



SOLAR UNITED NEIGHBORS

2020 Annual Report

 SOLAR UNITED
NEIGHBORS

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Message from The Executive Director

Friends,

What a decade this year has been! This was our hardest year since Solar United Neighbors began as a neighborhood volunteer project in 2007. Yet, 2020 ended up being our best year. Our team came together and transformed SUN into a truly national organization.

SUN crossed three huge thresholds this year.

There are now more than 5,000 families that we have helped go solar through solar co-ops. We have now stimulated \$100 million in local investment. This has eliminated more than one billion pounds of carbon offset.

Now more than ever, we are able to represent solar owners and advocates across the country.

This progress allowed us to build an even more diverse base of solar champions and enact impactful change in communities nationwide.

We also grew our network of solar supporters to more than 170,000 people strong. And we continue to win real victories in state legislatures and town halls across the country.

This includes helping to pass groundbreaking measures, including 100% clean energy commitments in D.C., Virginia, and Arizona; fighting to implement a 50% commitment and an innovative low-income community solar program in Maryland; and concluding our groundbreaking low-income solar work in D.C.'s Solar for All program.

We've been able to accomplish all of this and more through a simple but powerful theory of change: Help people go solar. Join solar supporters together. Empower them to fight for their energy rights.

The pages of this report tell some of the stories from 2020 behind this theory of change. These stories show how our amazing team and our network of solar supporters enabled SUN to thrive.

It is these successes that gave us the confidence to launch our most ambitious effort ever: the 30 Million Solar Homes campaign. This program seeks to address three urgent problems: climate change, economic downturn, and social injustice. It does so by rapidly scaling rooftop and community solar.






We are going to succeed by building a coalition that will fundamentally transform our energy system.

I hope you'll join us!

Best,
Anya Schoolman








OUR IMPACT *BY THE NUMBERS*

	<u>IN 2020</u>	<u>SINCE 2007</u>
 FAMILIES THAT WENT SOLAR WITH A CO-OP	727	5,358
 PEOPLE WHO JOINED A SOLAR CO-OP	3,767	24,312
 KW OF SOLAR INSTALLED	6,210	42,934
 LOCAL SOLAR SPENDING GENERATED	\$16.6M	\$110.8M
 LIFETIME CARBON OFFSETS	208.9M lbs	1.3B lbs

WELCOMING SOLAR NEIGHBORS *across the country*

In 2020, we passed several major milestones. We've now helped more than 5,000 families go solar. This means more than \$100 million in local spending and more than a billion pounds of carbon dioxide offset.

	<u>IN 2020</u>	<u>SINCE 2007</u>
 NEW SOLAR JOBS CREATED	108	735
 LIFETIME ENERGY BILL SAVINGS	\$27.6M	\$187.9M
 FAMILIES THAT INSTALLED EV CHARGERS	18	76
 FAMILIES THAT INSTALLED BATTERY STORAGE	35	137
 KW OF STORAGE CAPACITY	243.16	818.83



GO *SOLAR*

Helping homeowners *fulfill their solar dreams*

Pennsylvania homeowner Jim Lafontaine went solar in 2019 with the Indiana County Solar Co-op. He shared how working through the co-op made his goal to go solar come true.



Tell me what sparked your interest in going solar.

I had an initial interest because I wanted to do something constructive to combat climate change. I probably have a deeper interest than most because I spent my whole career in the coal industry.

But to go solar, it had to make economic sense. I'm a retiree, and I have an all-electric home. This means I am very sensitive to electricity price increases. I looked into going solar several years ago. At that time, I found that the payback to invest in a system wasn't worth it. But working through the co-op, I was able to get an offer that made financial sense.

Were there any challenges to getting your system installed?

I live in a rural area and have land, so I opted for a ground-mount system. There is a single transformer that feeds electricity to my house. I was concerned that it would not have

enough capacity to handle my system. I was able to work with my local electric cooperative to resolve that issue. They paid for a replacement for my transformer so I could install the solar system I wanted.

How did you learn about the co-op and SUN?

My previous research into solar was done totally online. I hadn't gone as far as to contact an installer because I didn't think the economics would work.

[SUN Pennsylvania Program Director] Henry McKay came to the county to hold a public meeting about the co-op. I decided to join the group to learn more.

At about the same time, I was also on the county's Sustainable Economic Development Task Force. I was part of the renewable energy subcommittee. We were concerned about the kind of economic direction

the county is headed in and whether we should be headed toward sustainable energy. This is a key issue since we have a coal-fired power plant in the county that will close soon. That's a big economic impact. That added to my interest in attending the co-op meeting.

