



# Solar Advocate Citizen Lobbying Guide

**A GUIDE TO FIGHTING FOR YOUR SOLAR RIGHTS**



# Acknowledgements

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## Solar United Neighbors staff, fellows and interns:

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## Solar United Neighbors

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Solar United Neighbors (SUN) is a national nonprofit. We represent the needs and interests of solar owners and supporters across the country. We envision a clean, equitable energy system that directs control and benefits back to local communities, with solar on every roof and money in every pocket. We're a community of people building a new energy system with rooftop solar at the cornerstone. We help people go solar, join together, and fight for their energy rights.



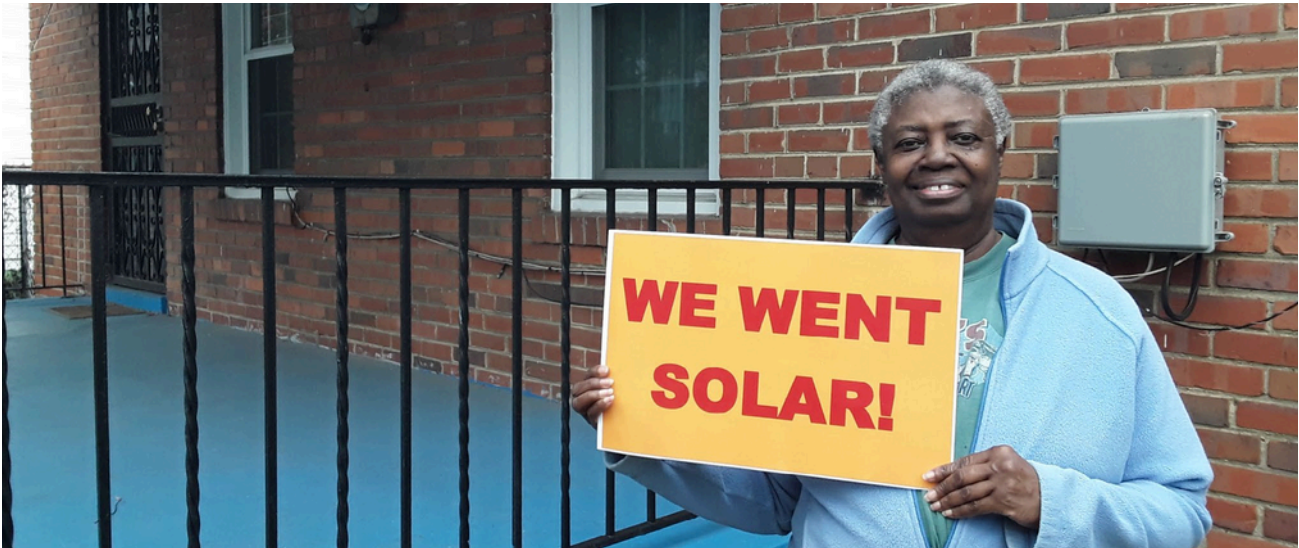
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# Lobbying 101

## What is lobbying?

Lobbying is a strategy for getting what you want by advocating to the people with the power to give it to you.

### Does citizen lobbying make a difference?

**ABSOLUTELY YES!** There is ample evidence that citizen lobbying sways policymakers. Elected officials want to hear from constituents, and they want to make informed decisions. (They also want to be re-elected). Unfortunately, not many constituents take the time to lobby their elected officials. Even fewer do it effectively. As a result, most of the lobbyists that elected leaders hear from are professionals with ties to special interests. They often push for policies that limit your solar rights.

The goal of this guide is to give you the information and support you need to be a persuasive solar advocate.

### How does a bill become law?

As a note: this explanation is focused on state-level policymaking. Federal legislation follows the same general process.

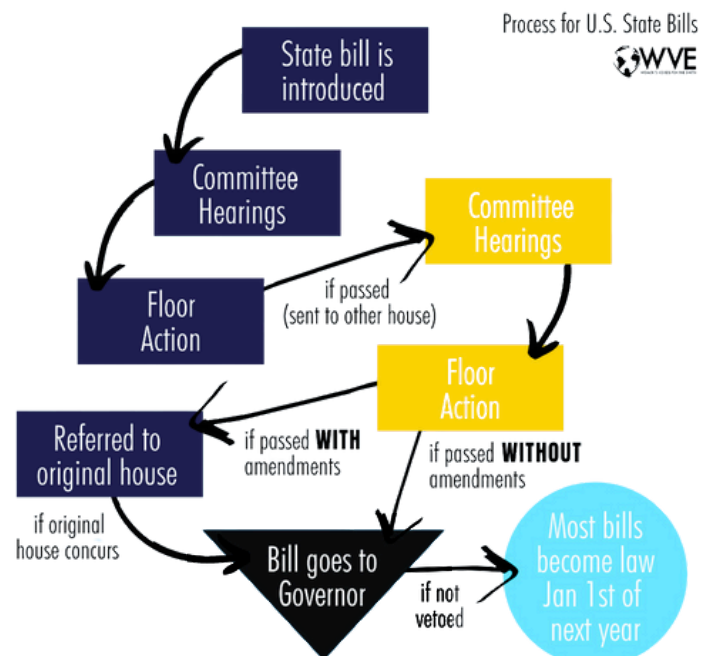
A bill is a proposed law. Once introduced, every bill is assigned to an existing committee in the House or Senate. Committees are small groups of legislators that are assigned bills related to the committee topic.

