

## **NC WARN**

NOTE TO EDITORS  
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### **Hearing Proves Duke Energy's Trying to Kill NC Solar**

*Duke already gumming up solar projects – closing only 2 percent of proposals – and now seeks to worsen contracting rules*

Durham, NC – At a four-day hearing on large-scale solar power last week at the NC Utilities Commission, witnesses from solar companies made clear that Duke Energy is already severely harming them, that the utility wields heavy and punitive control, and that its new proposals could destroy their industry in this state.

The evidentiary hearing amplified NC WARN's concerns outlined in our "Duke Hates Solar" TV and print ads ([ncwarn.org/dukehatessolar](http://ncwarn.org/dukehatessolar)). This is part of a national fight that's now playing out here, resulting from rapid solar power growth that has cut into profits and threatens the business model of old-school, monopoly utilities.

The Utilities Commission must now choose whether to allow Duke Energy to choke out North Carolina's once-growing solar power business.

Not only is Duke seeking to lower the price paid for juice from large-scale solar projects, but the Charlotte-based corporation has been stalling contract and interconnection negotiations with project developers, who complain that it takes many months or even years to finalize deals with Duke – if they are ever completed at all.

Commissioners must adopt rules to stop Duke from continuing to slow-walk negotiations on large contracts, and prevent the utility from worsening its treatment of solar companies. Among its worst proposals, Duke wants to lower the project size requiring a standard contract from 5 megawatts to 100 kilowatts – which would allow it to further delay new projects by haggling over all facets of a solar proposal, making it all but impossible for solar developers to obtain financing.

Other highlights of the hearing include:

*> Large-scale solar developers proposed 2,310 megawatts to Duke's two NC utilities in 63 different projects over the past four years, but Duke awarded only three deals totaling 56 MW.*

*> A Duke witness admitted during cross-examination that solar now makes up under one percent of its generation capacity in its NC service areas – refuting Duke's deceptive PR claims.*

*> A Strata Solar official said Duke officials immediately threatened to stop negotiating projects with Strata after he suggested in pre-filed testimony, and to a reporter, that Duke is difficult to work with.*

*> Solar company witnesses emphasized that Duke – as a monopoly, thus their only NC customer – exercises tight control over negotiations, and they cannot risk alienating Duke by seeking arbitration over a failed or slowed contract negotiation.*

*> Solar companies testified that utilities in western states – and even TVA, which has 20-year standard rate contracts up to 20 MW – are much easier to work with than Duke Energy.*

Outside the hearing, one solar developer said "Duke is going all out [to] kill the NC solar industry." A decisive commission order might happen as early as September. (There is a second part to the docket later this fall, but it looks like that first ruling could be controlling.)

Also, Duke plans to use this case to slash the price paid to residential and small business solar customers later this year.\*

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\* See more in NC WARN's new "Duke Hates Solar" white paper at <http://tinyurl.com/q64y66l>.

*Now in its 26th year, NC WARN's mission urgency is to induce Charlotte-based Duke Energy – now the world's largest corporate utility – to make a strong shift to clean, affordable energy in order to stem pollution's damage to communities, and to help avert climate tipping points and ongoing rate hikes.*