deployment and that deliver the many benefits of solar to all Massachusetts consumers.

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