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Mass Solar Coalition Proposes Legislation to Extend Task Force, Ensure Solar Industry Growth in Massachusetts

BOSTON— The Mass Solar Coalition, which is coordinated by New England Clean Energy Council (NECEC), Solar Energy Business Association of New England (SEBANE), Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) and Vote Solar, today announced its support for proposed legislation to extend the Net Metering and Solar Task Force report deadline and raise the state's net metering cap to maintain solar development while the Task Force develops a long-term comprehensive solution to ensure the growth of solar in Massachusetts.

The bills, *An Act Relative to Net Metering* (SD-869 and HD-2050), filed by Senator Anthony Petrucelli and Representative Frank Smizik, address the short-term bottleneck looming in the state's solar market by increasing the state's net metering caps by 2 percent in the public sector and one percent in the private sector. In addition, the legislation proposes to extend the due date of the recommendations of the Net Metering and Solar Task Force to June 1, 2015 to allow the Administration of Governor Charlie Baker to transition and to fully engage in the task force.

There is an urgent need for this legislation. Analysis from the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (DPU) indicates that the net metering caps in certain utility territories will be hit by March 2015. Further, once the Task Force comes forward with recommendations, time will be needed for the consensus to work its way through the legislative process. The Mass Solar Coalition believes this modest increase in the utility system-wide caps on net metering eligibility is essential to ensuring solar and its many benefits continue to grow in the Commonwealth during this process. The Mass Solar Coalition looks forward to engaging with the Baker Administration through the Task Force.

"This legislation is essential to the continued growth of renewable energy in the Commonwealth and the benefits it is delivering to customers by enabling them to continue to take advantage of net metering for their systems, one of the simplest and most effective solar policies in the state. This bill will also allow the Baker Administration to transition into its leadership role on the Net Metering Task Force," said NECEC President Peter Rothstein.

The Mass Solar Coalition remains committed to the Net Metering and Solar Task Force and will continue to work with members of the Task Force to arrive at a set of policy recommendations for the Commonwealth that will ensure the continued development of a robust, growing solar industry and market that benefits all citizens, businesses and industries. However, the Task Force is unlikely to conclude before an interim cap increase is necessary to prevent solar and other qualified net metering projects currently under development from stalling out due to the inability to receive fair value for net excess generation under Massachusetts' net metering framework.

“Massachusetts’ strong solar industry, which employs more than 12,000 people, shows that policies such as net energy metering are working for the state,” said Rhone Resch, president and CEO of SEIA. “We are confident that the Task Force will be able to come up with smart, effective recommendations for the future, but in the meantime, it is vitally important that homeowners, businesses, schools and organizations in Massachusetts continue to be able capitalize on clean, renewable solar energy.”

Tom Thompson, SEBANE’s President, agrees. “These legislative proposals will enable us to work together so that we can produce a stable, equitable, and significant role for solar energy in Massachusetts.”

The Coalition supports the advancement of policies and programs to ensure the further growth of renewable energy throughout the Commonwealth, offer fair and equitable access to the benefits of solar for all Massachusetts electricity customers and recognize the grid, economic and environmental value that solar and distributed energy resources bring to all electricity customers in Massachusetts.

Several pieces of legislation on Beacon Hill have already been filed with the aim of growing the solar market. The Mass Solar Coalition has not yet taken a position on any legislation beyond SD-869 and HD-2050.

“The Mass Solar Coalition is encouraged by the enthusiasm with which many legislators and advocates are approaching solar policy, evidenced by the forward looking legislation they have introduced,” said Sean Garren, Northeast Regional Manager for Vote Solar. “Even as we focus on the Net Metering and Solar Task Force and the continued growth of the solar market in the near term, we look forward to working with legislators to deliver a clean energy future.”

About Mass Solar Coalition

Mass Solar Coalition is an alliance of solar and clean energy industry organizations, businesses and solar and environmental advocates committed to working with the Massachusetts Legislature and other stakeholders to ensure the Commonwealth’s continued solar success. The Coalition aims to advance fair, long-term, sustainable, and cost effective solar programs and policies that support strong solar deployment and that deliver the many benefits of solar to all Massachusetts consumers.

About Net Metering:

Net metering ensures that solar customers receive fair credit on their utility bills for the excess clean power they deliver to the grid for use nearby. In place in 44 states, this simple crediting arrangement is one of the most important state policies for enabling homes, schools and businesses to go solar.

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