Focus areas for committees vary by state, but some common examples include: energy, natural resources, education, health, and appropriations/budgeting. The committee acts like a "gatekeeper."

It can consider the bill and conduct a public hearing before voting on the legislation. If the bill does not have a hearing or fails to pass through a committee, the process stops for that legislative session.

The bill language could still be added to another bill such as a larger omnibus-type bill or a similar bill on the same topic. Many bills that eventually become law fail one or more times in committee. This is why it is useful to note if your legislator

## HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW



is a committee member or chair. This gives them significant power to decide if bills receive a hearing and make it out of the committee. Once a bill passes through a committee (sometimes it must pass multiple committees), it goes to the full legislative body for a vote. If it

receives the necessary votes, the bill passes. It also has to go through the same process in the other legislative chamber (House or Senate) before going to the governor's office to be signed into law. If the governor vetoes a bill, the legislature can vote again to override the veto.

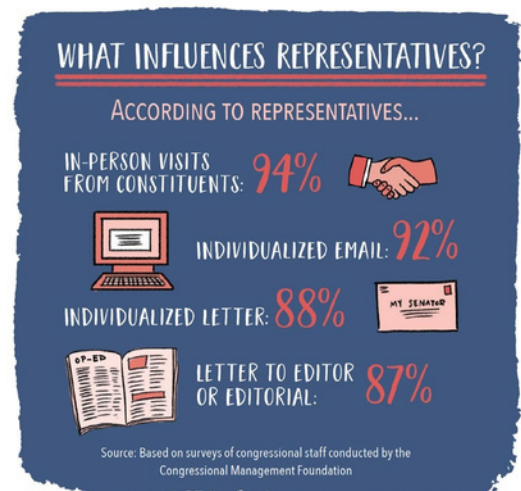
## An important note:

Laws passed through the legislature aren't the only way that policies are enacted. This is especially true for policies that relate to energy and electricity. Solar policies are sometimes developed and implemented by agencies outside the legislative process. This means solar advocates will sometimes also need to

lobby public agencies or administrative entities. An example of this would be a state public utility commission. This document is designed to guide you to lobby legislators, but most of the approaches and tips are also useful if you are interested in influencing administrative proceedings.

## What are effective citizen lobbying activities?

1. Calling, emailing, or writing your elected representatives or administrative officials.
2. Organizing or attending a meeting with your legislator in the district at their office or a public space like a library or café.
3. Visiting with your legislators at their office at the Capitol.
4. Emailing testimony to the appropriate committee.
5. Presenting your testimony in person before a committee.
6. Writing a letter to the editor in your local newspaper.



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Ideally, solar citizen lobbyists should try to do most of the above for priority bills, but, of course, not everyone has the time. Taking just one of these actions — or doing as much as you can — will still make a big difference.

Research shows meeting with your legislators in person is the most impactful step you can take. But all of these approaches are meaningful, effective lobbying activities.

# Pyramid of Effectiveness for Lobbying Activities



## We're here to be a resource

Solar United Neighbors is ready to help you. We can provide talking points on bills that are important for solar. We would also be glad to help you to organize a group in-district meeting. We can also help you to write testimony.

Contact us at: [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org).

## Want to access the information in this guide as a video?

Most of the information in this guide can be found in recorded webinars on [SUN's Advocacy YouTube Channel](#) including Solar Lobbying from Your Couch, from fall 2020.





# Setting up a lobbying meeting

## Before contacting your representatives

Find the contact information for your representatives:

- Federal Senators
- Federal House of Representatives members
- State legislators: OpenStates.org or your state government's website
  - Learn about your official's background from their online biography. You can usually find their biography on their websites. We can also provide you with their voting record on solar-related matters.

- Prepare what you want to say or write. Start with a personal story about how the bill solves a problem or impacts your family, community, business, etc.
- Remember that your personal story will make a greater impact than just presenting facts about the bill. (For details about the bills, consult talking points provided by Solar United Neighbors and other trusted sources).

## Emailing and calling your representatives

- Address the representative by their proper title (e.g.: "Senator," "Delegate," "Assemblymember," or "Representative").
- Identify yourself by name and your city or town. If it is relevant to the issue, state your profession and/or organizational affiliation, such as Solar United Neighbors.
- Identify the bill you want to talk about by bill title and number (see "State lobbying online resources" on page 19 for links to search for bills).
- Briefly state what your position is and how you would like your representative to vote.
- Explain how the bill would affect you, your family, your business, or your community. Solar United Neighbors can provide talking points, but your personal impact story is most important!



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# Setting up a lobbying meeting

- If the representative (or their staff member/legislative aide) takes a position opposing yours in personal meetings or in follow-up communications, express disappointment (not anger). Offer to answer questions or supply any additional information. You may want to ask what specific information would prompt them to consider switching positions.