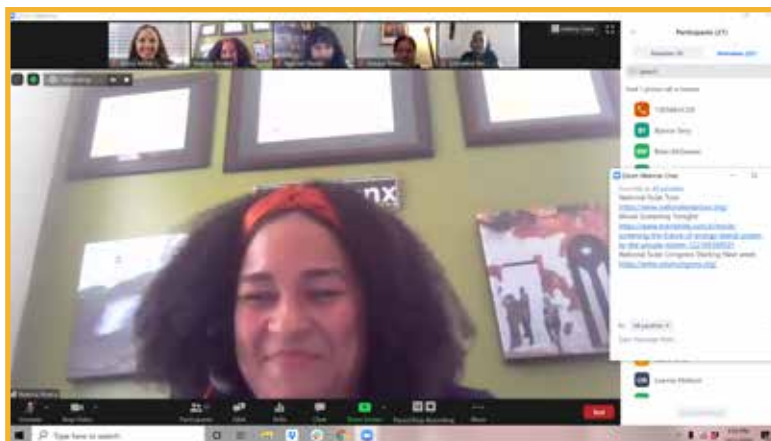
Tell me about participating in the co-op.

After I joined, Henry asked me to participate in the selection committee to evaluate the proposals from the installers. The selection committee was able to see the range of offers coming in. It was helpful to have Henry's insight and explanation to answer our questions about what was included in each proposal.

This process helped us choose an installer to serve each co-op member. As far as I know, everyone who has gone solar has been pleased with the experience.



Making sure solar can benefit everyone



The community of solar supporters must include everyone. Director of Energy Equity and Inclusion Yesenia Rivera discusses ways we're expanding solar access.

Talk about equity and inclusion in relation to solar energy.

Equity and inclusion is a way to ensure that we're not just replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy while leaving all the harm from an extractive system in place. Equity and inclusion means that we're actually reaching out to everyone. We're making sure we all have a chance to take part in the energy system. This is true regardless of your income level, your race, and whether you are a homeowner or a tenant. It means if you want to go solar, you can.

Solar is the key to a just transition. Take Washington, D.C., for example. They are on a path to 100% renewable energy. Of all the renewable energy sources, solar is the one that actually benefits the community. It helps with workforce development. It helps with wealth creation. It does that while helping families reduce their energy bills.

Tell me how we've worked to expand access to solar.

Over the past several years, we piloted and completed a program to help low-income families install solar in Washington, D.C. We spent much of 2020 sharing what we learned with other communities interested in engaging in a similar effort.

We were able to share what we learned, and we helped them avoid reinventing the wheel. We put this into practice in Indianapolis. We helped about two dozen families with this effort. It shows low- to moderate-income solar projects can work regardless of politics and of where you are in the country.

What have we learned from this work?

Lesson number one: It's okay to start small. Starting with a pilot allows you to see what the conditions on the ground are as well as the barriers to success. This will help you learn what policies need to change before you scale up. That is the smarter way of doing it.

Lesson number two: Just because it's free solar does not mean folks are going to sign up. As a matter of fact, if you are offering them free solar, they will likely not sign up. This is because there are a lot of negative connotations associated with it. There's mistrust. People think it sounds too good to be true. So, there must be a catch. People have to hear from multiple sources they trust before they believe it's real.

You have to be patient in building that pipeline because it is going to take a while. This is especially true if this is a brand-new program.

How has the conversation around this work changed?

In the wake of a year of protests for social justice, I've had so many conversations about what equity and inclusion means. Everyone now wants to talk about it.

It felt like, finally, folks were ready to hear about our theory of change. They were ready to understand what we meant by energy democracy and why we're pushing for distributed rooftop and community solar. It feels like there's momentum behind that. It's like we are truly in that transition now. We see it with the 30 Million Solar Homes campaign. People are taking this seriously, and not only are we trying to transition to renewable energy in solar, but we're actually looking at this from a just transition perspective. We're making sure in this new model that everybody has a chance.

Spreading solar's benefits

Homeowner Carmela Thomas went solar through a partnership between Solar United Neighbors and the City of Indianapolis. The pilot program provided grants to help 10 families go solar. We spoke with her to learn about her experience with the program.



Why were you interested in going solar?

Going solar will allow me to save money while also fighting climate change.

Tell me about your system.

My system came online in December of last year. It was installed on my detached garage. The installer had to run extra wiring to my home so that I could take electricity from it to use in my home.

How did you learn about Solar United Neighbors?

I learned about Solar United Neighbors via Nextdoor. I saw that there was going to be an information session about solar, so I decided to attend. The information session did a good job of explaining how solar worked and the process of installing solar on my home.

What was the most surprising thing you learned while you were going solar?

Going into it, I didn't think solar would be something that I could afford. Having the grant program through the city helped make it possible.

Now that you've gone solar, what do you see as your next steps?

I have a gas stove and use gas for heating. I'd like to switch over to electric for them in the next few years.

What advice would you give to others who are thinking about going solar?

