



2017 ANNUAL REPORT



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2017 Annual Report



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“We are creating a powerful force of solar advocates with the scale and influence to ensure our energy system works for all of us.”

- Anya Schoolman, Executive Director

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The past year was an incredible one for us. We made a number of bold changes with the support of our network and solar champions. We changed our name and launched a membership program. We took on a record number of advocacy efforts, with big wins across the country. Most importantly, we emerged as the only national organization dedicated to representing the rights and interest of solar owners and supporters.

As I reflect back on a decade of this work (yes, it really has been 10 years since my son innocently suggested we look into solar), 2017 feels like a watershed moment. For years we've been working in local communities, honing our model, and building the credibility necessary to get things done. Now we're taking that work to the national stage.

Our timing couldn't be better. Our energy system is undergoing a fundamental change. Now is the time to make sure distributed energy, like rooftop solar, is at the cornerstone of this change. Investor-owned utilities are focused on their profits, not on how an energy system can be more equitable and beneficial to our communities.

We're not backing down. We are creating a powerful force of solar advocates with the scale and influence to ensure our energy system works for all of us. We're unabashedly declaring that solar owners and supporters have the right to fair treatment in our energy system. And we'll continue to boldly represent their interests.

Onwards,

Anya Schoolman

Executive Director | anya@solarunitedneighbors.org

WHY A NEW NAME?

Changing our name to Solar United Neighbors reflects how we help people go solar and are building a nationwide force of solar supporters to fight for our energy rights.

Connecting our state programs under one name reflects our combined power to stand up to monopoly utilities and protect our solar rights.

WHY MEMBERSHIP?

Solar owners are a unique type of ratepayer and no one is focused on representing their interests.

By launching a membership program, we can better represent these folks and fight on their behalf.

WHO WE ARE

Solar United Neighbors is the only organization in the country dedicated to representing the needs and interests of solar owners and supporters.

Solar owners and supporters are an important and unique class of ratepayers. We're not just passive energy consumers. We're actively generating our own power and contributing to the health of our entire energy system.

When utilities act to protect their monopoly by increasing fixed costs on our monthly bills or by lowering credits for the solar energy we produce, those decisions impact our bottom line. Because of this, we have a strong stake in the outcome of energy fights happening in state houses and public service commissions across the country.

OUR VISION

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.

OUR MISSION

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.



- D.C.**
- Florida**
- Maryland**
- Minnesota**
- New Jersey**
- Ohio**
- Pennsylvania**
- Virginia**
- West Virginia**



We represent solar owners and supporters across the country, and have on-the-ground staff in nine states.



INTRODUCING MEMBERSHIP

We are building an army of solar supporters! We give people more choices to get our help going solar. And we give solar homeowners and supporters a powerful voice to fight for policies that protect their investment in solar energy.

Both utilities and sales companies have powerful trade groups. We launched our membership program because no one represents the needs and interests of individual homeowners and solar supporters. Monopoly utilities are fighting tooth and nail to protect their profits and deny us the ability to choose where our electricity comes from. Solar homeowners are a unique constituency that can have a profound impact on the modernization of our electric system if we speak with one voice. Membership helps us bring more people solar and continue to educate and activate them to stand up for their solar rights. In 2017 we ran pilot programs in three states and membership will roll out nationally in 2018. As our membership grows, so does our ability to influence the policies that will regulate our energy system for years to come.

Learn more at: www.solarunitedneighbors.org/membership

"[Solar United Neighbors], which is both a nonprofit and knowledgeable, ... [is] a priceless resource for trustworthy guidance in this brave new world of solar."

- TRAVIS GALLAGHER
MARYLAND SOLAR HOMEOWNER

"I like the newsletters and policy updates - I love the advocacy work!"

- WEST VIRGINIA MEMBER

"We had a great experience in our co-op and want to support the solar effort"

- FLORIDA MEMBER

"[Membership] was an inexpensive way to have an experienced person (with no agenda) help walk me through the complexities of understanding the solar process."

