Virginia residents, businesses and local governments are held back when they want to generate their own electricity. It’s time to remove the barriers that are keeping clean, renewable electricity out of reach!

With customer-sited solar, the possibilities are endless. **Solar panels typically last up to 40 years and require little maintenance.**

Despite all its benefits, customer-owned solar is lagging across our state due to opposition from utilities like Dominion and their undue influence over Virginia politicians. **Virginia residents, businesses, and local governments should have the right to generate their own electricity and not be tied to dirty sources of power, but right now, we don’t.**

There are many barriers to solar energy in Virginia law now:

- **Barriers to residential solar,** including added fees known as “standby” charges that act like a tax or disincentive and major limits on “net metering”
- **Barriers to local government solar,** including the prohibition of using the electricity produced at one site to serve buildings at another site and limits on the use of budget-neutral financing
- **Barriers to solar for businesses,** such as restrictions on building owners selling solar output to tenants

Because of these barriers, rooftops, parking lots, airports and other spaces that could support solar panels are sitting idle and empty.

**Solar is the cheapest source of new power in Virginia!**

In other states, local governments are putting under-utilized land to work, saving money for taxpayers and putting funds toward schools and other local needs. Businesses are taking advantage of clean energy investments that make them more competitive, and more residents are powering their homes and farms with on-site or community solar.

Removing the barriers to customer-sited solar in Virginia could unleash hundreds of millions of dollars in private and public investment in clean energy across Virginia, creating thousands of new jobs. This is the local economic boost that our communities need, and everyone can benefit.

**What is “net metering” and why does it matter?**

Net metering allows owners of solar panels or other renewable energy generators to connect to the electric grid and **provide their surplus electricity to others and offset their personal electricity costs with their electric utility.** This way, solar owners are paid for surplus renewable electricity they generate.
A robust build-out of solar in our communities will improve electric grid resilience, reliability, and emergency preparedness, and reduce pollution for our kids and future generations.

In the event of emergencies, distributed solar coupled with battery storage can provide essential power for shelters, police and fire stations when the larger electric grid goes down. This dynamic duo can also replace the need for “peaker plants,” power plants that supply energy only when the electric grid is at maximum capacity.

Monopoly utility companies like Dominion Energy and Appalachian Power don’t want this practice to be allowed because it would jeopardize their profits and undermine their control over the electric supply in their territory.

Among the worst anti-solar laws in Virginia is the “standby charge” that Dominion and APCO put into place to penalize homeowners with solar systems larger than 10 kilowatts.

How does this “standby charge” work? Let’s take a look at an APCO customer, Naomi, who lives in Henry County, Virginia who has a 12 kW solar system on her home. That 12 kW system triggers the “standby charge” imposed by the utility. In the long days of summer especially, when she is generating more power than she needs, you’d think her bill would be smaller with just taxes and charges for transmitting electricity.

Instead, Naomi, who is retired and living on a fixed income, is penalized for generating electricity with a huge “standby charge” every month!

“Community solar” options are also limited in Virginia. As the name implies, community solar allows a group of residents or businesses to purchase the solar from a nearby solar farm. It is ideal for those who rent or don’t have space suitable for solar on their own home or property can benefit. Only one community solar project currently exists in the state. This project is thanks to an electric cooperative’s willingness to respond to their customers’ requests.

ACT NOW: Contact Gov. Northam today! Urge your public officials to champion Virginians’ right to customer-owned clean energy and freedom from monopoly utility companies’ dirty fuels and abuse of power. Together we can build a clean energy future that will serve generations to come.

For more information visit vasierra.club/moresolarmoreplaces