A great thing about going solar with the co-op is that you really learn about all aspects of solar. This makes it easy to explain it to other people. I've been talking about it with my cousins to encourage them to go solar.

I tell people, what's the harm? You're going to be able to save money, and with a clean energy source. I hope this effort will encourage more people in Indianapolis to go solar.

Carmela Thomas cuts the ribbon on her new solar array. Joining her is (from left to right) Ray Wilson (SUN and Solarize Indiana Volunteer), Zach Schalk, SUN Indiana Program Director, Max Kennerk, Jefferson Electric, the company that installed her system, and Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett.

Carmela Thomas during install 11.17.2020



Usando energía solar para reconstruir después de la tormenta

Tres años después, Puerto Rico todavía siente los efectos del huracán María. La tormenta dejó a muchos puertorriqueños sin electricidad durante meses. Como resultado, el interés por la energía solar y resguardo de baterías es alto en la isla. Trabajamos con una comunidad en University Gardens para lanzar el primer grupo de compra colectiva de Puerto Rico. Más de 60 miembros del grupo aprendieron sobre la energía solar y alrededor de una docena han firmado contratos para instalar sistemas de energía solar en sus casas. El presidente de la Asociación de Propietarios de University Gardens, Víctor Santana, y Yesenia Rivera de SUN se sentaron para discutir el proyecto.



Cuéntame cómo se desarrolló este proyecto.

Yesenia: Esto ha estado en proceso durante años. Es una de las primeras cosas en las que comencé a pensar cuando me uní a SUN un par de semanas después del huracán María. Es personal para mí. Mis padres seguían ahí. Mi familia está ahí. Fue realmente frustrante verlos pasar seis meses sin electricidad, sabiendo que si tenían energía solar y resguardo no tendríamos que preocuparnos.

Gracias a un miembro de la junta directiva de SUN, nos conectamos con la Asociación de propietarios de viviendas de University Gardens. Nos reunimos con la junta directiva y explicamos nuestro modelo y el proceso cooperativo.

¿Qué despertó su interés por la energía solar?

Víctor: La situación con la Autoridad de Energía de Puerto Rico y la experiencia con el huracán María. Había personas

y comunidades que se quedaron sin electricidad durante meses. La energía solar es una forma de controlar de dónde proviene nuestra electricidad.

Hábleme de los desafíos que enfrenta este proyecto.

Yesenia: Todos estábamos listos para viajar a Puerto Rico para reunirnos con la comunidad, y luego sucedieron los cierres debido al COVID-19. Hemos estado haciendo todo en línea. Hemos tenido que depender de socios en Puerto Rico para difundir y correr la voz. Han sido geniales con eso. Incluso colocaron un cruce-calles en el vecindario, animando a la gente a inscribirse.

Además, este es un mercado totalmente nuevo para nosotros y en otro idioma. Tuvimos que trabajar duro para asegurarnos que estábamos explicando cómo funcionan los grupos de compra colectiva y que las cosas no se perdieran en la traducción. Los puertorriqueños, por una buena razón,

tienen mucho escepticismo cuando se trata de electricidad y promesas de mejorarla. Tuvimos que trabajar duro para ganarnos su confianza.

¿Qué es algo sorprendente que aprendiste al hacer este proyecto?

Víctor: Me sorprendió ver el alto nivel de interés entre la comunidad. Mis vecinos quieren estar preparados para otra falla en la red eléctrica.

¿Cuál ha sido la parte más divertida de trabajar en este proyecto?

Víctor: Ver personas que están realmente interesadas en aprender sobre la energía solar, independientemente de sus edades. Entienden que el sistema energético actual no funciona. Necesitamos algo nuevo. La energía solar esta lista para ser una solución

Above: Photos from the first completed solar installation in Puerto Rico.



Using solar to rebuild from the storm

Three years later, Puerto Rico is still feeling the effects of Hurricane Maria. The storm left many Puerto Ricans without power for months. As a result, interest in solar and storage on the island is high.

We worked with a community in University Gardens to launch Puerto Rico's first solar co-op. More than 60 co-op members learned about solar energy, and about a dozen have signed contracts to go solar. University Gardens HOA President Victor Santana and SUN's Yesenia Rivera sat down to discuss the project.

Tell me how this project was developed.

Yesenia: This has been in the works for years. It's one of the first things I started thinking about when I joined SUN a couple weeks after Hurricane Maria. It is personal for me. My parents were still there. My family is there. It was really frustrating watching them go six months with no electricity knowing if they had solar and storage, we wouldn't have to worry.

Thanks to a SUN board member, we connected with the University Gardens Homeowners Association. We met with the board and explained our model and the co-op process.

What sparked your interest in solar energy?

