

S.1189: A Balanced Path for Distributed Energy in South Carolina

S.1189 is a balanced compromise bill developed by electric cooperatives, investor-owned utilities, solar power proponents and conservationists to open the way for more distributed energy production in South Carolina. The bill has checks and balances to encourage the growth of cost effective resources like solar, increasing South Carolina's energy independence by boosting access to renewable resources that consumers and industry demand.

Enables Leasing of Solar Panels

In other states, customers can lease solar systems to eliminate upfront costs of going solar and enjoy immediate bill savings. South Carolina's current law has been interpreted to bar customers from accessing the leasing market and putting excess power back on the grid.

- ✓ S.1189 would change that, allowing homes and businesses to lease solar systems from independent solar companies and reduce their energy costs immediately.
- ✓ Allowing solar leasing gives consumers independence, promotes market competition, and enables South Carolinians of modest means to access solar energy.

Opens the Way for Utility Distributed Energy Programs

Distributed energy resources like solar enhance grid security, increase consumer independence, and reduce health costs from pollution. S.1189 opens the way for utilities to get power from residential and commercial renewable installations as well as from utility-scale projects like the one recently constructed by Santee Cooper in Walterboro.

The bill ensures that the most cost-effective measures are selected first and contains caps to minimize any potential rate impacts should they occur.

Importantly, utilities would be required to have programs enabling schools, churches and other non-profits to save money using clean energy – making our communities stronger.

Sets Updated Net-Metering Rates

S.1189 would require the Public Service Commission to take an in-depth look at the benefits and costs of distributed energy generation installed by residents and commercial businesses and to update our net energy metering policy to reflect the value of distributed resources like solar. Similar studies done in other states have found that the benefits of solar outweigh any costs, meaning that when people decide to invest their own resources in solar power, all customers benefit.

Once this review has taken place, current limits on customer system size will be increased to allow more and larger distributed generation installations and to give more customers the opportunity to obtain fair value for the solar power they provide to the utility.

- ✓ Allows more businesses and residents to save more money through investing in solar energy and leasing solar power installations.

Taken together, the bill's key provisions – giving customers the freedom to lease solar, permitting utilities to introduce distributed energy programs, and ensuring equitable net metering rules – are complimentary approaches that will expand customer options and increase cost effective renewable power in South Carolina.