



## PRESS RELEASE

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## Georgia solar industry group introduces Solar Bill of Rights

**1/30/11 Atlanta, GA** The Georgia Solar Energy Association, energized by the consistent growth of renewable energy and new reports indicating that Georgia ranks among the top U.S. states for solar development potential, introduced its Solar Bill of Rights last week at an industry meeting.

After an impressive 2010, which saw the Public Service Commission double the amount of purchased solar, and the demand for new residential and commercial solar projects exceed legislative predictions by a wide margin, the industry is poised to make big gains in 2011. "The time is right for solar energy in Georgia" declared incoming Georgia Solar Board Chairman, Doug Beebe, whose company finances large renewable energy projects. "What we've seen happen with the Entertainment Industry Investment Act can easily take place within the renewable energy sector. Solar can create lasting, permanent jobs which will supply the state with long term revenue growth, both in property values and taxes. The technology is proven and reliable. We have more than enough sun. The cost has been steadily declining and our water resources are preserved with solar." The Solar Bill of Rights takes on the main obstacles to growth here in Georgia. "We need to protect solar jobs from continuing to move to states like North Carolina and Tennessee, where utilities work in partnership with small business." said Beebe. "We look forward to a successful legislative year"

### **The Solar Bill of Rights**

**Remove the aggregate cap on state-tax incentives for installation of solar and clean energy projects in Georgia and rename it the Clean Energy Investment Act. (o.c.g.a.48.7.29.14)**

Why: The results of the Entertainment Industry Investment act (signed in 2005) are unmistakable: a huge increase in jobs, local economy spending and dramatic gains made in attracting business to Georgia. Jobs are being lost to states like TN and NC with more favorable state tax credits for Clean Energy. Despite the state's current budget crisis a state tax incentive program will have a net positive impact on the state revenue stream, through a resulting increase in real property values, jobs in manufacturing production & installation, sales taxes collected, , and reduction in unemployment.

**Remove the restrictions (caps) on the size of systems for residential solar projects (currently 10KW) and for commercial projects (currently 100KW) and raise the limit on the required amount that a utility company must purchase. (currently .002 of annual peak demand) (o.c.g.a 46.3.56)**

Why: Caps on large scale commercial solar projects discourage serious financial investment. Without capital financing, large corporate investors look outside the state for development projects. The current requirement

placed on electric service providers is so small as to be completely in contrast with the intent of the original law, as defined as 1. To encourage private investment in renewable energy, 2. Stimulate the economic Growth of Georgia and 3. Enhance the continued diversification of energy sources in Georgia.

**Establish a uniform set of statewide standards and guidelines for the installation of solar projects in residential subdivisions and condominium projects.**

Why: As with any new technology, the installation of solar projects presents unique challenges that may require external changes to roofing, plumbing and electrical systems in addition to maintaining exposure to sunlight through a potential easement. Florida's Solar and Wind Access Law forbids ordinances, deed restrictions, covenants, declarations or similar binding agreements from prohibiting the use of solar collectors to avoid the burden of excess regulations from various homeowners associations to municipalities which inhibit investment and industry growth.

**Establish a uniform set of statewide standards for power grid interconnection and net metering by all utilities. (o.c.g.a 46.3.2)**

Why: In 1973, the Georgia General Assembly adopted the Georgia Territorial Electric Service Act, establishing assigned territories for Georgia utilities, in which they granted designated utilities the exclusive privilege to serve all residential, small business and existing large commercial and industrial customer s. As originally intended this provided ratepayers with an orderly means to purchase electricity form a public utility and prevented the duplication or overlap of distribution lines. However, because the act was written well before legislators contemplated today's advances in renewable energy, Georgia has an outdated law that prevents customers from freely opting to exercise the option to choose affordable, renewal energy generation technology. The act must be improved to make it clear that preventing any ratepayer from exercising this choice is beyond the jurisdiction of the act, such as it currently is in almost all 50 states.

**Remove local ad-valorem property taxes for solar equipment.**

Why: With real estate on life-support in Georgia, we need to do whatever is necessary to support the industry and hold up property values across the board. . Realty Trac reports that real estate values increase when solar is installed however local municipalities have learned to "game the system". Unlike a new roof, permits pulled for solar installation can trigger a reassessment placing an undue burden on the homeowner trying to invest his property and improve the stability of the neighborhood. Reassessments and ad-valorem property taxes discourage homeownership. When utilities upgrade the grid or pipeline, that cost is not borne by an individual homeowner in a local municipality, so a similar standard should be applied to any and all power/utility upgrades. Real anecdotal stories abound about how local governments have taken advantage of this unequal application of the tax law.

**About the Georgia Solar Energy Association:**

The Georgia Solar Energy Association (501 c-3) leads the statewide effort to promote the economic and environmental benefits of solar energy through education, advocacy and industry support. Our members are working together to make Georgia a leader in sustainable energy and green job growth.