Victor: The situation with the Puerto Rico Energy Power Authority and the experience with Hurricane Maria. There were people and communities left without power for months on end. Going solar is a way for us to take control of where our electricity comes from.

Tell me about challenges in taking on this project.

Yesenia: We were all ready to travel to Puerto Rico to meet with the community, and then the lockdowns happened due to COVID-19. We've been doing everything online. We've had to rely on partners in Puerto Rico to really get the word out. They've been great about that. They even put up a billboard in the neighborhood encouraging people to sign up.

Additionally, this is a totally new market for us and one in another language. We had to work hard to make sure we were explaining how the co-ops work and that things didn't get lost in translation. Puerto Ricans, for good reason, have a lot of skepticism when it comes to electricity and promises to make it better. We had to work hard to earn their trust.

What is something surprising that you learned in doing this project?

Victor: I was surprised to see the high level of interest among the community. My neighbors want to be prepared for another grid failure.

What has been the most enjoyable part of working on this project?

Victor: Seeing people who are really interested in learning about solar energy, regardless of their ages. They understand the current energy system isn't working. We need something new. Solar is ready to be a solution.



Right: Although we couldn't present in person, we were able to connect with the community virtually. We held a special youth education session to teach the next generation about solar.

Helping Texans understand a complicated solar market

Texas' deregulated electricity market can make going solar a challenge. There is no statewide net metering policy. Solar owners do not earn credit for any excess electricity their systems generate.

Texas customers shop between a variety of retail electricity providers for service. Solar owners do not have a guarantee that these plans will provide them with credit for the electricity their systems generate. Some of these plans offer solar owners rates that approximate the benefit they would receive if Texas did have net metering. These plans vary widely.

The result is a confusing mess for solar customers. We have stepped in to clear the confusion.

Working with Texas Power Guide, we have created a service that solar owners in CenterPoint and Oncor territory (Houston and Dallas) can use to decide which plans would work best for them and their solar systems. Customers participate by providing basic information about their systems. In return, we provide them with a custom report. It shows them which retail electricity plan would maximize their solar value.

To date, we've helped 90 homeowners find the best option for their systems.

Electric Plan Analysis for

John Smith
Houston, TX

Solar System Size: 8 kW
HVAC: Smart/WiFi
Pool: None
Electric Vehicle(s): None

Grid-Level Energy Usage

Energy (kWh) vs Month (Sep 2019 to Aug 2020)

Your electric bill depends on how much grid energy you import (consume) versus export (supply), and when.

Some plans set prices and track usage annually; others every 15 minutes.

Tip: Minimizing peak-time usage reduces pollution and can save you money.

	Your Home	Average Texas Home
Peak (6 AM - 6 PM)	19% << 52%	
Day (6 PM - 7 PM)	12%	17%
Night (7 PM - 6 AM)	69% >> 31%	

Analysis Methodology

For your latest 12 months' usage, we calculated and ranked your annual energy plus delivery costs for hundreds of current electric plans... (See next page for results) →

Electric Plan Comparison – Sep 2020

For your electricity usage, you'd save up to \$771 per year on a different plan:

Retailer	Plan Name	Term (mo)	ETF	Rate Type	Base /mo	Import /kWh	Export /kWh	Annual Bill
	Twelve Hour Power	12	\$135	Time-of-Use	\$9.95	15.2¢+TDU Free 9p - 9a		\$1,214
	Griddy Zero	0		Indexed	\$9.99	RTW+TDU	RTW	\$1,311 †
	Free Power Nights	12	\$125	Time-of-Use		11.1¢+TDU Free 9p - 6a		\$1,550
	Texas Solar Home	12	\$150	Fixed	\$4.95	6.3¢+TDU	6.3¢	\$1,749
	Rise Solar	12	\$15 /mo	Fixed	\$4.95	6.6¢+TDU	6.6¢	\$1,795
	Solar Buyback	24		Indexed		6.7¢+TDU	RTW	\$1,861 †
	Your Current Plan	12		Fixed		13.9¢	13.9¢	\$1,985
	Renewable Rewards	12		Fixed		14.9¢	14.9¢	\$2,128
	Simple Solar Sell Back	12	\$150	Fixed		15.9¢	15.9¢	\$2,271
	Renewable Buyback	24	\$295	Fixed	\$9.95	14.9¢	11.9¢	\$2,346

Notes & Definitions

ETF: An Early Termination Fee for quitting your contract more than 14 days early (unless you move).

Rate: "Fixed" rates guarantee the same pricing terms for each month of the contract.

Type: "Time-of-Use" plans charge predefined rates for usage during peak vs. non-peak hours. "Indexed" rates vary with indices like the wholesale price of electricity or natural gas.

Base /mo: A monthly fee to cover administrative or other non-usage-based costs.

Import /kWh: The rate you pay for each kWh of electricity you consume from the grid.