- FLORIDA MEMBER





SAVE
MONEY



PROMOTE
ENERGY
INDEPENDENCE



CREATE
GOOD
JOBS



TAKE CONTROL
OF YOUR
ENERGY USE



PRODUCE
YOUR OWN
POWER
ON YOUR OWN
PROPERTY



IMPROVE
STRENGTH
AND
RELIABILITY
OF YOUR
ENERGY
SYSTEM



REDUCE
POLLUTION
AND
PROTECT
THE
ENVIRONMENT

2017 BY THE NUMBERS

GO SOLAR

- Helped more than **2,500** homes go solar since 2007
- Facilitated a total of **19,000 kW** of solar since 2007
- Enabled **\$47 million** in local spending on solar
- Created **231** new solar jobs



JOIN TOGETHER

- Built a network of more than **42,000** solar owners and supporters
- Launched a brand-new engagement program that activated more than **2,000** volunteers to organize events, host solar open houses, or spread solar to their neighbors
- Recruited **1,280** supporters to attend rallies, happy hours, info sessions, and other community events
- Earned **208** stories in local and national press outlets
- Collected solar stories from **274** happy solar owners and advocates

FIGHT FOR OUR ENERGY RIGHTS

- Helped supporters send **13,638** emails to their elected officials in support of strong solar policies
- Empowered **123** supporters to testify in support of solar
- Launched the **only** membership program in the country that represents the interests of solar owners and supporters
- Added on-the-ground staff in **3** new states



STATE PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

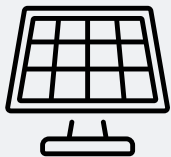
In addition to representing solar owners across the country, we have on-the-ground staff in nine states. We work with communities to organize solar co-ops, tackle barriers to going solar, and expand solar rights on the local level.

D.C. 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

Our oldest state-program, Solar United Neighbors of D.C. has been systematically expanding solar access to all District residents since 2007. We're continuing to push the boundaries of solar adoption through the new Solar for All program and an aggressive new renewable energy standard. This year we began offering more support and new services for our solar community, including a solar help desk, discounts at solar-powered businesses, and new social events like solar happy hours at Atlas Brewery. As the number of solar advocates in the District continues to expand, so do the many ways that we engage with the solar community.

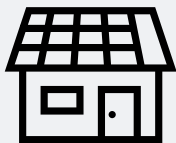
Go Solar

SINCE 2007:



2,677 kW

INSTALLED SOLAR CAPACITY



479

HOMES GOING SOLAR



61

NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED



Join Together



In May, **more than 70 solar supporters from across D.C. joined together** at the D.C. Solar Congress. Attendees learned about solar, heard from Councilmember Mary Cheh about the District's strong solar policies, and discussed how to maximize the impact of the Solar for All program with Tommy Wells, Director of the Department of Energy and the Environment. The group also held a session to frame out D.C.'s solar future, including specific policies and approaches that maximize benefit for all District residents. The annual congress is a unique opportunity for local solar advocates and owners to engage with elected officials and set the agenda for the coming year.

Since 2012, Solar United Neighbors has brought D.C. residents together at annual solar congresses to learn about solar and engage with policymakers.

48 D.C. solar champions volunteered in their communities in 2017, doing everything from organizing events to tabling at farmers markets, or testifying at the D.C. Council.



"Going solar has been fantastic and the co-op has been a great partner for us to go solar with. We hope that incentives and interest continue in D.C. so that more of our fellow residents can go solar."

-SANJAY, DEEPA, SAAVAN, & MIRA ACHARYA, WASHINGTON, D.C.



East of the River Solar Co-op participant Sylvester Bush had his 18-panel 5.89 kW system installed in May. Bush said he appreciated working with the co-op because it **minimized the uncertainties of the process** and provides piece of mind.



Fight for Our Energy Rights



This year, Solar United Neighbors of D.C. was chosen to implement the D.C. Department of Energy and Environment's single-family Solar for All program.

The Solar for All program was created last year as part of the District's expansion of its renewable portfolio standard. The program seeks to offset the energy bills of 100,000 low-income households in D.C. with solar by 2032.

Solar United Neighbors of D.C. will receive \$2 million in funding to provide more than 200 low-income homes with free solar systems and solar education. The program is designed to provide low-income families with the maximum financial benefit. In addition to owning the solar system, participating homeowners will have the opportunity to utilize the federal residential tax credit, and receive solar renewable energy credit income after the first five years. By designing the program this way, solar becomes a long-term asset for these families. This supports a pathway out of poverty and demonstrates that solar can be used to create wealth in low-income communities.

In 2017, we empowered 466 District residents to contact their councilmembers or the Public Service Commission to voice their support for solar. Our D.C. network has been highly active from the beginning. Their engagement has been central to our success in passing monumental pro-solar legislation, like a 50% renewable portfolio standard and the Solar for All program.



