

Chairman Paul Tonko
Subcommittee on Energy and Climate Change
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member John Shimkus
Subcommittee on Energy and Climate Change
2217 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Hearing on "Building a 100 Percent Clean Economy: Opportunities for an Equitable, Low-Carbon Recovery."

Dear Chairman Tonko and Ranking Member Shimkus,

On behalf of the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA), I want to thank you for your leadership and the aggressive work you have undertaken for the American people during the 116th Congress to create a 100 percent clean economy by 2050. As the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change prepares to discuss various policy solutions at today's hearing, I want to share with you the many ways the solar industry is coping with the COVID-19 pandemic and how, despite setbacks, our industry's workforce is continuing to build aggressively towards the 100 percent clean energy future the nation desperately needs.

The Solar+ Decade

The 2020s will be the decade where the solar industry, alongside partners in storage, grid modernization and other technologies work to make solar energy account for 20% of U.S. electricity generation by 2030. The Solar+ Decade represents not just the immense amount of solar installations that must be deployed in order to prevent the irreversible effects of climate change, but also an opportunity to create hundreds of thousands of jobs and equitably distribute the benefits of the clean energy economy to communities that have too often been left behind. If we meet these goals, 600,000 Americans could have a career in the solar industry, and we could add \$345 billion to the economy. These benefits can and must reach communities that have been disproportionately harmed by both climate change and the pandemic.

While the solar industry is still on target to reach our 2030 goals, the COVID crisis has dramatically impacted our industry. Prior to this crisis, the solar workforce was expected to grow to 294,000 Americans this year. Analysis from SEIA shows that instead of adding more than 50,000 jobs during the first half of the year as we originally projected, the industry lost more than 72,000 workers. Tens of thousands of solar projects have been cancelled or postponed, putting billions of dollars of economic investment on hold. In addition, companies continue to see constraints on tax equity markets, a major component to financing solar projects.

SEIA also knows that addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice issues must be a priority as we navigate the clean energy transformation. SEIA is working with its members and board of directors to ensure this important work is incorporated into all aspects of our industry. We continue to develop best practices and research in this area, and environmental justice and equity are increasingly becoming a focal point for our policy priorities. Any federal policy aiming to address climate change must simultaneously address the socioeconomic and systemic challenges faced by communities of color and other marginalized groups. As the nation endures the pandemic and some of its biggest impacts of climate change to date, the solar industry is ready to play a leading role in the development of these policies.

Smart policies can put us on the path to 20% solar by 2030 while also making solar electricity cost savings accessible to every family and small business; enabling the United States to completely decarbonize the electricity sector.

SEIA has identified the following policy areas as beneficial drivers for creating a strong, equitable recovery:

- Adjust the Investment Tax Credit: In order for solar companies to lift us from this economic nosedive, we must make changes to the solar investment tax credit (ITC). In the immediate term, we should establish a temporary 100% direct pay program for the ITC, which will ensure steady financing in the midst of the crisis and provide much needed certainty. In addition, we should delay the current phase down schedule of the ITC and push out critical deadlines associated with construction start dates and placed-in-service dates.
- Modernize the grid and invest in transmission: Electricity infrastructure investments are a critical component of the long-term growth prospects of clean energy. To do this, we can direct FERC to evaluate interregional transmission planning to account for the power market's move toward renewables and allocate federal funding for microgrid projects in remote or underserved communities. In addition, federal investments in transmission projects that transport clean renewable energy to load centers, upgrades to existing interregional transmission lines, tax credits for regionally significant transmission lines, and streamlining the interconnection process for large-scale solar will accelerate clean energy deployment.
- Expand access to solar for all Americans: Ensuring low-cost electricity access for all communities, especially those hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, should be a key focus of any long-term infrastructure or stimulus effort. SEIA supports the creation of federal grant programs for installing distributed solar energy systems, including small community solar projects, and expanding federal funding for rural energy projects, including modernization and investment on tribal lands, among other possible solutions.
- Streamline permitting and inspection for clean energy: Streamlining the permitting and inspection process for solar projects could save homeowners and businesses thousands of dollars. For example, expanding federal support and funding for the Solar Automated Permit Processing (SolarAPP) program and providing additional infrastructure project permitting proposals, such as FAST 41, can help accelerate growth in the clean energy sector.
- Train the next generation of a diverse solar workforce: It is imperative that the solar workforce reflects the diversity of our nation and that solar job opportunities are available in all communities. SEIA supports expanding U.S. Department of Energy funded training programs, including initiatives that recruit women and people of color to careers in the clean energy sector, as well as federal grants to support on-the-job training or apprenticeship programs. We also support continued support for programs, such as Solar Ready Vets, that assist military veterans and transitioning service members find careers in the solar industry.
- Bringing clean, affordable power to public schools and non-profits.

SEIA also supports the development of a number of other policies to stimulate the solar economy such as:

- Authorizing federal agencies to enter into long-term contracts for energy from renewables and cogeneration facilities;
- Tax credits for investments in advanced energy manufacturing;
- Tax incentives based on emissions output profiles of energy technologies;
- Clean Renewable Energy Bonds for renewable energy projects, including solar; establishing a federal Green Bank;
- DOE funding earmarked for research, development, and demonstration projects;

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- Funding for energy generation, transmission, and energy efficiency projects on military facilities; and funding to build, repair and renovate federal buildings to increase energy efficiency, including installation of solar energy.

SEIA is proud of the contribution the solar industry has made towards decarbonizing our electricity system. With the right policy support, we are confident that the Solar+ Decade will be fruitful for the American economy, and American workers and small businesses in every community. Thank you for your consideration of these policies and continued dialogue with the solar industry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Abigail Ross Hopper".

Abigail Ross Hopper, Esq.
President & CEO