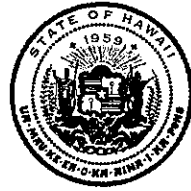


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The Senate

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ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT

VICE CHAIR
TRANSPORTATION, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

MEMBER
PUBLIC SAFETY AND MILITARY AFFAIRS
JUDICIARY AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

Hawaiian Electric's Solar Moratorium

Statement by Senator Mike Gabbard Chair, Committee on Energy and Environment

Prohibiting Hawai'i's homeowners and businesses from installing solar energy systems on the islands of Hawai'i, Maui, Lana'i, and Moloka'i is not in the public interest. In fact, it is directly at odds with the interests of the families and small business owners that my colleagues and I represent.

Today's solar and other types of renewable energy systems being installed directly on homes and businesses are a glimpse into a future that is not far off. These efforts by thousands of individuals committing to a clean energy future are a crucial part of the solution to Hawai'i's energy problems and should not be discouraged by our utilities.

Hawai'i's energy security situation is dire – we are incredibly vulnerable to oil price spikes and supply disruptions that are charged to utility customers, who must simply pay their bill no matter how high it rises. Furthermore, as an island chain, we are exposed to sea level rise and other consequences of global warming that threaten the way of life that we are so fortunate to enjoy. If Hawai'i – which has so much to lose - cannot move decisively to address its own impact on climate change we cannot credibly expect others to do the same.

Meanwhile, in these challenging economic times when Hawai'i needs jobs more than ever, the solar industry is creating green jobs for working families. It is one of the few industries that have survived the economic downturn relatively unscathed. There is no doubt that Hawaiian Electric's proposal will put solar contractors out of business and this is simply unacceptable in the current environment.

On a more personal level, my district has world-class solar potential and at the same time folks are paying as much as \$600 per month for electricity for their homes. I'm concerned that Oahu could possibly be next in line for this PV ban, and I'm not willing to stand by and watch Hawaiian Electric remove the one off-ramp that these families have to reduce their electricity bills.

As Chair of the Senate's Energy and Environment Committee, it's clear to me that our efforts to convert Hawai'i to renewable energy cannot succeed if we allow the utilities to have veto power over which plans and projects get selected. The Hawaiian Electric companies must begin living up to their responsibilities as public utilities and stop acting in opposition to the interests of the citizens of our state.

Senate District 19

Waialeale, Village Park, Royal Kunia, Makakilo, Kapolei, Kalaeloa, Honokai Hale, and portions of Ko 'Olina & Waivahua