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Public Service Commission Approves Net Metering Settlement

Provides Residential Customers Final Chance to Go Solar at Full 1 to 1 Rates

Charleston WV - March 27, 2024 - After months of heated debate and intense advocacy, the West Virginia Public Service Commission has approved nearly every provision in a settlement reached earlier this year by FirstEnergy, solar energy installer Solar Holler, and other interveners in FirstEnergy's recent net metering rate case. The terms approved by this ruling establish a level of fairness previously unprecedented in the US solar industry. Notably, the ruling also provides one last window of opportunity for homeowners to transition to solar at full one to one net metering rates.

The filing, first issued in July 2023, attempted to reduce the value of solar by about half. It proposed crediting solar producers 6.6 cents per KWh of energy sent onto the grid, while charging about 13 cents for the same amount of energy consumed. Solar advocates argued that FirstEnergy's proposal failed to account for the many benefits of solar and that it lacked any mathematical backing. Supporters further argued for clear timelines and fair notice of any policy changes.

Solar sales in FirstEnergy territory have been at a standstill since last fall due to the uncertainty created by the case. With the PSC's decision to grandfather existing customers— and any new customers who apply for interconnection this year— into the current one to one net metering rate, installations can resume and homeowners can be confident in the financial return of their solar investment. The ruling also ensures the one to one rate will be upheld for those customers for the next 25 years. For the first time in months, the financial benefits of solar are both predictable and stable for existing and new customers.

Still, time is of the essence as the return on investment will decrease by about 30% for homeowners who apply after December 31st of this year.



Dan Conant, CEO of Solar Holler and a prominent figure in the fight for solar rights, summed up the victory as well as the challenges presented by the ruling saying, "For months, we banded together in defense of solar-- we rallied, we emailed, we gave testimony-- we proved to Charleston that the people of West Virginia want fair energy policies and access to solar. It feels great to finally have a ruling that delivers that. And it feels even better to get back to work where we couldn't before. We've changed the future of solar in West Virginia, particularly for nonprofits and small business owners. The challenge now is to ensure that homeowners are informed about the decision and the advantages it provides those who commit to solar this year."

While the energy savings provided by solar will be less for homeowners who make the switch after 2024, advocates are happy with the methodology used in the calculation and are especially pleased that it applies to various classes that typically face exceptionally lower net metering rates. Beginning next year, homeowners, churches, businesses, and schools will all be credited 9.34 cents for net metered energy. This actually makes net metered solar more affordable than ever for commercial customers.

While homeowners are strongly encouraged to capitalize on the full benefits of renewable energy by committing to solar this year, the ruling is a clear victory that sets the state up for exponential growth in solar in the coming years. The decision underscores the power of community-driven advocacy and serves as a testament to West Virginia's overwhelming support of energy independence and the green energy economy.

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Solar Holler is bringing the next generation of energy production to our ancient mountains, and strengthening our communities with union employment. Solar Holler relentlessly pursues innovative approaches that bring solar within reach of all Appalachians, starting with low-interest financing options with no upfront cost. Solar Holler has helped dozens of businesses, nonprofits, and churches, and thousands of homes go solar across West Virginia, southern Ohio, western Virginia, and eastern Kentucky.