

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 22 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

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.

3 Example bill testimony

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.