SUPPORT SB 191

Net energy metering; eligibility limits

Senator Barbara Favola

Reasons to Support SB 191:

SB191 provides that Virginia customers who wish to self-generate electricity with renewable energy using the net metering provisions of the Code may install up to 125% of their previous 12 months' electric demand, or in the case of new construction, of the electric demand of similar buildings. The extra 25% "wiggle room" means projects can be sized to meet an expected increase in electric demand, such as adding an electric vehicle, building an addition to a house, or adding family members.

Overview

SB191 is needed to remedy a problem introduced in a 2015 law that limits consumers to installing only as much solar energy as needed to meet their previous twelve months' electricity demand. The new limit created needless inefficiency and confusion in residential solar sales and construction. In addition, the 2015 law is silent on new construction.

Consumers have expressed frustration over a backward-looking limit that means solar arrays have to be added onto as demand grows instead of installed all at once, causing delay and higher costs.

The net metering statute has a built-in disincentive to installing more solar than needed: surplus electricity cannot be sold to anyone other than the utility, and only at its avoided cost. Thus, changing the law to allow a solar array to be right-sized from the start creates little risk that a consumer will install more solar than needed.

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