



View of Lake Champlain from Ethan Allen Park Pinnacle (Richard Hibbert)

Green Mountains, Blue Water

- Welcome VTIPL's New Coordinator
- Update on H.289
- Thoughts on H.289
- Expanding Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard
- Urge Congress to Pass Farm Bill
- "Energy Incentive Calculator"

Vermont Interfaith Power and Light Welcomes Our New Coordinator

**=====

After a thorough search process, during which we received applications from a number of highly qualified and capable individuals for the part-time position of Coordinator for VT IPL, our board offered the position to Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder. She has accepted our offer and is ready to get started leading us in our work. She sends greetings to us and looks forward to our shared efforts to address the Climate Crisis as a spiritual concern:



"Dear VT Interfaith Power & Light Community,

Greetings!

I'm so pleased to be joining you in this good work of faith-based Earth stewardship as the new Coordinator for VT IPL.

With my background in interfaith studies and nonprofit communications work, as well as my writing career which has focused on relationship to place as sacred, I'm very much looking forward to continuing to learn and grow alongside Vermont's faith communities who are advocating for the places and landscapes we all share.

A bit about me: I grew up in the Great Plains of Nebraska and Oklahoma and found my way to New England for graduate school. After receiving my masters of theological studies in comparative religion at Harvard Divinity School, my work and writing became focused on the confluence of relationship to place with experiences of the sacred. I served as Communications Coordinator for Kairos Earth in Canterbury, NH, from 2014-2016. I then worked as a staff writer and editor for Emergence Magazine from 2017-2022. I'm the mother of a wonderful, creative, and increasingly opinionated three-year-old and the author of the forthcoming book MOTHER, CREATURE, KIN.

My husband and I fell in love with Vermont during our time living in Jeffersonville a few years ago and we've maintained our connection to this great state through our family camp in Johnson (which is probably our daughter's favorite place on earth!). This summer, we're moving from Portland, Maine to Rochester, Vermont, and we can't wait.

I'm looking forward to meeting and getting to know you as I begin my time with VT IPL!

Warmly,
Chelsea Steinauer-Scudder

Update on H.289

This week, the Senate Natural Resources and Energy committee held a special Monday committee hearing to debate and vote out the modernized Renewable Energy Standard bill (H.289) and did so on a 4-1 committee vote. The bill will now move through the Senate Finance and Appropriations committees before it goes to a full Senate vote.

Other priority climate bills that are also moving through House committees as they work their way to the floor include House Ways and Means passing out the Flood Safety Act (S.213) and both the House Judiciary and Ways and Means committees voting out the Climate Change Super Fund (S.259).

Call to Action

Modernizing the Vermont Renewable Energy Standard can and should be done this year, but we need to make sure that all members of the Senate know that it's a priority. Please take a moment to [contact your Senator\(s\)](#) to urge them to support modernizing the Vermont Renewable Energy Standard

so that Vermont can have 100% clean energy and more in-state and regional renewables!

Thank you for all you do,
Johanna Miller & Lauren Hierl
Vermont Natural Resources Council
Vermont Conservation Voters



Image from Vecteezy

Thoughts on H.289

From VT IPL Board Member Richard Butz: On 4/25 I reached out to Ben Wash, Climate and Energy Program Director for VPIRG, regarding H.289 the RES (Renewable Energy Standard)

because I have been hearing that it gutted net metering. Here is his reply, submitted with permission.

“Thanks for reaching out. It sounds like you’ve been getting bad information about the bill, and I’m sorry to hear that’s the case. Net metering is not being eliminated under the bill. Existing net metering systems are not being affected in any way by the bill. On-site net metering is not being affected in any way by the bill. If anything, raising the requirements for new renewables, including new renewables in Vermont, will make it (at least somewhat) less likely the PUC will reduce net metering rates going forward by as much as they would have otherwise, given they have in the past cited the low requirements under Tier 2 as a rationale for reductions to the rates for new net metering systems. The one change to net metering in the bill is the elimination of off-site (or “virtual”) group net metering for systems that apply for a CPG after the end of this year (or the end of next year for systems being built to serve affordable

housing). Systems that apply for a CPG by the end of this year can still be used for off-site group net metering. And the bill requires a report to come back to the legislature on the design for a successor program, which we (and REV, VNRC, 350VT, etc.) and many legislators have made clear we intend to push for next session.

As to why we're supporting the bill even though it has that one change to net metering, the short version is it's going to require a boatload more new renewable energy to get built, and that will have an enormous impact on climate pollution (our estimate is that it will be the equivalent of taking 160-250,000 cars off the road by 2035, with significantly more benefit in the late 2030s and beyond)."



