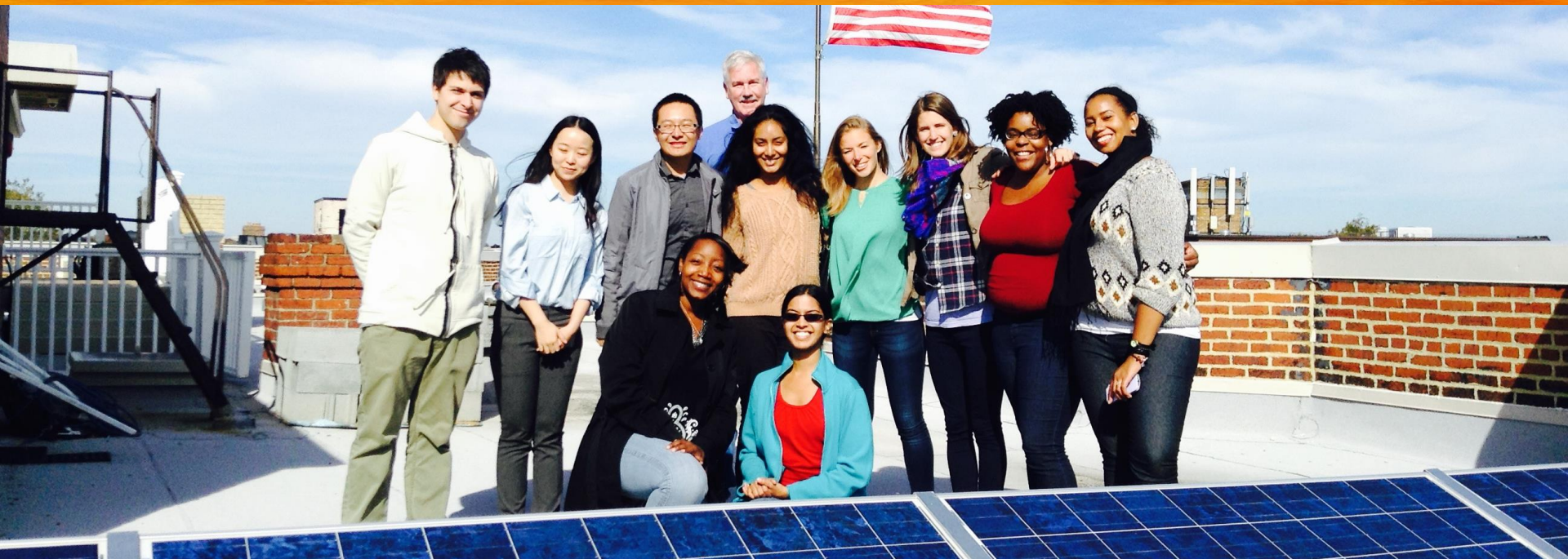




Virginia

Citizen Lobbying Skills

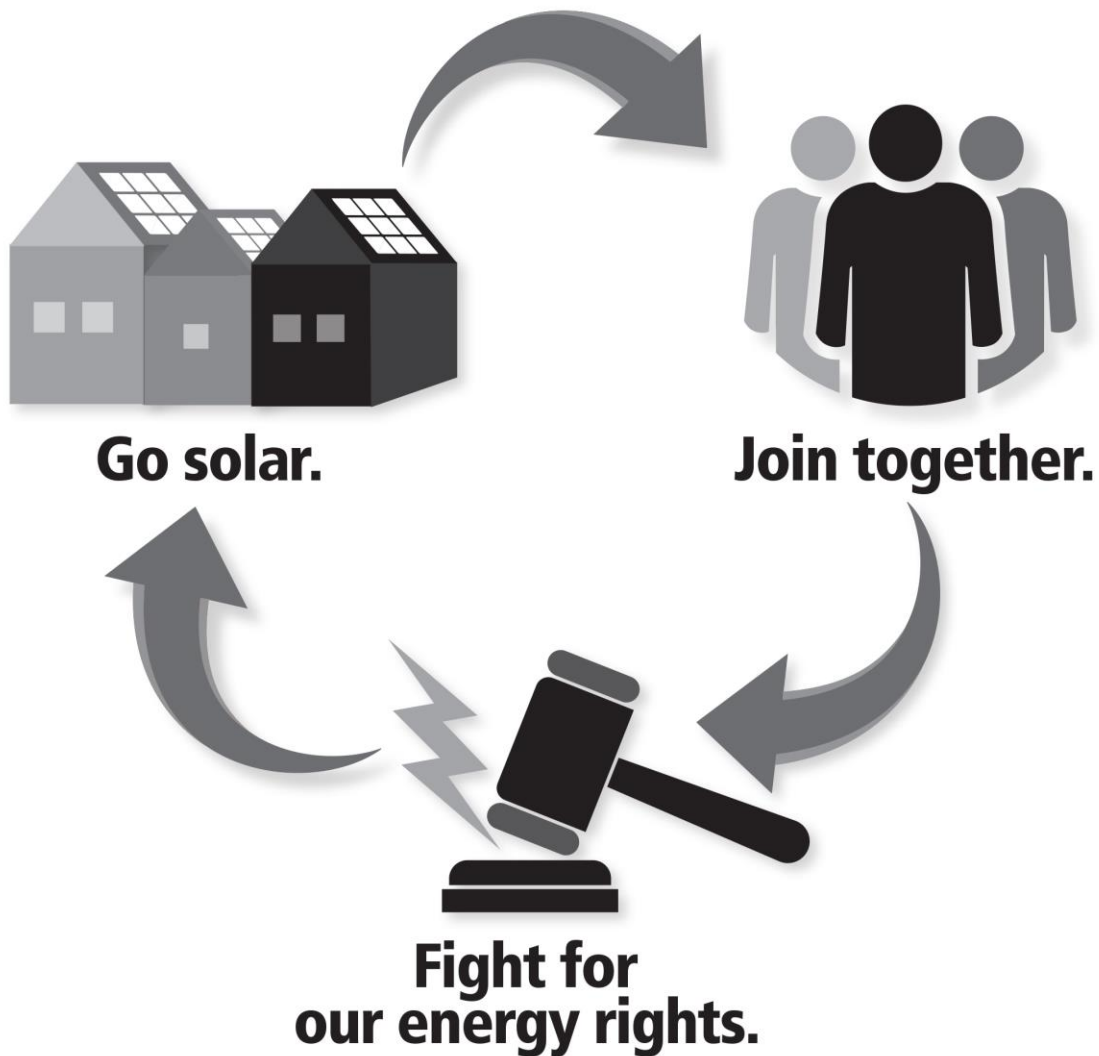


Virginia Solar Lobbying Overview

- Solar owner/prospective solar owner = most affected constituency
- Solar is non- partisan. All voices/perspectives welcome
- Solar policy is mostly determined at state-level (GA)
- Expand net metering, third party ownership, reduce barriers



Our Theory of Change



- People who have a stake in the clean energy economy are highly-motivated and compelling advocates for clean energy policies.



Strengthening the Voices of Solar Homeowners



- Bringing solar homeowners' unique perspective to lobby for pro-solar policies is a key part of our mission.

Citizen Lobbying

- **What is Lobbying?**
 - getting what you want by advocating to the people with the power to give it to you.
- **Does grassroots lobbying work?**
 - YES!



How does a bill become law?

- A bill = proposed law
- Assigned to committee which holds public hearings before voting on bill.
- If bill passes through committee, it goes to the full legislative body for votes. If approved, it is sent to the Governor to sign.
- If the Governor vetoes, the legislature can vote again to override the veto.

Effective Citizen Lobbying Tactics

- **Calling, emailing, or writing your local reps.**
- **Meeting with your legislator in district or at the statehouse office**
- **Emailing testimony to committee**
- **Testifying in person before the committee**
- **Writing a letter to the editor in your local newspaper**

Before Contacting Your Representatives

- Learn about your official's background and their solar and clean energy voting record (ask us).
- Prepare what you want to say, starting with your personal story about how the bill solves a problem or impacts your family, community, business.
- Remember that your story will make a greater impact than presenting facts about the bill.

Emailing, calling your representatives

- **Address by their proper title**
- **Identify yourself by name, town and, if relevant to the issue, profession and organizational affiliation**
- **Identify the bill you want to talk about by bill title and number.**

Citizen Lobbying

- Briefly state how you would like your rep. to vote and explain how the bill would affect you, your family, business, and community.
- If the representative opposes, express disappointment (not anger) and offer to answer questions or supply any additional information.
- Follow up ASAP by email with the information and restate your position.

More Tips

- **Be politely assertive and use a professional tone. Try not to express anger, or threaten.**