- As soon as possible, follow up by email with the information and restate your position and request.
- See an example email to set up a meeting on page 26.

We'd appreciate hearing how your legislator responded to your lobbying. You can contact us at: [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org).



## More tips:

Be politely assertive and use a professional tone. Try not express anger, hostility ("I'm a taxpayer!"), or threaten ("You'll pay for this at the polls!"). One of the goals of meeting with your representative is to build an ongoing and productive constituent-representative relationship.

# Lobbying your representatives in-person or virtually

Meeting with your representatives in person is generally the most impactful way to lobby. Both one-on-one and group meetings (typically no more than four people) are effective. Solar United Neighbors can connect you with fellow solar advocates from your community to organize a group meeting. We are eager to help you organize the meeting. We can provide the information and assistance you need.

It's usually more convenient to meet your legislators at their main office. If that doesn't work for your or their schedules, you can request a meeting in your local district. If your legislator doesn't have a district office, you can meet at a public location like the local library, a café, etc. In both cases, the meeting should be scheduled at least a week ahead of time. Virtual meetings are also an option upon request.

## Lobbying Steps

1

### Preparing For Your Meeting

- To prepare for the meeting, see suggestions under "Before contacting your representatives" on page 8.
- It's a good idea to have a one-page outline to talk from. There is an example agenda/reminders for a meeting on page 27.
- Don't bring a lot of written material to leave with the legislators. If you do, it should be no more than 1-2 pages.



2

### Optional: Organizing others to join

- Reach out to friends, neighbors, and community leaders who may want to attend.
- Work with us to engage Solar United Neighbors members in the district to join.
- Partner with other organizations.
- Bonus: organizing a group of people will help get a meeting.

# Lobbying your representatives in-person or virtually

## 3

### During the meeting

- Follow the “Emailing and calling your representatives” guidelines on page 8.
- Make sure to allow lots of opportunity for the legislators (or their staff) to peak about their positions and concerns. You want to encourage your legislators (or their staff) to talk so you can learn more about their thinking. It’s a good idea to take brief notes as long as it’s not distracting.
- If you do not have the answer to a question, say so. Offer to find the answer and provide it to the legislator later. We can help you find the information they need.
  - Close the meeting by thanking your representative (or their staff) for the meeting and tell them that you will send a follow-up email.
  - If your representative opposes your position:
  - Calmly express your disappointment. Ask what kind of information the representative would need to reconsider their position. Offer to send more information via email. Solar United Neighbors can help you get this information.

## 4

### After the meeting

- Immediately after the meeting, write up brief notes or review/clarify notes taken during the meeting.
- The day after the meeting, call or email the person(s) you met with to express your thanks for the meeting. Include any follow-up information. Ask the representative to support/oppose the bill. If your legislators said they will support your position, thank them and urge them to encourage their colleagues to follow suit.

## Virtual Lobbying

When an in-person meeting is not possible or practical, a virtual meeting can still be almost as effective at connecting with your representatives and making your voice heard. The process is generally the same as meeting in person, with a couple extra tips to prepare.

You should request a virtual meeting at least one week ahead of time.

If your legislator is not available, ask to meet with a staffer/legislative aide.

Be sure to increase the impact of your virtual lobbying meeting with other forms of remote lobbying, such as submitting written or oral testimony and spreading the word through social media.

# Other ways to influence your representative

## Writing a letter to the editor

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Getting original letters to the editor (LTE) published in local papers is a great way to inform the public about a bill. It also sends a clear message to your local legislators and decision makers. Most policymakers monitor any mention of their names in local papers.

You can write and submit your LTE before your meeting or try to get it published as a follow-up to your outreach or meeting with your representatives. In either case, it's important to submit a LTE as soon as possible. Legislation can move quickly.

## Writing and publishing tips

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- Before you write the letter, make sure you find the submission instructions on the newspaper's website.
- Follow the paper's guidelines for word count.
- Your lead sentence should explain what it is you're writing about.
- Next, you should explain why it matters to you and your community and what people can do to help (for example: sign a petition, volunteer their time, spread the word).

- Remember to call on legislators by name to support your position.
- It may be useful to recruit others to submit their own LTEs on the same topic to the same paper. This will increase the probability of one of the letters being printed.
- It can also be helpful to tie your letter to an article the newspaper previously published.
- Share on social media if your letter is published.

Writing a letter to the editor may feel challenging if you haven't done it before, but it isn't! Whether this is your first letter or your hundredth, we would be glad to assist you in writing your letter to the editor.

For more guidance, see SUN's two-page LTE Guide Handout and the appendix at the

bottom of this document for a few sample LTEs.

You can also contact [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org) for feedback on your LTE.



# Other ways to influence your representative

## Using social media

Social media can be a powerful platform to promote your issue to other possible supporters and your legislators. Coordinated efforts by a lot of supporters at once is the most effective way to get your issues noticed. This will make it harder for legislators to ignore an avalanche of

messages. A successful social media campaign can sometimes appear as a trending topic on X or Facebook.

