



For Immediate Release
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Press Release

Clean Energy Jobs to Decrease; Solar Energy Costs to Increase; Electrical Ratepayers to Suffer Higher Costs under Anti-Solar Legislation Now at Governor's Desk

NJ Solar Energy Businesses, Electrical Contractors, & Solar Workers

Call on Governor Corzine to VETO S.2340/A.3372

Trenton, NJ – A coalition of solar energy businesses, electrical contractors, independent electricians, and solar energy workers joined together today at the State House to call on Governor Jon Corzine to **veto** legislation (A.3372/S.2340) the group says will not only increase costs for ratepayers, but cost the state hundreds of new green energy jobs as well.

The coalition characterized the bill as an “oppressive new mandate” on all renewable energy and energy efficiency installation projects in New Jersey, with the sole exception of residential projects, by imposing New Jersey Department of Labor “prevailing wage” law on those projects. Prevailing wage is synonymous with union wage rates and often forces businesses to hire union labor and sub-contractors at additional cost.

“This legislation must be vetoed by Governor Corzine. It is anti-solar because it will result in increasing the labor costs of solar by 180%. It contradicts the Governor’s and Legislature’s policies of growing solar and reducing global warming gases. If signed, this bill will increase a solar system’s total cost increasing it by as much as 30% . In effect, this will kill many contracts and discourage the fragile private investment. The end result will be that solar energy will wither and clean energy jobs will suffer. As a result of this bill, solar energy has cloudy future in the State of New Jersey”, said Dennis Wilson, Vice President-NJ for the Mid-Atlantic Solar Energy Industries Association (MSEIA) based in central NJ. The organization is the solar trade association for solar energy companies, manufacturers, and solar project developers in NJ, Pennsylvania, and Delaware since 1997.

A.3372/S.2340 applies to all energy efficiency projects along with renewable projects such as wind, solar, and biomass. The legislation pertains to any project that receives any “approval” or any authorization by the NJ Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU). Currently, the legislation is so broad that it includes energy efficiency upgrades for non-profits such as churches, and small businesses.

Joe Hovanec, Jr., Government Affairs Director of the NJ Electrical Contractors Association (NJECA) and a leader in the national Independent Electrical Contractors said, “90% of the licensed electricians in NJ are not union. This bill indirectly maneuvers energy efficiency and renewable energy business to union halls. Why should 10% of NJ electricians receive this kind of favoritism? Small businesses and houses of worship that wish to be energy efficient will be less likely to do so because of the union wage standard in this legislation. Larger commercial businesses will have to pay 100% - 120% more in labor for energy efficiency retrofits. This discourages energy efficiency and demonstrates how bad this policy would be for NJ citizens”.

Pat Murray, the owner of Solar Home Energy Solutions based in Mt. Laurel, NJ and in the leadership of MSEIA noted, “ It is not in the public interest, or the interest of promoting energy efficiency or renewable energy, for the state to force union wages on private transactions between parties. Furthermore, renewable energy projects “approved” by the NJBPU are not funded by NJ taxpayers, but by ratepayers.”

“This is a back-door approach by unions to take-over renewable energy and energy efficiency work in NJ, and will result in a net loss of clean energy jobs. Solar energy remains expensive and this is the wrong time and wrong sector to be forcing union wages on growing industry that has such an important role”, Murray said. He showed a union pay scale from two union halls in NJ, demonstrating that prevailing wage would result in exactly the same rates as the union halls in Atlantic County, a 185% to \$70.77/hr - \$91.75/hr.

“We offer fair wages, based on experience and the type of job, but the wages this legislation will force us to pay, reflect not fair wages, but wages needed for union hall business staff, other dues, and for political action committee donations to legislators. This hurts the growth of solar energy and the market will not be able withstand this mandate. A 10% increase can easily result in cancelled contracts and therefore, clean energy job layoffs will occur”, Murray added.

Jay Rowe, the NJECA sergeant of arms and an electrical contractor, said: “The NJ Electrical Contractors Association represents 440 electrical contractor businesses. Our contractors want the opportunity to compete fairly for renewable energy and energy efficiency work. This legislation penalizes non-union electricians, and creates unfair competitive advantage. The Governor must show courage and conviction and veto this bill – not be held hostage to the I.B.E.W that now wants to claim a new economic sector as their own and suppress competition”.

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