Export /kWh: The credit you earn for each excess kWh of electricity you supply to the grid.

TDU: Your Transmission and Distribution Utility (Centerpoint) currently charges \$4.39/mo + 4.23 c/kWh.

† RTW: Real-Time Wholesale electric rates vary every 5 minutes and are NOT guaranteed, so 'Annual Bill' applies the trailing 12-month price history for reference only. [Click for more details.](#)

This report brought to you by Solar United Neighbors and powered by Texas Power Guide. Questions? Please contact txteam@solarunitedneighbors.org

Examples of the reporting that we can provide to Texas solar homeowners.



JOIN
TOGETHER

Pivoting to digital

Bringing solar supporters together is a key part of our theory of change. But what happens when people can't physically be together?

Coronavirus presented a critical challenge to our ability to build community.

But we quickly realized that everyone being stuck at home was an opportunity. We could bring together a larger, more geographically diverse group than we ever had before.

On March 31, we hosted a movie screening. More than 400 solar supporters joined us to watch *Current Revolution*. The film

Staying socially close but physically distant

In September, we hosted a drive-in movie screening event, Drive into the SUN. Nearly two dozen solar supporters joined us to watch *An Inconvenient Sequel*.

The film reminds us what can happen when regular folks take a stand. It examines the efforts used

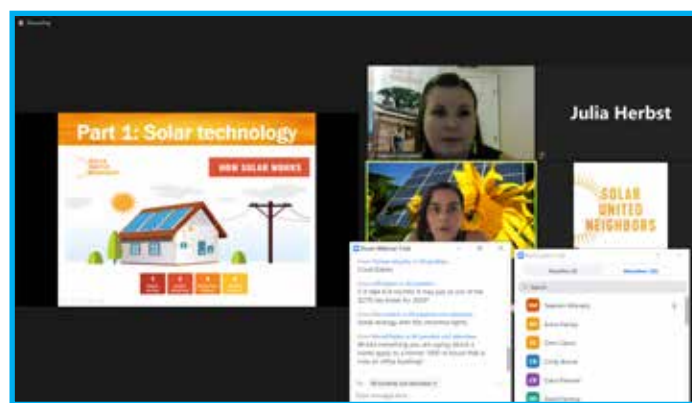
examines how a combination of distributed energy (like rooftop solar) and a robust electric vehicle infrastructure can massively improve our electrical grid.

After the film, we hosted a discussion featuring SUN staff and Arizona State University professor Paul Hirt. Paul was featured in the film.



to persuade governmental leaders to invest in renewable energy (like rooftop solar).

Before and after the film, attendees were able to (safely) meet our new Maryland program director, Kimberly Armstrong, and connect with fellow solar supporters.



Solar United Neighbors staff presents at an online solar co-op information session.

This event's success showed us we could bring solar supporters together virtually from across the country during an uncertain and stressful time. It's what inspired us to host more virtual and remote events.

"Thank you SO MUCH for screening this film and for the Q&A afterward. I felt happier after watching it than I have in a long time. Not only was it a very welcome break from the coronavirus fears, but it left me feeling more hopeful about the future of our planet than I have in a long time! The Q&A speakers were fantastic."

*- Current Revolution screening attendee
Jeanne Zang*

Building partnerships to grow solar co-ops



Community partners play an important role in solar co-ops. They provide local expertise and help us build co-op membership. Jeff Corey, the executive director of One Roof Community Housing, shares how our organizations are working together on a co-op in Duluth, Minnesota.

Tell me about your organization and the work you do.

One Roof Community Housing is a non-profit community-based organization. We like to say that “we make home a better place.” We work with low-income families to provide home buyer education and counseling, as well as tenant/landlord education counseling and mediation.

We also have a single-family affordable housing development, made up largely of community land trust homes. Additionally, we offer lending to folks to help them fix up their homes, and we develop multi-family housing properties.

How did you connect with SUN?

I have a common connection with Minnesota Program Director Bobby King. We both lived in a house of hospitality for people experiencing homelessness, as part of the Loaves and Fishes Community a bunch of years ago. He moved out shortly before my wife and I moved in. We stayed in touch over the years. When SUN came to Duluth with the co-op, a partnership was a natural fit. We’re excited to connect the people we work with to the co-op.

Tell me what you’ve learned from this process.

It has definitely enhanced our understanding of what it takes to put solar panels in place to make such things work. We hadn’t really explored it before.

We’re careful about doing something new because there is always a risk involved when you don’t stick to your knitting. We love being able to team up with a group that has credibility and has done this work before. This way, we don’t have to reinvent the wheel to help people in our community benefit from solar.

Energy burden, the fact that low-income families pay a disproportionate percentage of their income on electricity, is a growing concern. Tell us how you’ve seen this issue play out in Duluth.

