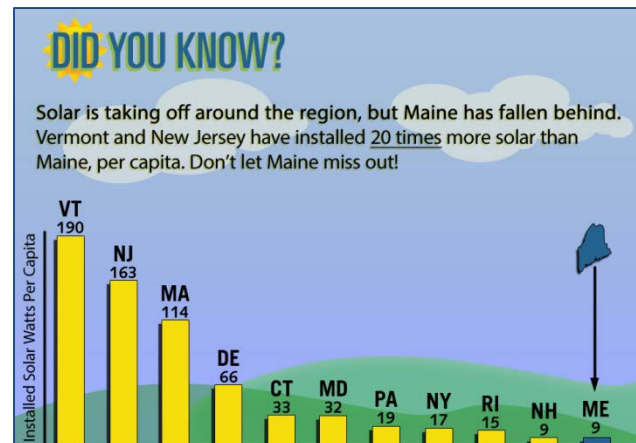


Maine Public Utilities Commission Proposal to Gut Net Metering Would Take Maine in the Wrong Direction on Solar Power

The Public Utilities Commission's (PUC) proposal to gut net metering is extreme, unjustified, illegal, and harmful to Maine people and businesses. The PUC's drastic proposal demonstrates that Mainers need the Legislature to take action that will create hundreds of new solar jobs, lower energy costs, and provide clean, local energy for Maine people.

Background:

Maine currently is in last place in the region for the amount of solar energy and solar jobs per capita. We are completely out of step with neighboring states and missing out on the tremendous opportunity to capture a clean, locally produced energy source that could create hundreds of good new jobs and reduce electricity costs for Mainers.



Last session, the Maine Legislature came within two votes of overriding the governor's veto of a comprehensive solar policy. This summer the PUC conducted a shamefully inadequate "review" of net metering because solar power accounts for 1% of the power Maine produces at peak times. Thousands of Maine people urged the PUC to leave net metering alone and scores of commenters pointed out the benefits of solar power. Ignoring all of this, the PUC started a rulemaking process and proposed an extreme set of changes.

The PUC proposal would do four key things:

1. **Phase out net metering as it currently exists.** For new solar customers, this phase-out would reduce what they receive for the solar power they put on the grid by *more than half* of what they receive today. (Today each kilowatt-hour they send to the grid gives a credit to buy one kilowatt-hour back from the grid. Pretty fair, right?)
2. **Put a new fee on new solar customers for consuming the power they produce right in their own home or business!** This grid tax is hidden behind a new phrase called "nettable energy" and it's like the grocery store charging you for food you grow in your garden.
3. **Give existing solar customers continued use of traditional net metering for 15 years,** after which they would be subject to the two solar rollbacks above, too. No other state has such a short term.
4. **Removes the 10-person limit on community solar farms** – however larger solar farms will also be subject to the phase-out of net metering bill credits, so the proposal gives with one hand and takes away with the other.



Here's what we're telling the PUC:

- A. **Initiating this rulemaking was a mistake.** It makes no sense to propose such extreme changes to net metering when Maine is getting only 1% of its electricity from solar. The PUC should let the Legislature adopt a comprehensive solar policy that works for our economy, environment, and ratepayers.
- B. **PUC's "review" of net metering provides no justification to get rid of it.** The PUC failed to gather evidence or conduct any transparent analysis to support its proposal, which is what we expect and deserve from the *Public* Utilities Commission. The PUC sided with the interests of the utilities rather than the interests of Maine ratepayers and overwhelming public comment. The PUC's own "value of solar" study confirmed that additional solar in Maine provides net benefits to ratepayers, including those who do not have solar, but it was ignored.
- C. **This proposal is extreme.** The proposal to charge solar installation owners new fees for the power *they produce and consume themselves* is extreme, unethical, logistically completely unworkable, and likely illegal. Grandfathering existing customers for 15 years is more extreme than rules in Nevada or any other state (but you shouldn't need to be grandfathering anyone from a phase-out that is itself unjustified).
- D. **The proposal for community solar projects is insufficient.** We support the PUC's proposal to remove the existing arbitrary limit of 10 participants in a shared/community solar project. We know the utilities and governor want to put a limit on community solar participation, but there is no valid reason to have a specific limit. However we believe the rules fail on community solar overall by simultaneously phasing out full net metering.

Public comments on the draft PUC rule are due **Wednesday, November 2, 2016**

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