Since the beginning, we have fought to ensure all District residents can use solar to lower their energy bills. Solar for All is a huge leap forward towards this vision.

FLORIDA 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

If 2016 was the year that Floridians stood up for their right to go solar by defeating a misleading ballot initiative, then 2017 may be remembered as the year we started exercising that right in earnest. The year began fresh off the heels of the resounding defeat of a utility-backed measure that would have limited our ability to go solar. Florida now leads the country in new residential solar installations. Across Florida, our community of solar supporters is leading the charge to bring solar to the Sunshine State.

Go Solar

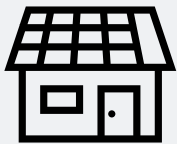


SINCE 2015:



6,348 kW

INSTALLED SOLAR CAPACITY



710

HOMES GOING SOLAR



184

NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED



Join Together



In September, Hurricane Irma hit. Solar showed that it could withstand the storm, in many cases protecting roofs that would have been damaged without it. We profiled several solar homeowners about their storm experiences. Those with special “secure power supply” inverters were able to keep critical circuits running with power from their solar array. For many, solar was a huge comfort and relief during a terrible time. Read more: www.solarunitedneighbors.org/irma.



Across the state, communities have been clamoring for solar co-ops. Municipalities in Miami-Dade County and St. Petersburg both passed resolutions to fund solar co-op coordinator positions. These positions allow the municipalities to work with Solar United Neighbors of Florida to implement solar co-ops throughout the county and surrounding area.



In 2017, Florida solar advocates organized numerous press conferences and secured **97 earned media stories about solar**. We're letting Floridians know that there's a new wave of solar happening in their state.





Fight for Our Energy Rights



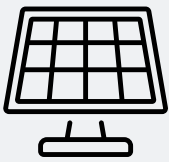
South Miami passed an ordinance with encouragement from solar co-op participants to require solar on new residential construction. The first of its kind in Florida, the bill will help grow the area's solar market and provide cost savings for new homeowners. Several Miami-Dade municipalities have also passed ordinances aimed at streamlining the solar permitting process and, to show their commitment to renewable energy, many have waived solar permitting fees. Both initiatives further reduce costs for homeowners.

MARYLAND 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

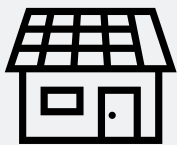
In a state that already has a lot of solar, our solar advocates are working to ensure all Marylanders can benefit from renewable energy. Whether it's developing community solar projects for low-income families, or spreading solar in rural areas across the state, we've become a leader in community-based solar.

Go Solar

SINCE 2013:



2,585 kW
INSTALLED SOLAR CAPACITY



467
HOMES GOING SOLAR



114
NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED

Join Together



Before going solar through the Frederick County Solar Co-op, Thom Boone had been investigating his solar installation options for years. He was not able to fully dedicate to solar until he learned about the Frederick County Solar Co-op. The co-op **connected Thom to an installer that was affordable** and able to install solar on his type of roof.



Volunteers turned out across the state to support solar adoption, including **15** who opened up their homes for solar **open houses**.



Across the state, solar owners celebrated successful co-ops in Bowie, Frederick, Mountain Maryland, and Montgomery County. After installations are complete **we bring everyone together at a party** to celebrate a successful co-op and honor the work of our dedicated community leaders.





In 2017, **71 Marylanders** shared their solar stories both in writing and on film. Folks from all walks of life were excited to share why they went solar and what the process was like. They're a big part of how we're changing the public narrative around solar.



"Having a group, a community of solar users to talk with about things, made the process so much easier and rewarding."

- MIKE SCHENK, ROSEDALE, MARYLAND



"It seemed the obvious thing to do."

- DAVID HILL, ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND



"I have to say this was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Wish I had done it earlier. "

