

Sierra Club Press Release

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Contact: Refugio Mata, refugio.mata@sierraclub.org or (805) 428-4075

Jim Metropulos, jim.metropulos@sierraclub.org or (916) 715-8217

Legislature to Vote on Groundbreaking Clean Energy Legislation

California Renters, Working Families Not Previously Reached by Homeowner Programs Would Benefit from Set of Bills Aimed at Widening Access to Clean Renewable Energy

SACRAMENTO, CA – Clean energy advocates are urging legislators to pass a slate of clean energy bills – SB 843, SB 1222, and AB 1990 – that are scheduled for a final vote in the California legislature in the coming week. The bills are designed to increase access to local clean energy for working families by creating an innovative program for renters, lowering solar permitting fees, and ensuring that a portion of the rooftop solar installed in the state happens in low income communities. Should they pass, the bills would bring California utilities closer to meet Governor Brown’s clean energy goals of reaching 12,000 megawatts of Renewable Distributed Generation (RDG) by 2020, while bringing much needed jobs and savings to Californians.

“Together, this slate of clean energy bills is a critical step towards ensuring that every Californian has access to local clean energy” said Jim Metropulos, Senior Advocate with the Sierra Club California.

“These new pieces of legislation will not only make it easier for more families to enjoy the savings in their electricity bills that come from the use of clean energy like rooftop solar, but they will also generate tens of thousands jobs for our local economy.”

Sierra Club’s My Generation Campaign is a statewide effort to ensure that every Californian is able to enjoy the access and benefits that come from the use affordable, local clean renewable sources of energy. While thousands in our state are already reaping the benefits of solar, wind, and energy efficiency, there are still too many needless barriers that prevent homeowners and renters from taking part in California’s fast-growing clean energy economy. The slate of bills that the California legislature will consider for a final vote before the session ends on August 31st represents a key milestone in the ongoing efforts of the My Generation campaign to make sure that all Californians are able to enjoy the benefits of producing their own clean energy locally and in the process help reduce our overall reliance on dangerous fossil fuels.

About the bills:

The “Solar for All” legislation, **AB 1990** by Assemblymember Paul Fong, would direct California utilities to purchase renewable energy from clean energy projects built in low-income urban and rural communities. These disadvantaged communities are oftentimes the most vulnerable to the negative impacts from energy generated from dirty fossil fuels and they are not yet seeing the full benefits of transitioning to a clean energy economy. The bill would be a first towards addressing the lack of geographic diversity in solar distribution by establishing 190-megawatt solar cash back or “Feed in

Tariff” (FiT) program for disadvantaged communities in California. AB 1990 also includes a preference for projects that hire local workers that could potentially create 9,000 jobs in these communities hit hard by the recession.

The “Community Solar” bill, **SB 843** by Senator Wolk, would implement a new 2,000 megawatt program that would allow the customers of PG&E, SCE and PG&E utilities the ability to voluntarily buy up to 100% renewable energy from an off-site renewable energy system and give them a credit on their bill for every kilowatt purchased. While rooftop solar is a strong and growing business in California, this program will assist households that can’t participate in current renewable energy programs because (1) they are renters and don’t own their roofs, (2) they are unable to finance the cost of installing a solar system, or (3) their roof is too small or does not receive enough sunlight. It will also help most businesses because they rent or lease their facilities and do not own their own roofs. Local governments, schools, colleges, and the military plan to take advantage of this program by purchasing energy generated from wind, solar, and geothermal through off-site facilities. According to a study commissioned by Vote Solar, SB 843 would lead to the creation of at least 12,000 new jobs in California, \$230 million in tax revenue, and \$7.5 billion in economic activity in the state.

The “Solar Permit Reform” bill, **SB 1222** by Senator Leno, would cap excessive permit fees charged by local governments for residential and commercial rooftop solar systems. Since 2005, the Sierra Club has surveyed the cost of solar permitting fees for both residential and commercial solar PV systems up and down the state of California. Our surveys have found that these fees vary widely for no apparent reason, increasing processing costs for Californians that wish to go solar. Excessive fees and unnecessary burdensome permitting processes are among the top reasons solar PV systems have not achieved price parity with more polluting grid electricity. California’s rooftop solar revolution is integral to the state energy and environmental goals and to the state economy. Permitting reform will provide an even greater economic boost and job growth to the existing solar market.

To read more about the My Generation campaign, visit www.SierraClub.org/MyGeneration

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