## Days of action

- Solar United Neighbors often organizes online days of action on pressing issues.
- Participating in these by sharing posts on social platforms and using campaign hashtags takes minimal effort but can go a long way.
- Even without these days of action, there are simple steps you can take to amplify your message.



**Solar United Neighbors** @SolarNeighbors · 20h

Solar United Neighbors calls for the immediate, full repeal of Ohio HB6 & the resignation of OH House Speaker Householder and those who took part in the corrupt dealings that led to its passage. [#repealHB6](#) [#disregardingdemocracy](#) [@GovMikeDeWine](#) [@JonHusted](#)

## Tips for X: tagging someone

- You can tag legislators directly in your own posts if you are sharing a relevant news article, a personal story, or are participating in a social media day of action. Just include the legislator's X handle (e.g. @IAgovernor, @MarkWarner) in your message to make sure they receive a notification about it.

**Looking for a legislator's X handle?**

# Other ways to influence your representative

## Tips for X: tagging someone (continued)

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- Sometimes, you'll find a tweet by someone else that you want a legislator to see — for example, when a reporter posts a relevant news story or when a respected public figure shares a convincing statistic or story. You can notify your elected official about the tweet by replying to the post with the legislator's X handle and a short message about the post (e.g. your reply might say something like: @IAgovernor: here's another reason why Iowa should make it easier to install rooftop solar!).
- You can also try direct messaging a legislator on Twitter with your concerns, although many public officials will prevent messages from being sent this way. If the legislator has their direct messages open, there will be a mail icon on their profile you can click on. To maximize your impact and the likelihood that your message will be seen, direct messages can be sent in conjunction with other tagging/tweeting, as well as personal calls or emails.

## Using hashtags

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- On Twitter and some other social media platforms, topics that show up on the front page are often trending hashtags that are being used widely over a short period of time.
- Getting a hashtag (e.g. #SaveSolar) to the front page can be a huge boost in outreach to the wider public.
- While large pushes like that are best suited for days of action, using specific hashtags whenever you post about the issue still spreads the word and makes it easier for people to see related posts all at once.

# Submitting written and oral testimony

Submitting written and oral testimony is an essential and necessary aspect of lobbying. This step is most critical while a bill or legislation is being considered by a committee. You can lobby by submitting

written testimony and/or presenting your testimony in person (or virtually) at a public hearing. Scheduled bill hearings can be found on the online legislative calendar or bill status search.

## Tips for testimony

- Written testimony is usually best kept to 1-2 pages. It should be emailed to the clerk of the committee before the hearing, with a cover note asking for your testimony to be distributed to the committee members. Some government agencies/bodies require you to have a set number of printed copies to pass out. Check if this is needed. We recommend that you bring enough copies of your testimony (another reason to keep it concise) to pass out to the committee members just before you speak.

- Oral testimony is usually restricted to 2-3 minutes. Your goal should be to convey
- your personal story of how the bill impacts you, your family, and community. The more specific the better!

See page 25 for an example testimony. Solar United Neighbors staff is available to assist you in putting together and submitting your written and/or in-person testimony.



## Actions you can take now

Find current National and State Actions by visiting [SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/action](https://SolarUnitedNeighbors.org/action)

# Solar talking points



Here are some general talking points on some of the most common solar policy issues that we see for reference with links to our website for additional resources.

## General solar talking points:

- Solar is affordable. The price of solar has dropped rapidly over the past few decades. From 2010 to 2020 the installed price for residential solar decreased 64% from about \$7.50/watt to less than \$3/watt (NREL 2021). As a result, solar installations have skyrocketed. In addition to solar panels themselves getting cheaper, clean solar energy also helps you save on your electricity bills.
- Solar is clean and renewable. Solar is a pollution-free, carbon-free energy resource. Transitioning to clean sources of energy like solar is a critical step to both help fight climate change and protect our communities' health from dirty air pollution.
- Solar is an investment in justice and equity. Low-income families have a high energy burden — they spend a higher proportion of their income on utility bills — and also suffer the most health and economic harm of fossil fuel extraction and pollution. Solar saves electricity costs, reduces pollution, puts people in charge of their energy, and creates local jobs and wealth.
- Solar helps ensure resilience in the face of disasters. Solar systems paired with battery storage can provide a backup source of electricity when the power grid goes out. As climate change worsens extreme weather disasters, widespread power outages — as seen during the record-breaking fall 2020 wildfire season in California or the winter 2021 storm in Texas — will become more of a risk for communities across the country. During major blackouts, having clean, reliable backup power from solar can save lives, especially for people who are medically vulnerable or during episodes of extreme heat or cold.



# Important solar policy issues



## Value of solar

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The solar that is installed on homes and businesses in our community is good for everyone. Solar creates local jobs, generates local wealth, improves energy security, and improves public health.

For solar panel owners, solar lowers monthly electric bills, increases home values, and provides energy independence.

Local solar also benefits the entire electric grid. The grid is made stronger, cheaper, and more efficient thanks to distributed solar energy like rooftop solar panels. This translates to long term savings for all ratepayers.

Learn more about value of solar in this factsheet and on our webpage.



