

May 10, 2024
Joint Interim Standing Committee on Natural Resources
Sen. Julie Pazina, Chairperson
401 S. Carson St.
Carson City, NV 89701
NRInterim@lcb.state.nv.us

Dear Senator Pazina and members of the Natural Resources Committee,

If there is one thing Nevada has plenty of, it's sunshine. We can and should be national leaders in this form of renewable energy. According to the Nevada Independent and other sources, the idea of "community solar" — expanding access to solar energy to people who don't have the ability or financial means to install rooftop panels — is gaining traction nationwide. Nevada is one of 39 states that has implemented a community-based solar program. But because Nevada's program was put under the umbrella of NV Energy, they are responsible for initiating and overseeing projects. To date, only three of the six to 20 allowed by the 2019 legislation have been built and the project is lagging mostly due to NV Energy's reluctance to initiate more projects. Minimum construction standards have not been met and a solar workforce training program created by the bill has recruited fewer than a dozen people, while customer enrollment in the program has also lagged.

Participants buy into a shared solar producing facility, receiving credit and cost savings on their electricity bills, this is a huge societal benefit. But five years later, NV Energy has not reached the minimum construction standards set by the bill, and the utility's efforts toward fulfilling the bill have state lawmakers and watchdog groups disappointed and concerned. NV Energy should be held accountable for this dismal performance!

No hard deadline was put in place for NV Energy to roll out the program, and the bill does not have any clear requirements that the Public Utilities Commission of Nevada (PUCN) create enforcement mechanisms such as fines to ensure compliance.

Community solar makes the most sense because it is installed in existing communities on already-disrupted land, without the environmental and socioeconomic implications of large solar arrays. No incursions on raw land, benefits for lower-income residents, plenty of good-paying jobs - what could be better to increase solar renewable energy?

We urge your committee to review the situation and investigate why the program has been lackluster to date. Then, advocate for stricter requirements with either fines for NV Energy to ensure compliance, or additional legislation that would encourage them to take more action on this desirable path toward more renewable solar energy in Nevada. Or, consider the option of putting the program with strict requirements under a private contractor rather than the utility company that seems reluctant to ensure the success of the legislation.

Until we make renewable energy the primary source for all our electric needs, we will continue to burn climate-damaging fossil fuels at a rate that contributes to the worsening of the climate crisis. Community solar is one proven way to produce more renewable energy; it deserves more impetus.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Rita Ransom

Rita L. Ransom

Las Vegas



Member: Sierra Club, Toiyabe Chapter Nevada, Legislative Committee; Citizens' Climate Lobby