

DUKE ENERGY'S SOLAR SCHEME UNDERMINES CAROLINAS ELECTRICITY CUSTOMERS & SOLAR ROOFTOP INDUSTRY

A Duke Energy scheme in South Carolina to stifle the long-sought growth of rooftop solar power is coming to North Carolina. If successful, it would undermine “net metering,” the state requirement that rooftop solar customers be credited for excess power they share with neighbors. Despite Duke’s long-running efforts to thwart rooftop solar, net metering has survived and has gradually allowed customer-owned solar to grow.

The new scheme would greatly limit rooftop solar installations and is consistent with Duke’s puny commitment to renewable energy. The company’s most recent long-term plan projects a massive buildout of new gas-fired power plants (over 50 units) and an increase from 5% renewables now to only 14% by 2035, compared to the 2019 national average of 17.6%.

Based on analysis by NC WARN consulting engineer Bill Powers, a veteran opponent of utility efforts to stifle rooftop solar, here are key points of Duke Energy’s proposal:

1. **Limits solar mostly to affluent customers who install large systems.** An already-bloated fixed charge would more than double, to \$30/month, for households installing solar. Duke says it will consider a plan for low-income customers at an unspecified later date.
2. **Minimizes solar customers’ benefits.** A key incentive payment is available only to households heating their homes with electricity. After a grace period, current solar owners will pay a \$10/month additional fee unless they shift to the new scheme.
3. **Supports the decade-long bogus claim by Duke and the Kochs that “net metering forces the poor to subsidize affluent solar customers.”** Duke claims this scheme *solves* that

fabricated “problem,” while it would actually *reduce* access to solar for low- and fixed-income Carolinians.



4. The technical consultant to several parties supporting the Duke plan totally contradicted the key justification for the settlement. Just weeks after the SC settlement was announced, in sworn written testimony in a separate SC regulatory case, the consultant demonstrated that the system prior to Duke’s meddling worked just fine, stating, “There is not presently a cost shift from solar customers to non-participating ratepayers, and distributed solar is a cost-effective resource for [Duke Energy SC] ratepayers.”

5. Hurts all Carolinians by boosting Duke Energy’s plan to burn more fossil fuels. The growth of rooftop solar reduces grid power demand, which cuts into Duke’s revenues and removes its supposed justification to build over 50 [climate-wrecking, fracked gas-fired power units](#) while constantly raising rates. That’s why Duke keeps backing schemes to limit solar, all while assuring people it’s a “green” corporation.

Emerging evidence continues to support NC WARN’s 2017 [NC Clean Path 2025](#) report, which shows that the best way to provide “solar for all” is via a system-wide approach where all power users share the benefits of solar-plus-storage financed through the statewide power system. Even some monopoly utilities are adopting similar approaches. Let’s make solar and climate protection work for all state residents.

Once again, Duke Energy seeks to limit renewables in order to justify burning more fossil fuels while pretending it’s green.

—NC WARN consulting engineer Bill Powers

- 6. Ignores market trends showing solar installations are now commonly coupled with on-site battery storage.** Duke says it will consider altering its scheme to include an incentive for customers to add batteries – at an unspecified later date.
- 7. Penalizes affluent solar customers, too,** by switching from the current, straightforward retail net metering to a complicated scheme in which customers are credited different amounts depending on the time of day they feed excess power to the grid. Some times of day would pay substantially less than the current retail value, and the highest credit would be earned from 6-9 pm, when very little solar is produced.
- 8. Undermines rooftop solar in other states.** Other utilities fighting the growth of solar across the U.S. are using Duke’s solar scheme – particularly the \$30/month fixed fee – as a way to further bash solar in other states.