## Net Metering

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Net metering is a policy that ensures solar owners earn fair credit for the electricity they generate.

Most solar systems are connected to the electric grid. This allows solar owners to use grid electricity when they need it and share their solar electricity with

neighbors when they don't.

Net metering provides solar owners with a credit on their electric bill based on how much electricity they generate, but don't use themselves.



## Grid Modernization

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- The growth of stronger, cheaper distributed energy technologies — like solar, wind, energy storage, smart

meters, and demand management — is creating huge new opportunities to rethink our energy system.

# Important solar policy issues



## Grid Modernization (continued)

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- Reforming the electric grid means we can take control of where our electricity comes from. While a centralized system worked well for a while to subsidize and build the

infrastructure so that everyone had access to electricity, it no longer makes technical, political, or economic sense.



## Time of use

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- The cost to generate and deliver electricity to you can vary depending on the time of the day, day of the week, and the season. When demand for electricity spikes — say on a hot summer day or early winter morning — utilities will need to turn on plants that are more expensive to generate and deliver enough electricity. Some utilities charge customers more for electricity during these periods of high demand, and this is called time of use rates (TOU) or 'time varying rates'.

- The goal of a time of use structure is to change consumer behavior by charging more for electricity when demand is high and less when demand is low.
- When implemented well, time of use rates can help customers save money.
- Good implementation includes major investments in public education about time of use rates, as well as immediate availability of your electricity use data to make sure you are able to manage your electric bill.

# State lobbying online resources

Most of this information, like committee membership and the legislative calendar can be found by going to your state legislature's website (see the list below).

Some databases have easy-to-access information on legislators and bills, so we have provided those as well.

## Directory of state legislators

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Find contact information for your representatives using [Openstates.org](https://openstates.org). Typing in your address under "Find your legislators" will give you links to pages on

your legislators along with their contact information and actions/votes they have taken on bills.

## State legislative calendars

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See which committees are holding hearings and what events are scheduled at the State House and Senate by searching for 'legislative calendar \*your state\*' on any search engine.

The official calendar should be the first or second link and will end in .gov You can access start and end dates for the annual state legislative sessions for all states here: [Legislative Calendar Interactive Map](#)

## Bill status search

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Openstates.org provides information on bill text, committees, actions, amendments, roll calls and more. Find your state in the drop-down menu in the top left of the page. Then, you can type in keywords or the number of the bill (e.g. SB 629) and get a list of bills in your state.

Each bill page has a summary and full text of the bill, along with a timeline of every action and vote taken by either house on it. Any information not listed on the site can likely be found by searching on your state's legislative assembly website.