Every time we develop a property that we’re going to be selling to a lower-income family, we’re doing the things that are reasonable to do to make it more energy-efficient and cost-effective for that family to live in.

Solar is rarely part of this. So, the co-op raises the game in terms of affordability. We are hopeful we can continue this partnership in the future to help more families benefit from solar energy.

Jeff & Betty Haukebo



Growing solar co-ops with the help of volunteers

Mesa County, Colorado resident Wendy Metzger played an active role in making the solar co-op there a success. The group educated 250 participants about solar energy and helped 70 families go solar. We spoke with Wendy about her work with the group and how they overcame the challenges presented by COVID-19.



Mesa co-op volunteer signs in an attendee at a pre-pandemic information session.

How did you get involved with the solar co-op?

I started out by attending an information session. I was interested in solar because I have an energy intensive business. I have an indoor aquaponic farm where I grow lettuce and other greens alongside fish.

Tell me about growing the co-op and the challenges presented by COVID.

We had all these grand plans. We had all these meetings set up. This was just at the beginning of March. When we all realized what was happening, we moved our information sessions online.

I'm an in-person kind of person, so online presentation is a challenge. We worked with the local chamber of commerce and other local nonprofits. They shared these online meetings with their networks and helped to drive turn out.

When the weather warmed up, we were able to do some tabling at the local farmers market.

What advice would you give to others who are looking to grow a solar co-op in their community?

Building partners is key. You have to reel in all your local nonprofit groups. For example, we worked closely with local preservation groups, the local unitarian church, and the many clean air groups in our area. Partnering can be as simple as saying, "Hey, can you please share this information session with your group?"

How was the co-op received in the community?

We're in Colorado, so we have aggressive oil and gas people who don't want to hear about solar. That can be a challenge. But there are a lot of people who live here because they like the clean air and the outdoor activities. The success we had tells me there's really an opportunity to do more in the future.

Mesa solar panel installation





FIGHT
FOR ENERGY
RIGHTS

Protecting net metering nationwide...

Rooftop solar scored perhaps its biggest federal policy victory ever in 2020. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) rejected a request from a utility-backed front group that would have denied solar owners fair credit for the electricity they produced. VP of Advocacy Glen Brand discusses what happened.

What was the issue before FERC?

Solar opponents had asked regulators to assert federal authority over the electricity generated by solar owners. For decades, this issue was left to the states. Most states use net metering to credit solar owners for the electricity they generate but don't consume themselves. Net metering provides a credit to the solar owner that is equal to the value of the electricity the customer would have bought from the utility. Essentially, it's as if the energy a solar customer generates causes their meter to run backwards. This saves them money on their monthly utility bill.

Had FERC ruled in favor of the request, it's likely that net metering would have been significantly weakened, or disappeared altogether.

How did we respond?

It was a full court press.

We engaged in a broad public education campaign. We hosted a webinar with several hundred attendees. We organized to educate our base on the stakes of this fight. We empowered them to share with their networks why this was such an important issue and why people needed

to take action. Working with Vote Solar, we built a microsite, www.savesolar.org. This served as a launching point for people to submit comments to FERC.

We built a broad coalition of environmental groups, climate groups, and clean energy businesses. We were also able to bring in conservative groups who were interested in preserving state control over electricity rules.

Working together, we galvanized tens of thousands of responses, pressuring FERC to leave net metering alone.

What are lessons that solar supporters can bring from this campaign to the next fight?

We learned that an informed, mobilized public can make a real difference. It shows how powerful solar supporters really are. I think we're much stronger now for having achieved this victory.

Another lesson was the power of solar stories. It was impactful for commissioners to hear first-hand from solar owners what it would mean if net metering went away.



...and in states

The fight to protect net metering came to the states as well. Florida provides a good example of how to mobilize solar supporters to defend their rights. Florida Program Director Heaven Campbell discusses how solar supporters beat an attempt to roll back net metering.

How did this issue come about?

A utility front group called Energy Fairness found a lawmaker to ask the Public Service Commission to review the issue of net metering. Net metering is a billing system that ensures solar owners receive fair credit for the electricity they produce. The request was based on a seriously flawed report the front group had peddled in several states.

The Public Service Commission decided to hold a special workshop to look into net metering.

How did solar supporters respond?

More than 16,000 Floridians wrote to the Commission to urge them to keep net metering in place. That's more comments than they'd received on any other issue. Commissioners called this fact out during the meeting.

What was the result of the workshop?

The Commission sided with solar supporters. It was clear that we had gotten their attention. Commissioners said it didn't make sense to make changes to net metering.

To what do you attribute the strong response from solar supporters?

When people go solar, they know they need fair credit for the electricity they generate. Net metering provides that. Without net metering, solar doesn't pencil out for a lot of families.

Because of this, we've done a good deal of work to educate Floridians about this issue. People understand that it's a basic issue of fairness.