- RACHEL BONAS, ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

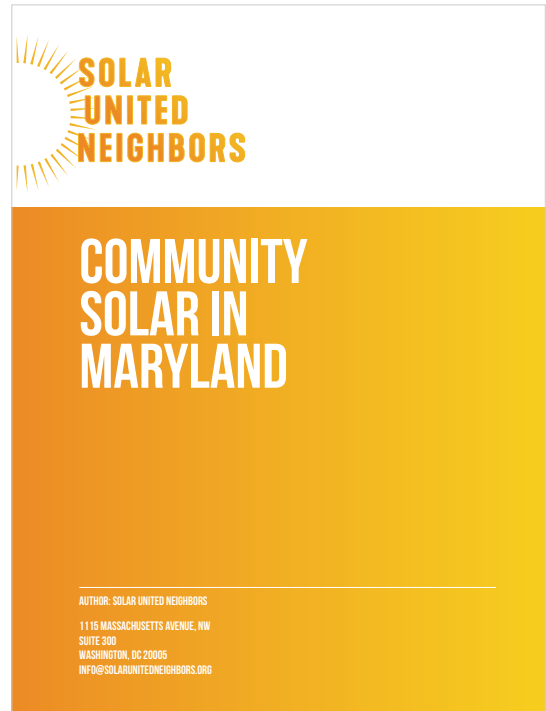
Fight for Our Energy Rights



Our multi-year efforts on community solar culminated in 2017 with the release of final community solar regulations. We worked extensively with the Public Service Commission and stakeholders to ensure the program benefited low-income Marylanders. Maryland is now a national model for community solar programs! We're now helping individuals and community groups develop their own community solar projects across the state.



Throughout this year, with the help of expert representation from Pace Law Center and Earthjustice, we've meaningfully contributed to Maryland's Grid of the Future proceedings. The proceedings may significantly change the rules for how we generate and receive electricity, and we've worked hard to broaden citizen awareness about and engagement with the process. We've published informative content on our website, sent regular newsletter updates about the docket, and conducted an in-person educational workshop at our annual Solar Congress in September.



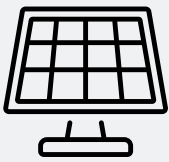
We released a first-of-its-kind report about Maryland's community solar program. We cover the program's history and structure, projects happening across the state, and investigate successes and challenges so far. The report is meant to establish a baseline for future analysis of Maryland's community solar program. [Click here to download.](#)

OHIO 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

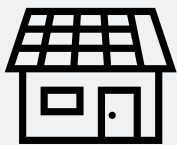
Solar faced a number of attacks in Ohio in 2017. Our growing network of solar supporters consistently fought off threats to solar and our right to be fairly compensated for the energy we produce. More than just defending our rights, though, Ohioans are looking to a new energy future that integrates solar, electric vehicles, and storage, while creating new job opportunities.

Go Solar

SINCE 2016:



1,072 kW
INSTALLED SOLAR CAPACITY



143
HOMES GOING SOLAR



41
NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED



Join Together



Lorain County Solar Co-op participants gathered on Veterans Day to celebrate the success of Solar United Neighbors' first Ohio solar co-op. The co-op single-handedly doubled the number of arrays in Lorain County. The event was all the more special because it was hosted at First Church, one of the new solar installations. Co-op participants in Delaware also celebrated a successful bulk purchase in 2017.



Solar Congress attendees learned about a variety of solar-related topics, including: careers in the solar industry, solar policy, how to impact policy at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, and a 'solar 101' tutorial. Attendees also took a tour of the College's Alternative Energy Training Lab and discussed ways to grow Ohio's community of solar supporters.



"We are thrilled with our solar system and thankful for all of the support we have received from everyone in the solar community!"

- SHANE, KIMBERLY, SAWYER, AND XAVIER ERSKINE,
DELAWARE, OHIO



This year Solar United Neighbors of Ohio honored **41 all-star volunteers** who are growing solar in their communities by organizing events, promoting solar co-ops, developing solar videos, and serving as solar ambassadors at info sessions.



The Congress then broke into workshop groups to learn about a variety of solar-related topics, including joining the solar industry as a career, solar policy, a citizen training on how to impact policy at the Ohio Public Utilities Commission and a 'solar 101' tutorial. Attendees also took a of the College's Alternative Energy Training Lab and **discussed ways to grow Ohio's community of solar supporters.**



Fight for Our Energy Rights



This year, several Ohio utilities asked the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) to allow them to increase fixed charges, making it more difficult for Ohioans to go solar. Solar United Neighbors of Ohio organized solar owners and fought back against these unfair charges. In August, American Electric Power announced it would withdraw its request for a \$10/month increase in fixed charges. **Public pressure was critical in forcing the utility to back down.**

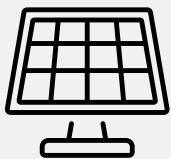
We worked with a broad range of Ohio renewable energy advocates to protect the state's renewable portfolio standard (RPS), which we had helped to reinstate in 2016. Solar United Neighbors of Ohio volunteers **testified against renewed attempts to roll back** the RPS in the Ohio General Assembly. We also participated in PUCO workshops and contributed to their evaluation of net metering rules in Ohio.