# State lobbying online resources (continued)

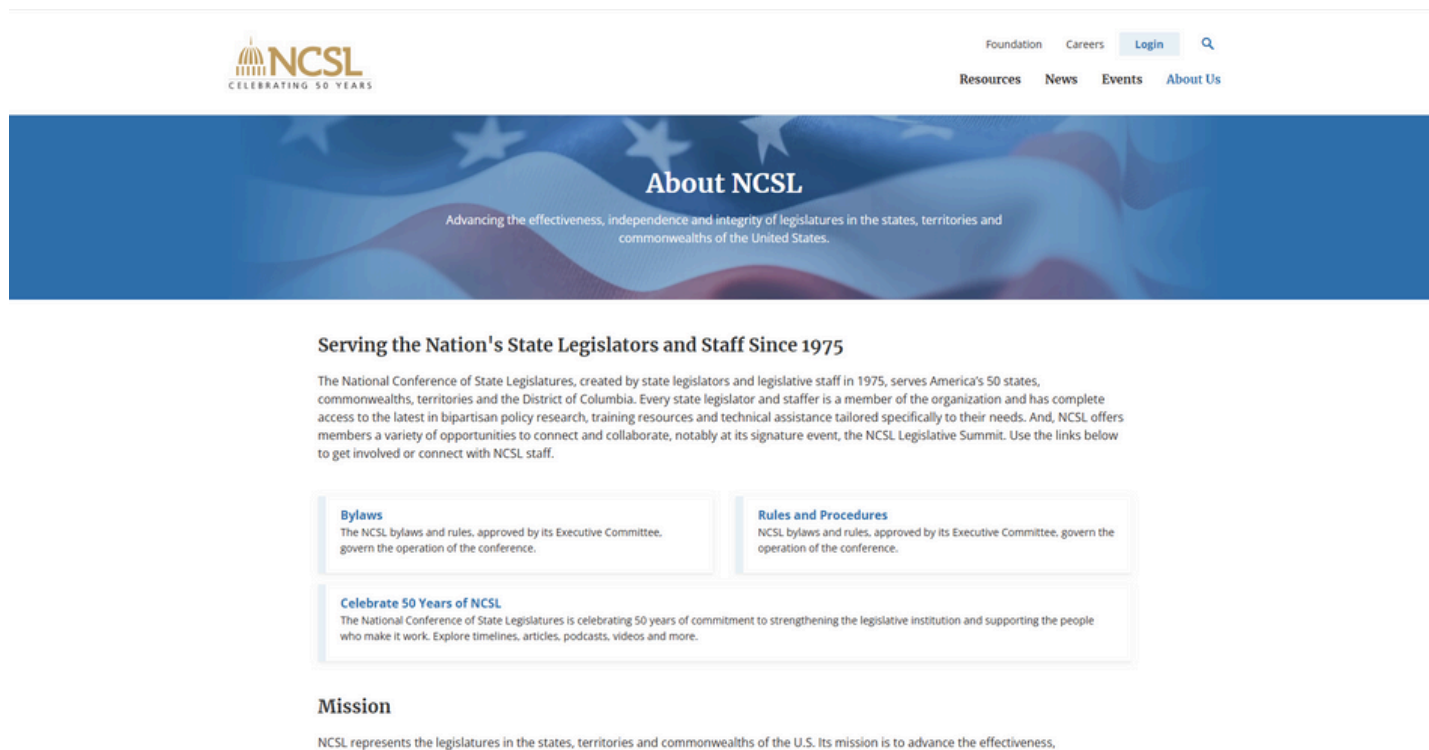
## Committee membership lists

Each committee has the contact information for the Clerk who can distribute testimony to committee members if you cannot testify in person at a public hearing. (You can also copy all committee members on the email to the committee clerk.)

Many state legislature websites have a "Committees" section front and center to click on, but sometimes you may have to look around. If you can't find it, try going to other sections like "Members" or those for a specific house.

## Links to state legislative websites

To see legislative resources for states, check out the [National Conference of State Legislatures' Legislative Directory here](#).



The screenshot shows the NCSL website homepage. At the top left is the NCSL logo with the text "CELEBRATING 50 YEARS". To the right is a navigation bar with links: Foundation, Careers, Login, and a search icon. Below these are links for Resources, News, Events, and About Us. The main banner features a blue background with white stars and the text "About NCSL" and "Advancing the effectiveness, independence and integrity of legislatures in the states, territories and commonwealths of the United States." Below the banner is a section titled "Serving the Nation's State Legislators and Staff Since 1975" with a paragraph about the organization's history and mission. At the bottom, there are three boxes: "Bylaws" (describing the NCSL bylaws and rules), "Rules and Procedures" (describing the NCSL bylaws and rules), and "Celebrate 50 Years of NCSL" (describing the 50th anniversary celebration).

**NCSL**  
CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Foundation Careers Login

Resources News Events About Us

### About NCSL

Advancing the effectiveness, independence and integrity of legislatures in the states, territories and commonwealths of the United States.

#### Serving the Nation's State Legislators and Staff Since 1975

The National Conference of State Legislatures, created by state legislators and legislative staff in 1975, serves America's 50 states, commonwealths, territories and the District of Columbia. Every state legislator and staffer is a member of the organization and has complete access to the latest in bipartisan policy research, training resources and technical assistance tailored specifically to their needs. And, NCSL offers members a variety of opportunities to connect and collaborate, notably at its signature event, the NCSL Legislative Summit. Use the links below to get involved or connect with NCSL staff.

##### Bylaws

The NCSL bylaws and rules, approved by its Executive Committee, govern the operation of the conference.

##### Rules and Procedures

NCSL bylaws and rules, approved by its Executive Committee, govern the operation of the conference.

##### Celebrate 50 Years of NCSL

The National Conference of State Legislatures is celebrating 50 years of commitment to strengthening the legislative institution and supporting the people who make it work. Explore timelines, articles, podcasts, videos and more.

#### Mission

NCSL represents the legislatures in the states, territories and commonwealths of the U.S. Its mission is to advance the effectiveness,



# Sample resources for successful lobbying

## Example letters to the editor

1

Net-metering rules protect consumer, alternative energy

Columbus Dispatch

June 10, 2020

My family installed a rooftop solar array in 2017 because it was the right thing to do for the environment and producing our own energy lowers our electric bill. The majority of what we produce during the day goes out to the grid and is used by others. We receive credit from the electric utility for the power we contribute to the grid and draw on that credit at night when we are not producing.

This net-metering arrangement, used by over 49 states and territories, makes it possible to afford going solar.

Eliminating net metering would discourage millions from investing in solar systems, depriving all of us of the economic, environmental and public health benefits of solar energy. This could happen if the New England Ratepayers Association, a group representing utility interests, has its way.

It has petitioned the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC Docket EL20-42) to eliminate states' rights to set energy policy, including net metering, and give that right to the federal government. A change in net-metering rules would mean the loss of many good-paying solar jobs. With unemployment at high levels due to COVID-19, this is the last thing we need.

I urge Gov. Mike DeWine to let FERC know that Ohio is against NERA's petition and that we will fight to keep the right to regulate solar in our state. Readers can sign the petition at [savesolar.org](https://www.savesolar.org).

