



SOLAR NET METERING

S.7171 (O. Johnson, et al.)

Summary

This bill would amend the public service law in relation to net energy metering for non-residential solar electric generating systems. It would expand the eligibility criteria in existing net metering laws to include non-residential solar systems of up to two thousand kilowatts in size (or a customer/generator's peak load, whichever is less), and increase the limits on residential solar systems from ten to twenty-five kilowatts.

Explanation

Net metering measures the difference between electricity bought from an electric corporation and electricity produced by the customer/generator. Under this bill, residential customers/generators would receive the full retail value for any surplus electricity they produce, while non-residential customer/generators would not receive compensation from their electricity supplier for any surplus power they generate.

New York has one of the most restrictive policies in the Northeast when it comes to allowing customer/generators to sell their excess electricity back to the grid. While New Yorkers with small-scale residential and farm systems can already net meter, commercial businesses cannot, even though the commercial and industrial sectors are responsible for two-thirds of the state's electricity usage.

Making larger, non-residential solar electric generating systems eligible for net-metering would help protect New Yorkers from the harmful effects of air pollution created by fossil fuel-fired power plants. These harmful effects include asthma attacks and premature deaths in seniors, increased levels of mercury contamination, destruction of our forest ecosystems by acid rain, as well as wide-ranging negative effects associated with global climate change.

Greater reliance on clean, distributed generation such as larger solar-powered systems would make additional power available during times of peak demand, reduce stress on transmission lines and potentially avoid further large-scale power outages. Promoting clean, renewable sources of electric power through expanded net metering laws is a sound way to help protect the environment of New York State. This bill is a solid step in on that path, though a better bill would include all renewable technologies, and eliminate the system-wide cap on net-metered load in New York State.

Environmental Advocates of New York supports this bill.

Memo 37