We couldn't do this alone. We brought a great group of partners to the table to support this effort. We also activated our super volunteers to share the word with their communities. They took actions like recording radio interviews and speaking at community meetings. In this way, they were able to educate friends and neighbors about the importance of protecting net metering in Florida.

What can Floridians do to ensure net metering stays protected?

There are two things. One, continue to raise your voice to the Public Service Commission. Ask them to protect net metering. Two, reach out to your state representative and senator. Tell them why you support solar energy and why net metering is important.

Solar advocates present at a hearing before the Florida Public Service Commission to defend net metering.



Winning landmark legislation in Virginia...

Solar advocates scored several noteworthy policy wins in Virginia in 2020. Lawmakers passed landmark legislation that put the Commonwealth on a path to 100% clean energy. Virginia Program Director Aaron Sutch discusses this and other big solar victories.



How will these policy changes support solar's growth in Virginia?

The Virginia Clean Economy Act is a pivotal piece of legislation. It sets the stage for the creation of a market for credits for solar. This will help more Virginians benefit from solar energy and help current solar owners realize their investment sooner.

Also, it supports rooftop solar by ensuring solar owners receive fair value for the electricity they generate, via net metering.

Virginia's new laws are expanding solar opportunities for schools and non-profit organizations as well. These institutions will be better able to finance solar with third-party ownership. This is a critical tool to help them install solar.

Lawmakers also passed a bill to protect solar homeowners from unfair HOA restrictions. Talk about that process.

Homeowners associations (HOAs) were the single biggest barrier to residential solar in Virginia. Since 2014, more than 300 residential installations were stopped because of HOA rejections.

We worked closely with the organization that represents HOAs in Virginia. Together, we crafted legislation that protects homeowners' rights to go solar while preserving HOAs' ability to set community standards. The state association was a good partner. We built the relationship by saying, "Let's work together to solve this problem."

The bill sets forth a reasonable standard. HOAs cannot enforce restrictions that increase the cost of the system by more than 5% or that lower the production of the proposed system by more than 10%.

These legislative wins were years in the making. How have we built such a strong community of solar supporters?

Our work has solidified solar owners and supporters as a constituency. It is diverse and bi-partisan. We've built it by working in essentially all areas of Virginia, from Abingdon to Arlington to Virginia Beach to Roanoke.

It's proven our theory of change. We help people go solar. We join them together. And then, we successfully advocate for fair policies.

What are the next challenges that solar supporters in Virginia are going to take on?

Last year was a watershed moment. Big, ambitious climate goals are excellent, but everyone must be able to participate in the new energy system. To that end, we're mobilizing solar supporters to reach out to the Virginia State Corporation Commission. We want to make sure the regulations they create will help low- and moderate-income families benefit from solar as well.

Wu Family, Virginia





... and setting the stage for future wins in West Virginia

The fight for solar rights takes different forms in different communities. In West Virginia, solar supporters are working to expand solar by increasing financing options. West Virginia Program Director Autumn Long discusses why legalizing Power Purchase Agreements is essential.

What are Power Purchase Agreements? How do they help people go solar?

A Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) is a type of financing for solar or other renewable energy generation projects. With a PPA, a third-party developer owns and installs the system. The customer then purchases the value of that electricity from the system developer at a fixed rate over a fixed contract period. The customer is able to save money on their electricity costs from day one. They lock in long-term energy rates through that contract without having to bear the up-front costs of going solar.

It's a very popular and common financing mechanism for solar. This is particularly true for tax-exempt entities like schools, municipalities, and churches. This is because, as tax-exempt organizations, they can't take advantage of the federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for solar. With a PPA, a private developer can capture that tax credit and pass through some of its value in the form of lower energy costs for the final customer.

How would legalizing PPAs benefit West Virginia?

It would spur local economic development throughout the state. This means good new jobs. It would also encourage companies with sustainability goals to locate in West Virginia.

PPAs can save taxpayer money. If public institutions like schools and governments are able to lower their energy costs, that's actually benefiting our state's bottom line.

Tell me how you've built a coalition and bipartisan support for legalizing PPAs.

We've developed a coalition called West Virginians for Energy Freedom, which includes 48 organizational members. These range from economic development authorities and local municipalities to small businesses and large international corporations, as well as nonprofit groups and local community and civic organizations.

The coalition has been successful in spurring interest from lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. We've cultivated Republican lead sponsors for the bills that have been introduced to enable this policy.

What can West Virginians do to help make PPAs legal in West Virginia?

West Virginians can visit the coalition website at www.energyfreedomwv.org. You can learn all about the issue there. You'll also find resources to make it easy to connect to your lawmakers and urge them to support PPAs.