Carol Miller, Newark

# Sample resources for successful lobbying

## Example letters to the editor (continued)

2

Tell PSC we want choice

November 4, 2018

To quote the organization Solar United Neighbors of West Virginia, “West Virginia’s monopoly electric utilities — Appalachian Power, Wheeling Power, Mon Power, and Potomac Edison — want to drastically reduce the rate at which net-metered solar owners receive credit for the energy their solar panels produce. If the state’s Public Service Commission accepts the utilities’ proposal, this would penalize existing solar owners who went solar expecting to receive full retail-rate credit, and would strongly discourage additional West Virginians from investing in solar.”

Solar United Neighbors continues, “The utilities’ proposal comes at a time when the Public Service Commission is considering changes to the state’s net metering regulation. The PSC proposed relatively minor changes, but the utilities have taken this opportunity to argue for gutting our net metering rules, making it far more expensive for West Virginians to go solar.”

We must let the Public Service Commission know that this is unacceptable. No matter your political ideology or party affiliation, we can all agree that penalizing West Virginians for trying to generate their own energy and feed part of what’s generated back into the grid is just mindless greed on the part of existing electric utilities. Public comments to the PSC regarding this reduction of net metering rates are due by November 8. To protect reasonable net metering rates, go to [Solarunitedneighbors.org/westvirginia/](https://solarunitedneighbors.org/westvirginia/) and click on “contact the public service commission” on the main page by or before Nov. 8. Or you can go to Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action’s Facebook group page and click into the Solar United Neighbors comments page for the PSC at the top of MOVCA’s page under “announcements.”

Let’s take a stand today for renewable energy independence in West Virginia.  
Montani Semper Liberi.

# Sample resources for successful lobbying

## Example letters to the editor (continued)

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Floridians should speak out on solar

September 12, 2020

Perhaps the Florida Public Service Commission should read Mr. Inglis' September 2 opinion piece "Florida Conservatives Embrace Climate Action." While Floridians are facing two crises, COVID-19 and climate change, the PSC is considering a policy that would take a leap backwards in reducing carbon emissions and would raise the cost of electricity. What's worse is that the PSC is limiting our rights to speak about it. On Sept. 17, the PSC will have a workshop to discuss ending net metering, a program that allows Floridians with solar panels to use the excess energy they generate without penalty. Removal of net metering would discourage people from going solar. We need to increase solar availability, not curtail it. The PSC is not allowing for public comment at the workshop. We need to let the PSC know that we want our solar rights and our rights to speak protected!

Susan Steinhauser, Coconut Creek

[From Sun Sentinel](#)

## Example op-ed

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From Apalachicola Times State regulators should back solar-friendly policies By Kathy Kirkland As the three-year anniversary of Hurricane Michael approaches, many Floridians - particularly those of us here in the Panhandle — are reminded of the extreme stress severe storms bring on. While an oncoming hurricane can make us feel helpless, we can regain a measure of control through actions we take to prepare for the disrupting challenge of power outages. In my neighborhood in Apalachicola, my house is often the only one that still has electricity when outages occur.

Thanks to my solar-plus-battery storage system, my home can power itself without fully depending on our utility company. We believe so strongly in solar energy that we also have a vacation home in Bonifay completely powered by solar panels.

# Sample resources for successful lobbying

It's resiliency against power outages during storms creates peace of mind for me and my neighbors, who enjoyed our "juice" after they lost power during Michael.

The concept of energy independence is what first led me to look into solar technology. We installed our first solar panel on our sailboat back in 1984 and now have 34 solar panels on our Apalachicola home and a dozen on our Bonifay home. Beyond the peace of mind I get when storms come through, I also reap the financial savings of home solar.

That's thanks to a consumer-friendly policy called net metering. Net metering is a critical factor when installing rooftop solar because it allows solar users to receive credits for any surplus energy their system produces — power that's fed back to the grid and sold by the utility for others to use.

With my solar-plus-battery storage system, I can rest assured I'll have power for the things I need most, including my refrigerator and freezer. It also helps me lower my utility bills each month.

Unfortunately, Florida's consumer-friendly net metering policies are now in jeopardy. State regulators are hosting a workshop next month where they will discuss changes that could dramatically limit the feasibility of home solar for countless Floridians — potentially eliminating net metering altogether.

Before the Florida Public Service Commission takes any action that could eliminate solar rights in the Sunshine State, it should carefully consider the needs of the more than 59,000 Floridians who use rooftop solar. Upending net metering is a direct assault on the homeowners and businesses — hardworking folks like me - who have already invested in solar energy.

It's also concerning that these regulators would consider such an important policy change when citizens are appropriately focused on the dual threats of a global health crisis and an active hurricane season. These challenges minimize the opportunity for public input that could help policymakers avoid changes that carry unintended consequences.

While natural disasters may be unpredictable, our opportunity to prepare for them doesn't have to be. Home solar is a cost-effective solution for so many, especially those in more rural communities who may have to wait weeks if a storm knocks out utility infrastructure.

Before regulators move forward with any action on net metering, I encourage them to look for input from those of us who have seen the benefits of net metering and home solar. I'll be happy to tell them – and so will the neighbors in Bonifay who enjoyed my electricity during the weeks our neighborhood went without power back in 2018.

— Kathy Kirkland is a solar user who lives in Apalachicola.



