



PublicService Commission <psc@utah.gov>

Docket 17-035-61

1 message

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To: psc@utah.gov

Rooftop solar has been growing rapidly in Utah since 2009. The growth is largely due to systems becoming more affordable as the cost of solar panels has dropped globally. Those lower costs mean the system payback periods – how long it takes a customer to pay off the solar system – for Utah families have become shorter. Due to this rapid growth, rooftop solar is beginning to compete with Rocky Mountain Power. In response, this monopoly utility wants to make the systems more expensive for Utah families.

Rocky Mountain Power's attempts to drastically lower the export credit rates, based on a study of customers, was intentionally narrow in order to obscure environmental and economic benefits. Their study was not nearly expansive enough to reflect Utah's entire rooftop solar market. An independent study by Vote Solar used over 3,300 customers, resulting in wildly different true costs and benefits of solar from that of Rocky Mountain Power. Vote Solar's analysis valued the compensation rate to be 22.6 cents per kilowatt hour – that's 82% more than what customers receive now in Utah. Without considering the climate and health benefits, the importance of grid flexibility, and the economic benefits, including job creation, rooftop solar ought not be quantified by rate changes

We can learn a lesson from our neighboring state. Nevada, a state with similar solar resources as Utah, recently learned the hard way about taking an axe to rooftop solar policies. After adding higher fixed monthly fees and reducing the export credit by 2/3 in 2015, the market fell by half and installations dried up. This was such a disaster that the governor and legislature enacted legislation to reinstate net metering, and the market has almost completely rebounded. Utah does not need to go this route. We know what can happen if you make the wrong decision. I believe that clean air, energy independence, and Utah jobs should be prioritized, not the profits of Rocky Mountain Power.

The recent growth in rooftop solar installations has led to the creation of thousands of clean energy jobs. As of 2019, there are more than 7,000 in Utah. By gutting the market with rate changes, it is likely that these individuals would lose their jobs. During the current COVID pandemic, we certainly don't need more people losing their jobs.

Despite recent investments in renewable energy, Utah is still primarily dependent on fossil fuels for electricity. Air-polluting fossil fuel power plants are still the major source of the power produced by Rocky Mountain Power. Widespread adoption of rooftop solar, rather than shutting the prospects of this down, will not only help Utahns become more energy independent and contribute to cleaner air, but also to help offset power generation from fossil fuels.

Based on all of the above observations, I urge you to take action to increase the compensation rate to 22.6 cents per kilowatt hour. Please take action that will properly address climate change instead of action that will hasten the onslaught that has already begun. Act in the interests of the people of Utah rather than the business interests of a monopoly utility only concerned about their own profit margins.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

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