VIRGINIA 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

As one of our most established programs, our Virginia network is well versed in organizing solar co-ops and letting the General Assembly know that solar is important to Virginians. During our membership pilot, new members were excited about new social gatherings at solar breweries, discounts at solar-powered businesses, and the ramp-up of solar advocacy efforts. In the fall, we defeated an unfair rate increase that would have penalized solar owners in Rappahannock Electric Cooperative territory. We also staved off efforts to undermine net metering — the single most important policy for rooftop solar.

Go Solar

SINCE 2013:



4,436 kW
INSTALLED SOLAR CAPACITY



623
HOMES GOING SOLAR



141
NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED

Join Together



A record **347 Virginians** attended our events in 2017. These included our Virginia Solar Congress, movie screenings, co-op celebrations, happy hours and solar open houses.

More than 60 Virginians shared their solar stories with us this year, either on film, through written testimonials, letters to the editors, op-eds, or by serving as information session ambassadors. We consistently find that solar owners are vocal advocates for solar energy and strong solar policies. They're excited to talk about how solar has impacted their lives.



"Go solar ... Put pressure on your legislators to expand the depth and breadth of solar power in your state."
- CHUCK KLEMEYER AND ANN DELOREY.
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA



"We were really interested in supplying an opportunity for local people to have [solar] employment. A lot of younger people are getting into this industry and it's a wonderful career path."

- SUE AND STEVE DUGGAN, ASHBURN, VIRGINIA



"I would love to see everyone in the neighborhood with solar panels."

- NOREEN QUILL, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA



"I cannot speak more highly of the benefits you will receive by having a co-op in your community."

- ALETA AND BILL GADINO, WASHINGTON, VIRGINIA

Fight for Our Energy Rights

PROTECTING CUSTOMER-OWNED SOLAR

The Rubin Group is meant to be a collection of Virginia energy stakeholders tasked with building consensus on solar policy recommendations to the Virginia General Assembly. As part of this year's negotiations, Virginia's monopoly utilities and electric cooperatives proposed policy recommendations targeting their solar customers. They sought higher fixed charges and reduced net metering credits. In response, we engaged solar supporters from across the Commonwealth to participate in meetings and phone calls with legislators. They made the point that any policies affecting rooftop solar must be substantiated with data that accurately values its costs as well as its many benefits.

Our efforts succeeded! The utilities could not provide any data to back up their claims. As a result, the Rubin Group's principal recommendation was for "better data collection and analysis" to inform future discussions about net metering policy. This is a victory for solar and shows utilities that ignoring the benefits of rooftop solar while targeting their solar-producing customers with unfair and discriminatory policies is no longer acceptable.

STOPPING AN UNFAIR RATE INCREASE

When the Rappahannock Electric Cooperative (REC), Virginia's fourth largest electric utility, sought to double fixed access charges in early 2017, they didn't receive much media attention. But, recognizing that a higher fixed charge would make rooftop solar less attractive while also disproportionately impacting low- and moderate-income rate payers, our community mobilized to act. Member-owners, including nearly 100 Solar United Neighbors supporters, flooded the REC board with their comments and concerns.

Ultimately, REC backed down from its initial request and reached a settlement to raise rates by just \$4 instead. The cooperative also promised to notify members in advance of any future rate increases. Emboldened by this success, we're now working with REC member-owners who are continuing to advocate for more transparency and democracy at the rural electric cooperative.



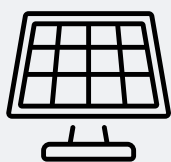
WEST VIRGINIA 2017

HIGHLIGHTS

Our West Virginia community is transforming how our state thinks about energy. We are pioneering solar and storage systems, operating solar-powered farms, and leading the charge against shady utility deals. West Virginia solar owners continue to prove that generating your own power appeals to folks across the political spectrum, and that solar helps people save money and grows local jobs. This year we helped lead the West Virginians for Energy Freedom campaign. This effort demonstrated that West Virginia industry leaders, low-income and social justice advocates, and energy efficiency and solar champions can work together to build an energy market that benefits everybody.

