

# SUPPORT

## LD 1652 – An Act to Support Solar Power Development in Maine

**Sponsor:** Senator VITELLI of Sagadahoc.

**Co-Sponsors:** President ALFOND of Cumberland, Senators BOYLE of Cumberland, JACKSON of Aroostook, LANGLEY of Hancock, MILLETT of Cumberland and SAVIELLO of Franklin; and Speaker EVES of North Berwick, BEAVERS of South Berwick, BERRY of Bowdoinham, DORNEY of Norridgewock, GIDEON of Freeport, GRANT of Gardiner, HOBBS of Saco, HUBBELL of Bar Harbor, McCABE of Skowhegan, McGOWAN of York, MORRISON of South Portland, RYKERSON of Kittery

**Summary:** This bill would adopt several legislative findings regarding the benefits of solar power in Maine and the legislature's desire to promote solar development. It would establish specific goals for solar development, including 40 megawatts (MW) by 2016 and 200 MW by 2020. (In comparison, in 2012 Maine had about 3 MW of solar, New Hampshire had 6 MW, Vermont had 28 MW and Massachusetts over 200 MW.) The bill also directs several state agencies to do more within existing economic development programs to promote solar investment and businesses. It directs the Public Utilities Commission to undertake a detailed analysis of the full value of distributed (rooftop) solar generation to ratepayers and Maine people.

**Explanation:** Maine is lagging far behind the rest of the region in solar energy, even while the cost of solar panels has plummeted (75% in the last five years), and solar power is increasingly seen as a way to reduce the cost of the electric grid. Solar power can be generated in every Maine town, urban or rural, on most homes or businesses. It's free power after an up-front investment to install, and is renewable source of clean, pollution-free energy that Maine should invest in for clean air and a healthy environment.

Our state has no vision or goals for how to make solar accessible to more Mainers. The Energy & Utilities committee is considering several policies to promote solar energy. NRCM supports those policies (such as expanding net-metering, re-funding the solar rebate program, or establishing a fair guaranteed rate that homeowners and businesses are paid to generate their own solar power.) We also need a broad vision and further analysis to guide Maine's solar future. Corporate electric utilities are lobbying to limit solar power for Maine homes and businesses to protect their profits. They want to reduce how much Maine people can cut their electric bills by installing solar, and oppose policies to make solar more accessible to more Mainers.

Maine continues to send billions of dollars every year out-of- state to buy imported fossil fuels. The path to less dollar drain and more energy independence is more homegrown renewable energy. In addition, power plants are a leading source of climate-changing pollution. It is important that we increase cleaner energy, since climate change threatens Maine's economy and way of life in countless ways.

Distributed rooftop solar power is increasingly seen as a way to limit expensive electric grid costs, which are driving up electric rates for Mainers. That's because solar panels provide extra value because they produce clean power when we need it the most—on hot summer days when power from the electric grid is the most expensive and most polluting. Solar power will increase energy independence, improve the environment, and help ordinary Maine people cut electric costs.

**NRCM Supports LD 1652.**