



SUSTAINABLE SOLAR EDUCATION PROJECT

Solar Consumer Protection Workshop Agenda

Hyatt Place Chicago/O'Hare Airport
6810 Mannheim Road, Rosemont, Illinois
Thursday, May 17, 2018

Wednesday, May 16

For those who arrive early, CESA will arrange for an optional, pay-your-own-way dinner. Those interested in this option should RSVP with CESA and should meet in the hotel lobby at 7:00pm. We will head to a restaurant from there.

Thursday, May 17

Starting at 7:00am, a free continental breakfast will be available in the Gallery Kitchen area of the hotel. You may eat there, with other hotel guests, or you may take your food to the meeting space (Rooms 2 & 3). Coffee will be available throughout the workshop.

8:00 AM – Rooms 2 & 3

Session 1: Introduction to Meeting Participants and to Solar Consumer Protection Issues

In this initial session, meeting participants will have an opportunity to introduce themselves and identify a solar consumer protection issue that has been a concern in their state. In addition, Nate Hausman of CESA will provide a brief overview of the consumer protection issues that have been addressed by various states across the country.

9:00 AM

Session 2: What Is the Role of the States?

Some solar consumer protection issues fall under the purview of federal agencies, especially the Federal Trade Commission. Other matters are best left to standard-setting and self-policing by industry groups, consumer review websites, and other private parties. Which are the issues that fall under the jurisdiction of state regulators and enforcement agencies, and which are most important to focus on? This session will start with a panel discussion among experts with varying perspectives. We will then seek out input from audience members. The session will also consider coordination among agencies on consumer protection.

Panelists

- Steven Burt, Associate General Counsel (SEIA Consumer Protection Com. Co-Chair), Vivint Solar
- Larry Sherwood, President/CEO, Interstate Renewable Energy Council
- Tyson Slocum, Director, Public Citizen Energy Program

10:00 AM

Break

10:15 AM

Session Three: Model Contracts and Customer Disclosure Requirements

Several states have taken action to require certain solar contract disclosures. This session will discuss state solar contract disclosures—the context in which certain states have taken action, the different disclosure provisions states have required, and the effectiveness of solar disclosure mandates. It will also discuss the voluntary actions industry groups and other organizations have engaged in related to model solar contracts and industry business codes.

11:15 AM

Session Four: Strategies for Ensuring High Standards for Installations

This session will feature a series of short presentations on what different states have done to ensure that solar installations meet high standards. Topics to be covered will include training efforts for system inspectors and installer licensing and certification programs. It will also discuss ways states have incorporated quality assurances into their solar programs.

12:15 PM

Lunch

A lunch buffet will be served at the workshop. Each lunch table will have a topic for discussion. After getting food, attendees will be able to choose a table based on which topic they want to discuss. Potential discussion topics include:

- Consumer Education
- Installer Licensing and Certification Programs
- System Installation Codes and Standards
- Solar Equipment Lists and System Data and Monitoring
- Solar Installer Rating Systems

1:15 PM

Session Five: Renewable Energy Certificates—Why You and Consumers Should Understand Them?

When a solar project generates electricity, it also produces Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), a tradable commodity that represents the green attributes associated with renewable energy generation and use. When consumers engage with a solar project they may have misconceptions regarding what they are buying, and whether they are receiving or using renewable energy. This session will feature a speaker who will discuss the broader market's use of RECs and how different types of consumers use these market instruments to meet objectives and substantiate market claims. You will also hear from a state expert who will detail the states' role related to RECs and consumer protection issues.

Panelists

- James Critchfield, Green Power Partnership, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Justin Kolber, Vermont Office of the Attorney General

1:45 PM

Session Six: Concurrent Sessions

A. Community Solar Consumer Protection Issues

Community solar is a rapidly growing sector of the solar market in the United States, but it can pose unique consumer protection issues. For example, community solar consumers' relationship with their solar systems is relatively abstract compared to rooftop solar consumers, making it easier for consumers to sign up for community solar without fully understanding its risks and benefits. Some states have developed community solar programs targeted towards low- and moderate-income customers, which may increase consumer protection concerns. And community solar can present its own distinct questions about the applicability of securities laws, about how much flexibility is or should be built into community solar contracts, and the applicability of the solar investment tax credit. This session will discuss the special consumer protection issues that community solar presents and what state have done and can do to embed consumer protections into community solar programs.

B. Grievance Processes and Dealing with Consumer Complaints

States have created pathways for aggrieved solar customers to lodge complaints. In some cases, these grievance procedures may be the same as those used for problems with other types of businesses, often involving a consumer protection division at the state attorney general's office. In other cases, there might be a solar-specific consumer recourse process housed at the Public Utilities Commission or somewhere else in state government. This session will focus on these solar customer grievance procedures and how states can effectively handle consumer complaints.

2:45 PM

Break

3:00 PM

Session Seven: What Are You Going to Do?

We will divide into small groups of several states each so that attendees can consider what additional they might do to address solar consumer protection. They will also discuss what else they think they need in the way of information, resources, or technical assistance. National experts from the federal government, industry, and NGOs will be scattered among the groups. The groups will report back at the end of the hour.

4:00 PM

Session Eight: Next Steps and Resource Material

A wrap-up discussion, along with information about some additional resources that can be useful to states figuring out how to address solar consumer protection.

4:30 PM

Adjourn