- **One of the goals of communicating is to build an on-going and productive constituent-representative relationship.**

Lobbying In-Person

- Meeting in-person with your representative is usually the most impactful way to lobby.
- Request meeting (at least one week ahead) at their Legislative office or in-district.
- If your legislator is not available, ask to meet with a staffer.

Preparing for the meeting

- To prepare for the meeting, see suggestions above for calling/emailing your representatives.
- It's a good idea to have one-page outline to talk from.
- 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.

During the Meeting

- **Make sure to allow lots of opportunity for the legislators to speak about their positions and concerns.**
- **It's a good idea to take brief notes as long as it's not distracting.**

More Tips

- **If you do not have the answer to a question,**
 - say so and offer to find the answer and provide it to the legislator later.
 - 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.**

If your Representative disagrees...

- Calmly express your disappointment and ask what kind of info would be needed to reconsider and offer to send more information via email.
- Solar United Neighbors can assist you in obtaining this information.

After the meeting...

- **Review/clarify your meeting notes**
- **Send follow up email thanking for the meeting**
 - include any requested info
 - repeat your ask
- **If your legislators say they will support**
 - thank and urge them to encourage their colleagues to follow suit.

Writing Letters to the Editor (LTE)

- Before you write your LTE, see the paper word count guidelines, usually around 150 words
- Identify the bill, explain why it's important to you and your community, and call on your local legislators by name to support your position
- It can also be helpful to tie your letter to an article the newspaper previously published

Writing/Giving Testimony

- **Email testimony (1-2 pp) to committee clerk, asking that your testimony be distributed to committee members.**
- **Tell your personal story! The more specific the better!**
- **Oral testimony usually restricted to 2-3 mins**
- **Bring enough copies to pass out to the committee members just before you speak**

Next steps

- Let us know if you need help connecting with your representatives (meeting, testimony, etc...)
- Look for forthcoming resources including this slide presentation and Citizen Lobbying Guide
- RSVP to attend our Lobbying Day in Richmond



**Learn more at
solarunitedneighbors.org**

Thank You!