



## VOTE SOLAR

**Connecticut General Assembly**

**Before the Joint Committee on Energy and Technology**

**Oral Testimony of The Vote Solar Initiative**

**Regarding SB 928 – An Act Concerning Shared Clean Energy Facilities and HB 6940 – An Act Establishing a Shared Clean Energy Facility Pilot Program**

**Sean Garren, Regional Manager - Northeast**

**March 17, 2015**

Thank you Senator Doyle and Representative Reed, Members of the Committee:

I am here today to testify **in support** of Raised Bill SB 928 and **in opposition** to Raised Bill HB 6940.

Quick background on Vote Solar - we are a non-profit, non-partisan grassroots organization with members throughout the U.S. including thousands in Connecticut. Since 2002, we've worked in more than 20 states to remove market barriers and implement policies needed to bring solar into the mainstream.

I want to make 3 brief points here in my testimony. These points and many others have also been detailed more thoroughly in the Connecticut Academy of Science and Engineering report recently brought before the Committee on the subject of shared clean energy facilities. The first point I wish to make is that **SB 928 would, for the first time, give ALL customers access to clean energy.**

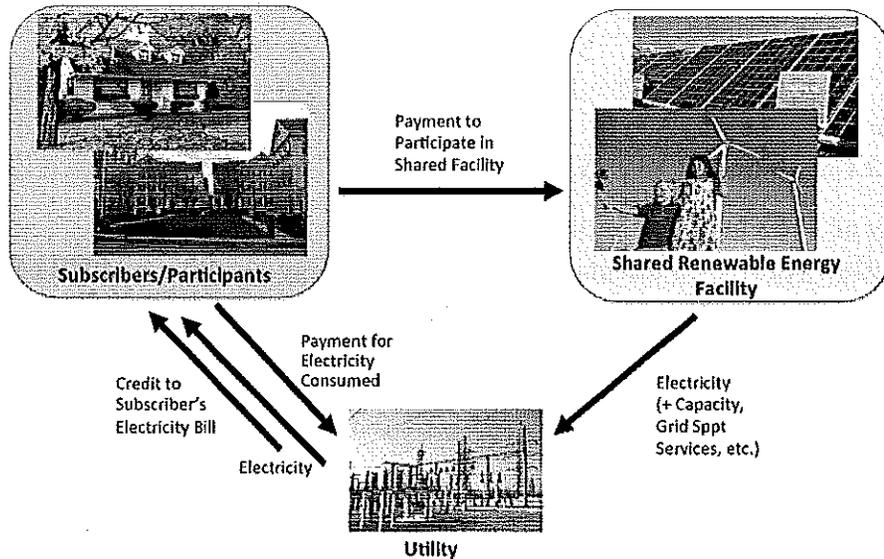
Currently, most Connecticut energy customers can't put solar on their property, either because they rent their home or business, or because their property isn't suitable. Under current law, these people and businesses, making up around three quarters of the population, cannot choose solar or another renewable energy source for themselves and access the many great state programs for renewable energy.

Shared clean energy can solve that problem. Here's how it works – and if you happen to have my written testimony in front of you, you'll find a corresponding graphic on page 2.

Customers sign up to participate in a local shared clean energy facility. The customer continues to receive their standard utility bill for the electricity they consume, but that bill will now show a credit for that customer's portion of the output from the shared facility. So customers can save money on their utility bills, hedge against rising electricity rates, and know that they're directly supporting local clean energy development.

**The Vote Solar Initiative**  
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## How does Shared Clean Energy work?



The second point I want to make is that **shared clean energy is an established framework that is operating successfully in 10 other states and a pilot program would be an unnecessary delay.** Even in New England, many shared clean energy facilities exist in Massachusetts and Vermont. The Federal Department of Energy and many of the nation's largest banks and investors have already pumped hundreds of millions of dollars into this business model. SB 928 is drawn from the lessons learned and best practices from existing programs and projects. HB 6940 would lead to an unnecessary pilot program that would delay expanding access to clean energy for three years or longer.

These programs have delivered significant economic and environmental benefits to these states, and Connecticut stands to gain from establishing a shared clean energy program. Companies like NRG, Clean Energy Collective and Community Energy have dozens of projects up and running or under construction in Massachusetts alone, investing hundreds of millions of dollars in the economy and putting hundreds of locals to work. You will hear more from these companies today, as well as local businesses like Greenskies, about how they stand ready to make that scale of investment in Connecticut.

The third and last point I want to make is that **shared clean energy benefits ALL ratepayers.** We sometimes hear concerns that these programs will raise rates for non-participating ratepayers. I want to assure you that SB 928 is designed to ensure that does not happen. This bill includes mechanisms to allow the electric utilities to recover certain costs from the project developers, to cap project size, and to adapt to future rate changes made through the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority.

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In fact, this bill has the support of many public interest and consumer advocates. Groups like the ConnPIRG, Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG), Environment Connecticut, the Sierra Club and Clean Water Action. You will hear from some of these groups today.

We are looking at a busy 5-10 years coming up in the electric industry as century old utility companies adapt to distributed generation and energy efficiency technologies that are cost-competitive. We expect that Connecticut, like many other states, will see a series of studies, rulemakings, and legislation take place to ensure proper valuation of distributed generation. The program proposed in SB 928 is designed to grow and adapt to those new market rules as they are established.

In the meantime, there is no reason to prevent 80% of Connecticut customers from participating in the clean energy market – I urge you to act now to pass SB 928 to give all Connecticut energy consumers the ability to choose clean energy. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee, Governor's Office, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and other stakeholders as this bill moves forward.

Thank you.

