

Solar Energy for Everybody

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Problem Statement

Current policies are hindering low income families, particularly renters, from gaining access to solar energy; whereas, allowing high income households to benefit from it. Moreover, Dominion Virginia Power is a monopoly that is compounding the problem by their lobbying efforts to minimize the number of families having access to solar energy.

Homeowners receive grants and tax benefits to install solar panels. These benefits are not available to renters. Current legislation limits the application of solar energy systems in community and group housing developments.

| Per Capita Rank | City | State | Per Capita Solar PV Installed (Watts-DC/person) [†] | Change in Per Capita Rank 2017 to 2018 | Total Solar PV Installed (MW-DC) | Total Solar PV Rank |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------|--|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Honolulu | HI | 646.4 | 0 | 226.5 | 4 |
| 2 | San Diego | CA | 247.5 | 0 | 351.4 | 2 |
| 45 | Richmond | VA | 14.9 | +2 | 3.4 | 53 |
| 69 | Virginia Beach* | VA | 0.2 | -1 | 0.1 | 69 |

- Hawaiian Electric has been encouraging residents to use solar energy making them becoming the leader of solar energy
- San Diego Gas & Electric provides electricity that comes from solar and wind energies for the last 35 years
- Virginia Dominion Power lobbies to minimize solar energy

Policy Formation

1. Develop policies that encourage and incentivise the use of solar energy system in large-scaled housing developments.
2. Develop policies that ensure that the financial benefits of using solar energy systems are passed on to the tenants.
3. Develop policies that counter the arguments made by the lobbyist of Dominion Virginia which keep homes running off corporate energy supplies

Policy Analysis

1. Financial benefits are lower electric bills for low income families and renters.
2. Increase financial resources to improve their necessities.
3. Reduce carbon footprint, thus, decrease pollution.
4. Provide paybacks to families when they use less energy than they produced.

Policy Implications

1. The power company industry will fight every effort to promote an energy source that they cannot profit from. They produce a lot of research materials that attempts to make the use of solar energy an environmental hazard.
2. Some of the arguments made by the power company industry include:
 - a. Solar panels consist of metals that are hazardous if not disposed properly. However, those materials are mostly organic and non-toxic.
 - b. The US has no recycling mandates for these materials; most ended up in landfills or get sent to developing countries. That is because they are non-toxic.
 - c. Higher carbon footprint compared to wind and nuclear energy. They make this argument because they control the means of production of these energy sources, they can't profit or control solar. Note that nuclear energy is not safe for disposal.

Recommendation

1. More inclusive legislation that provides solar energy access to low income families.
2. Advocate for the legality of solar fields and other means for distribution of solar energy in other housing developments.
3. Advocate for research for ways to recycle solar panels.

Citation

<https://www.whsv.com/content/news/Lawmakers-OK-bill-to-bring-solar-to-low-income-communities-568562761.html>

If Solar Panels Are So Clean, Why Do They Produce So Much Toxic Waste? (forbes.com)

<https://scdhec.gov/sites/default/files/Library/OR-1695.pdf>

Virginia Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program | Benefits.gov

Va. lawmakers OK bill to bring solar to low-income communities (whsv.com)

Shining Cities 2019 (environmentamerica.org)

[https://www.bing.com/search?q=does San Diego Gas %26 Electric support solar energy&qs=n&form=QBRE&msbrank=0_0__0&sp=-1&pq=does san diego gas %26 electric support solar energy&sc=0-50&sk=&cvid=D07BF7EEBBE749719B047B8A65163896](https://www.bing.com/search?q=does+San+Diego+Gas+%26+Electric+support+solar+energy&qs=n&form=QBRE&msbrank=0_0__0&sp=-1&pq=does+san+diego+gas+%26+electric+support+solar+energy&sc=0-50&sk=&cvid=D07BF7EEBBE749719B047B8A65163896)

Solar Power in Hawaii - All You Need To Know! (solar-nation.org)

https://environmentamerica.org/sites/environment/files/reports/WEB_AME_Shining-Cities_2019_040919-v1.pdf

Any Questions?