



Ensure all Virginians have access to local solar energy

Problem: Currently, the only way to power your home or business with local solar in Virginia is by installing solar panels on-site. Solar panels can be placed on your roof or on a ground mounted system. We know when Virginians have access to locally produced solar energy they are able to reduce their electricity bills, increase economic development, and support job growth in the expanding renewable energy industry across the Commonwealth.

Many Virginians do not have access to distributed, local solar energy due to factors such as: lacking access to credit or interest in taking out a loan, not having a roof suitable for solar, living in an apartment, or being a renter (33.3% of households).

Background: All Virginians could access low-cost, local solar energy to power their homes and businesses through community solar. Community solar lets individuals, businesses, or organizations buy or subscribe to a “share” in a community solar project. When you join a community solar project, you receive a credit on your electric bill each month. The size of your share determines how much credit you receive.

In 2020 the General Assembly (GA) passed a law to provide access to community solar for Dominion ratepayers (SB 629/HB 1634). This program will open to ratepayers by July 1, 2023. However, the law left out major electric utilities. Appalachian Power (APCO) and Kentucky Utility (KU) customers do not have access to community solar.

Solution: Expand community solar to APCO & KU territories to increase access to local solar. Stop letting monopoly utilities prevent Virginians from choosing local solar. A bill expanding community solar to APCO territory passed the Virginia Senate in 2023 with bi-partisan support, but it failed in the House.

Like rooftop solar, community solar provides energy bill savings and additional benefits to our electric grid and community. Benefits of local solar include: providing clean electricity at peak times when electricity is most expensive; providing electricity close to where it is used, which reduces the need to transmit electricity over long distances and lowers wear and tear on the grid; diversifying our power sources and providing resiliency.

Increasing distributed solar in Virginia through community solar and more residential and commercial solar from 100 MW in 2020 to 2,500 MW would increase direct jobs in Virginia from 2,900 to 29,500 and add \$7 billion in total economic impact.¹ This would also mean that Virginia would be powered with 3% distributed solar energy.

¹ VCU Center for Urban and Regional Analysis. 2020. “Assessing the Benefits of Distributed Solar Energy in Virginia.” Accessed 6/15/22.

https://virginiasolarforall.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/62/2020/01/CURA_solar_fact_sheet_-_1-22-20.pdf