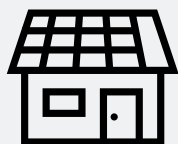
Go Solar

SINCE 2014:



710 kW

INSTALLED SOLAR CAPACITY



102

HOMES GOING SOLAR



22

NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED





This year in West Virginia we piloted an **Ag Producers Solar Program**. Solar United Neighbors of West Virginia helped farmers and agricultural producers solicit and review solar proposals, and provided assistance applying for grant opportunities and guaranteed loan-financing programs. We made public presentations on solar at agricultural events, conferences, and workshops around the state, and **helped three West Virginia family farms go solar**. These were a fruit and vegetable farm in Greenbrier County, a cattle farm in Jackson County, and a diversified livestock operation in Preston County. These solar installations will save these farm families more than \$188,000 over the systems' lifetimes. Solar is literally helping us plow new investments into West Virginia's economy.



Join Together



Screenings of the solar documentary “Catching the Sun” were popular in 2017, as more than **30 West Virginians attended a showing** and stuck around for discussion afterwards.



Nearly **70 people volunteered** with Solar United Neighbors of West Virginia in 2017. They helped at events, promoted local co-ops, hosted solar open houses, sat on the state Advisory Board, and served as info session ambassadors.



Solar co-op participants take their homes solar, but often that's just the beginning. Co-op participants from Monroe County have twice organized bulk purchase groups. In 2017, the Monroe County Solar Co-op not only helped homeowners and farmers go solar, but also **crowdfunded a rooftop solar array for the local library**. The Monroe County Public Library now saves more than \$2,000 annually through solar production and energy efficiency upgrades.



“We wanted to set an example in our community and be one of the first people to go solar.”

- AL TOMSON, DAVIS, WEST VIRGINIA



We were featured in **34 media stories in 2017**, covering everything from new co-ops popping up across the state to our fight against the proposed Pleasants coal-fired power plant transfer. Solar is now receiving consistent, positive media coverage in West Virginia. Letters to the editor, TV and radio news stories, and frequent newspaper articles about our work are changing the perception of solar in the state.



In 2017, we organized a **state-wide Solar Congress** that attracted more than **four dozen participants**. The event featured workshops on solar, energy efficiency, solar + storage, energy financing options for farms and small businesses, and our West Virginians for Energy Freedom coalition work.

Fight for Our Energy Rights

Last year we undertook an intense campaign to oppose a proposal by FirstEnergy, an Ohio-based utility conglomerate, to transfer an old and inefficient coal plant onto its West Virginia rate base. This would have forced West Virginians to shoulder the plant's above-market costs, including a guaranteed rate of return for FirstEnergy. The work took place under the banner of the West Virginians for Energy Freedom coalition. Learn more: <http://energyfreedomwv.org>

Although the case was arcane and might well have flown beneath the public's radar, we raised awareness by mobilizing a diverse coalition of stakeholders to work together to oppose the utility proposal. We secured endorsements from a dozen West Virginia nonprofit organizations. We convinced public officials and industry groups to urge the Public Service Commission to require an open and fair public comment process on the Pleasants case. We rallied residents to testify at three public hearings throughout the state and organized a #FaxthePSC day that resulted in the submission of 40 unique comments to the Public Service Commission. We also secured more than 1,000 petition signatures against the transfer. In early 2018, against incredible odds, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ruled against the proposal and stopped the plant's transfer. Our citizen engagement on the issue was critical to ensuring this unfair deal didn't get quietly swept through the West Virginia Public Service Commission like so many past proposals.



WEST VIRGINIANS FOR
**ENERGY
FREEDOM**
No Bailout for FirstEnergy!
EnergyFreedomWV.org

MEET OUR NEW STATE DIRECTORS

In 2017 we added new on-the-ground staff in three states. We're continuing to expand the number of states where we have an on-the-ground presence.



Virginia Rutter

Minnesota Program Director

About me: I'm a Minnesota native with a background in public and clean energy finance, as well as with local governments and nonprofits.

Looking forward to most in 2018: Minnesota is a great place for solar. We can make it better by expanding it in outstate regions and rural electric cooperatives outside of the Twin Cities.



Curt Macysyn

New Jersey Program Director

About me: Born and raised in New Jersey, I've worked in the public policy arena for more than two decades – working with educational groups, community associations and energy markets.

Looking forward to most in 2018: Ensure solar benefits all New Jersey residents through community solar and other new programs.



Henry McKay

Pennsylvania Program Director

About me: I've spent the better part of a decade working to make American communities more sustainable, more resilient, and more equitable by empowering local leaders and elevating good ideas.

Looking forward to most in 2018: To help Pennsylvania create new jobs and local wealth with solar.

PINE JOG ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER





www.solarunitedneighbors.org