# Sample resources for successful lobbying

## Example bill testimony

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### HOA bill testimony in Ohio

I'm writing to urge you to support SB 289 and offer proponent testimony.

This bill provides common-sense protections for homeowners who live in HOAs and want to install solar panels. All homeowners should have the right to install solar. Unfortunately, many HOAs make this impossible. They impose unfair restrictions on homeowners that want to go solar. Beyond precluding installation at all, these could include limits on size or how the array is designed. Such restrictions can ruin the economics of a proposed array. I submitted such a request to the Emerald Estates HOA (Jackson Township, Stark County) in 2018. That was initially denied by the HOA's Architectural Review Board. My developer (Yellow Lite in Cleveland) and I appealed to the HOA board. During that meeting, it was clear that the board members lacked enough knowledge of the basic design and function of such an array to make an informed decision. Despite submission of a revised proposal that included skirting and other aesthetic changes (driving the project cost upward), my request was ultimately declined again as it "was not in keeping with the character of the neighborhood." I considered litigating the issue but the cost of pursuing such actions are prohibitive. I recently joined my HOA's board as Treasurer and now have new insights into how it functions. That's only served to reinforce my belief that HOAs have no business regulating solar arrays beyond requiring that the arrays meet code and, perhaps, are professionally installed. Enacting SB 289 will reduce the need for protracted and expensive litigation between homeowners and HOAs. Solar energy helps Ohioans save money and take control of where their electricity comes from. We should not allow HOAs to put up unfair barriers to solar. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

# Sample resources for successful lobbying

## Sample email to set up meeting with legislator

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Subject:

Dear [Representative or Senator NAME],

My name is [NAME] and I am a resident of [CITY/TOWN, STATE]. As a constituent of yours and a supporter of solar energy and Solar United Neighbors, I wanted to reach out to request a meeting with you to discuss your support for the 30 Million Solar Homes initiative, a policy proposal to create an equitable economic recovery by deploying distributed solar energy to serve the equivalent of 30 million homes — or one in four American households — particularly in marginalized communities.

I want to thank you for your past support of legislation that would expand access to clean, renewable, and affordable solar energy for all Americans. Supporting the 30 Million Solar Homes agenda would be an important new opportunity for you to demonstrate your commitment to bold climate and clean energy leadership. In addition, the coalition of 300 organizations supporting 30 Million Solar Homes has estimated the policies would create three million good-paying jobs — a significant contribution toward the economic recovery communities like [YOUR TOWN] urgently need.

Solar United Neighbors is a national grassroots network of solar owners and supporters that's fighting for a clean, equitable energy system that directs control and benefits back to local communities, with solar on every roof and money in every pocket.

I know you are very busy, so thank you in advance for your time. I would be available to meet [LIST POSSIBLE DATES AND TIMES WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS]. Please let me know when would be best for you. If none of those days work, I would also be happy to find an alternative meeting time that works for your schedule. Please don't hesitate to let me know if you need any additional information from me in order to move forward, and thank you again.

Thank you very much, and looking forward to our meeting,  
[YOUR NAME]

# Sample resources for successful lobbying

## Sample agenda for meeting with an elected official

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- Address by proper title (e.g. Representative or Senator) and use professional tone.
  - It's a good idea to take brief notes as long as it's not distracting.
- Thank for opportunity to meet and quick round introductions.
  - Identify yourself by name, town and, if relevant to the issue/bills, profession and organizational affiliation.
- Explain purpose of meeting.
- Pass out bill fact sheet or other handout if you have one.
- Ask for their support for specific bill(s); Identify the bill(s) by bill title and number.
- Explain how the bill would affect you/solve a problem/bring benefits for your family, business, and community.
  - Remember that your specific story will make a greater impact/more memorable than presenting facts about the bill. Talk about your positive experience as a solar homeowner (e.g. how much you are saving on your energy costs).
  - Emphasize multiple benefits of solar (reduce and control energy costs; create local jobs; provide energy resilience, cleaner air, etc.) in representative's district and statewide.
- Allow lots of opportunity for the legislator to speak about her/his positions and concerns.
- If the representative supports your position:
  - Thank them and ask them to co-sponsor bill and to encourage fellow representatives to support.
- If the representative opposes your position:
  - Calmly express your disappointment and ask what kind of information would be needed to reconsider and offer to send more information via email.
- If you do not have the answer to a question, say so and offer to find the answer and provide it to the legislator with your follow up email. We can help you find the answer.
- Close the meeting by thanking your representative for the meeting and say that you will send a follow-up email.
- Before leaving, ask to have a picture taken with the representative and please share the picture on social media with tag @solarunitedneighbors for Facebook and @solarneighbors for X.
- Follow up ASAP by email with the information and restate your position. Please share your notes and experience with us at [advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org](mailto:advocacy@solarunitedneighbors.org).



At Solar United Neighbors, we believe we  
should all have the right to produce - and store  
- our own power!

Join us:

**SOLARUNITEDNEIGHBORS.ORG**

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Solar United Neighbors is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. We're a  
community of people building a new energy system with  
rooftop solar at the cornerstone. We help people go solar, join  
together, and fight for their energy rights.

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