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Diverse Coalition Defends Rooftop Solar Against Utility Profit Grab

After defeating AB 1139 in the legislature, the fight to defend consumer solar and keep clean energy growing continues against utility efforts to increase profits by making solar more expensive.

30-foot-tall inflatable “Utility Profit Grab Man” visited CA Public Utility Commission Headquarters

San Francisco, CA—Clean energy advocates, environmental groups, solar consumers, and businesses—fresh off defeating AB 1139 in the state legislature—are fighting back against the continued big utility “profit grab” that aims to make rooftop solar more expensive, harm consumers, and slow down California’s clean energy progress. They joined together at the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to call on state leaders to keep solar affordable and growing in California as the Newsom Administration considers changes to “net metering,” the state policy that defines how solar users send energy back to and interact with the electric grid. Following the event, supporters delivered more than 30,000 petitions against utility-proposed changes to net metering to CPUC’s headquarters.

*“Our coalition of solar consumers and clean energy activists did the unexpected and stopped a bill in Sacramento driven by big utilities and some of the state’s most powerful interests,” said **Dave Rosenfeld, executive director of the Solar Rights Alliance**. “Now as we turn our attention to this newest threat to affordable clean energy, the CPUC and Governor Newsom can expect to hear our voices in even greater volume.”*

Net metering is intended to put the benefits of rooftop solar in the hands of more people, and it’s doing just that. Hundreds of thousands of families, renters, businesses, schools, and others across California are saving money on their utility bills with rooftop solar. In fact, working and middle-class neighborhoods make up nearly 50% of today’s rooftop solar market. Rooftop solar is helping consumers of all types lower their energy bills and, when coupled

with storage, is a consumer's best defense against spiking energy costs and unpredictable power outages. Not only that, many of the state's low-income solar programs rely on net metering to deliver bill savings to vulnerable populations.

"What the big utilities are proposing would do nothing short of halting the rooftop solar industry in its tracks, just as our economy and clean energy needs demand we go forward," said **Bernadette Del Chiaro, executive director of the California Solar and Storage Association**. California voters [overwhelmingly support](#) the growth of rooftop solar and oppose the push by investor-owned utilities to increase their own profits by making solar more expensive for everyone."

By undermining net metering, making solar more expensive for everyone and halting critical clean energy expansion, the utility profit grab is out of step with California's long-standing environmental and clean energy goals and the growing need for a reliable energy supply in the face of wildfires and grid outage events. It would take California backward to a time when solar was only affordable for the wealthy, and reverse the rapid growth of solar currently happening everywhere and especially in middle- and working-class neighborhoods across the state.

"California is in a climate emergency, with record shattering heat waves, drought and wildfires spreading across the state," warned **Laura Deehan, state director of Environment California**. *"It couldn't be more clear: The devastating effects of global warming are here now. To face down this danger, we have to get to 100% renewable energy as fast as possible, and rooftop solar is one of our best tools to get there. With so much at stake, California gutting net metering would reverse our trajectory as a leader in solving global warming right when our leadership is needed most."*

As symbolized by the giant 30-foot-tall "Utility Profit Grab Man" stationed outside CPUC headquarters, the motive for big utilities is profits. PG&E and other utilities want to change the rules in their favor so they can profit off the energy created by solar consumers and eliminate a growing competitor in the energy market.

"The real cost shift happening in California is the exorbitant sums of ratepayer money being stolen from local renewables to subsidize transmission lines — which mostly benefit the utilities, who make huge guaranteed profits from transmission spending," explains **Rosana Francescato of Clean Coalition**. *"Transmission costs are the fastest-growing component of electricity bills in California, and deploying more rooftop solar has been shown to mitigate these costs."*

A wide range of environmental groups and solar supporters joined the event and shared the critical role rooftop solar plays in realizing California's clean energy goals.

"As a national leader in building electrification and climate equity, the City of Berkeley is counting on the Governor and CPUC to make plentiful and affordable access to rooftop solar a priority," said **Jesse Arreguin, Berkeley Mayor and President of the Association of Bay Area Governments**. "This will ensure that our state continues to lead the nation in our shared climate action and equity goals."

At a time when many of California's 18 million tenants are just fighting to remain housed, investor-owned utilities are trying to drive up their rates if their building includes rooftop solar," said **Mari Perez-Ruiz, Chair of the California Democratic Party Renters Council**. *"Renters deserve more rooftop solar, not more bailouts to PG&E, SoCal Gas, and Sempra."*

*"We need more solar where we live, local clean energy, local jobs, and local community resilience," states **Laura Neish, the 350 Bay Area executive director.** "The CPUC and the utilities are not looking at roof-top solar correctly— not seeing its benefits and giving a fair value for those benefits including better air quality and health, better land use, affordability of electricity and resiliency."*

*"California gets that we have gone beyond a Climate Crisis to a Climate Emergency," said **Bill Allayaud, California director of government affairs for the Environmental Working Groups.** "It is all hands on deck right now and inhibiting installation of rooftop solar by those who want to participate is the wrong move at this time. The PUC needs to pause and be certain that any move it makes is right for consumers and best for the environment."*

*Fully embracing rooftop solar is a no-brainer. With every new solar panel installed, we reduce our reliance on fossil fuels, keep pollution out of our communities and reduce carbon emissions," said **Jenn Engstrom, State Director of CALPIRG.** "Rooftop solar benefits consumers too. Here in California, homes, schools and businesses that go solar reduce our overall need for grid investments today, while helping build the clean and resilient grid of the future."*

*"Affordable and sustainable housing is a human right," said **Paola Laverde, former Chair of the Berkeley Rent Board and a member of the Berkeley Tenants Union Steering Committee.** "We call on the Governor and CPUC to make it more affordable - not less - for tenants to have rooftop solar powering their homes."*

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About Save California Solar

Save California Solar is a coalition founded by the Solar Rights Alliance, California's association of solar users, to help ensure that rooftop solar continues to grow and benefit every Californian. Learn more at www.savecaliforniasolar.org.