I would also encourage you to invite your local municipality, Chamber of Commerce, or economic development authority to get involved in this work. Cities and counties around the state have issued resolutions of support, which helps bring attention to this issue.

And finally, invite any organizations you're affiliated with to join our coalition. This can be your workplace, your faith institution, or any other local organization you're involved in.



Right: The Monroe County library has solar. Libraries around West Virginia can as well once the state passes a law legalizing Power Purchase Agreements.

Working together to get 100% clean energy in Arizona

Partnerships are a key aspect of growing the solar movement. We sat down with Marta Tomic of Vote Solar to learn how our organizations worked together in Arizona to push groundbreaking policy.

Discuss our work to push Arizona's 100% clean energy rule.

Arizona is close to meeting its clean energy goals, a 15% standard. So, the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC) put forth a new standard: 100% clean energy by 2050. Solar United Neighbors, because of the on-the-ground relationships you have, was instrumental in building the coalition that pushed this rules package forward.

Working together, we generated more than 5,000 citizen petitions to the ACC in favor of the 100% standard. We helped Arizona companies and solar owners set up virtual meetings with commissioners

to discuss the benefits of clean energy and why the rule was the right step forward.

What has made this partnership successful?

Our coordinated communications efforts have been fantastic. We developed a shared landing page (www.savesolar.org/az) that we used to connect Arizonans to their commissioners.

We also coordinated on communications to our respective lists. We were able to share language so that neither group was starting from scratch.

Internally, our communication has been effective as well. We coordinate via regular check-ins. This has been key to ensuring everyone is on the same page.

Lastly, I think we've succeeded because we were able to combine SUN's on-the-ground knowledge with Vote Solar's technical expertise. We're complementary in that way.

What are some things we've accomplished by working together that we couldn't have without this partnership?

From Vote Solar's perspective, we wouldn't have been nearly as effective without SUN's guidance on the approach to take.

Working together, we were able to show a strong collective voice. This was particularly true in our meetings with commissioners.

We were also able to excel in terms of grassroots member mobilization. This was critical to showing that the public really cares about this issue. That really persuaded the ACC to move these clean energy rules forward.

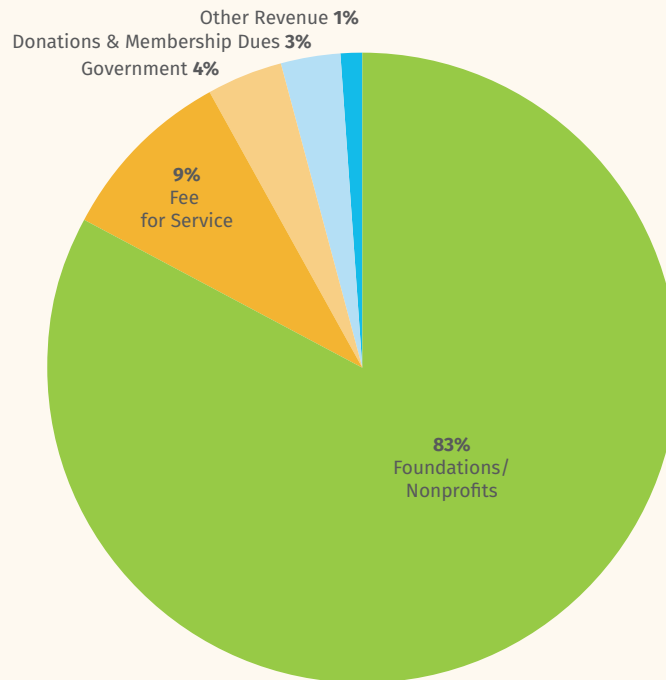


We delivered thousands of petitions to the Arizona Corporation Commission asking them to set a 100% clean energy standard.

Financial Summary

January-December 2020

Solar United Neighbors 2020 Revenue by Source



Revenue	
Temp Restricted Donations	\$3,162,257.60
Unrestricted Donations	\$598,942.46
Contract Revenue Fee For Service	\$467,000.00
Membership Revenue	\$35,014.46
Other Revenue	\$60,570.98
Total Income	\$4,323,785.50

Expenses	
Employee Expenses	\$2,785,451.51
Professional Fees	\$373,665.48
Engagement Expenses	\$28,603.52
Public Relations	\$97,187.21
Office Expenses	\$184,664.37
Facilities	\$111,042.14
Travel	\$31,761.97
Depreciation	\$17,997.25
Bad Debts Expense	\$68,600.00
Contribution Expenses	\$25,000.00
Miscellaneous Expenses	\$62.00
Total Expenses	\$3,724,035.45
NET INCOME	\$599,750.05



 **SOLAR UNITED
NEIGHBORS**

www.solarunitedneighbors.org
1350 Connecticut Ave NW #412
Washington, DC 20036

202.888.3601
info@solarunitedneighbors.org