Further Thoughts on H.289

Guest editorial: H.289
– Good intentions on renewables but one big flaw April 25, 2024 Addison Independent
By David Bittersdorf



The Vermont General Assembly — in attempt to move the state to 100% renewable energy — is making changes to how the state’s utilities buy energy. Within the next couple of weeks, the Senate Natural Resources Committee will consider H. 289, a bill to require the state’s utilities to buy 100% renewable energy.

This is known as the Renewable Energy Standard law. States around Vermont have been updating their own laws in this area and Vermont is following suit as we all take part in the transformation from a fossil fuel economy to a one powered by renewables.

The bill has already passed the House and has strong support from utilities and the environmental community.

As someone who has spent his life promoting and building the renewable energy system in Vermont, I am in complete agreement that 100% renewable energy is a must.

However, there is a major flaw in H.289 that threatens Vermont renewable energy jobs and the ability of Vermonters to participate in the benefits of community solar power projects. The bill eliminates a tried and true mechanism called “group net metering.” It sounds wonky, but group net metering is the only meaningful way in which Vermont customers who do not have their own solar sites can have direct access to solar energy.

Elimination of this mechanism will drive Vermont solar companies out of state to New York and other nearby states. It will stall in-state development of solar and take away the benefits of solar to affordable housing developers, schools and others.

Imagine a housing developer building a project. They want to power the project with solar energy. But the roof isn't big enough to hold enough solar panels to do the job.

Group net metering allows the developer to partner with a Vermont solar company to build a solar project elsewhere in the state and buy the energy from that project at a discount. H.289 would eliminate that program.

With so much going on in the world and the H.289 bill over 40 pages long, we are concerned that many Vermonters, and perhaps even some of our conscientious legislators, have missed this very negative part of the bill. More than anything else, the transformation to renewable energy requires that projects of all types and sizes be built. We need all kinds of projects, not just the speculative utility-based projects outside Vermont.

H.289 takes away one of Vermont's most successful programs and replaces it with nothing. While utilities have expressed cost-related concerns about your direct access to Vermont-generated solar, net metering rates have in fact come down for newer projects and are fully regulated by the Vermont Public Utility Commission.

This is a critical issue for our Vermont energy future.

I sent a letter to the Chair of the Senate Natural Resources Committee (to read it, head online tinyurl.com/blittersdorf-bray-letter). It has been a decades-long effort to secure your direct right to purchase solar energy to meet your needs. I hope you will join me and contact your Vermont Senators today. Their contact information can be found online at Vermont Legislative Senate Contacts.

Vermont needs a community-based solar energy program for everyone. I sincerely hope the Senate Natural Resources committee will amend the bill to

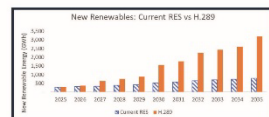
preserve group net metering before passing the overall legislation. H. 289 has the right goals. But getting rid of community based solar programs is not the way to go.

Editor's note: Dave Blittersdorf is the president of All Earth Renewables in Bristol.

Expanding Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard**

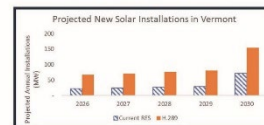
Expanding Vermont's Renewable Energy Standard

H.289 more than **quadruples** the amount of new renewables delivered to Vermonters, helping the transition away from natural gas and oil.



It's estimated that H.289 will eliminate as much climate pollution as taking up to **240,000 cars** off the road by 2035.

When New England needs **peak power**, that electricity usually comes from **natural gas**. That's why every time a new renewable is brought online, it **decreases** our reliance on burning natural gas for electricity.



x2

H.289 **nearly doubles** the amount of electricity Vermont utilities are required to get from new renewables here in Vermont.



Vermont is currently **48th in the nation** in the share of our energy we produce in-state, which means **we export** the vast majority of the environmental consequences of energy production to others.

H.289 reduces our **dependence on the 64 baseload fossil fuel plants** that supply New England's electricity, **none of which are in Vermont**.



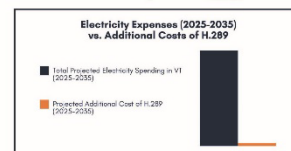
62% of these plants are located in communities that have a higher than average share of **low-income households, people of color, or children under the age of 5**.

65% are located in communities with a greater than average share of people of color.

60% are in communities with a higher than average share of low income residents.

88% are in communities with a higher than average share of kids under 5.

H.289 would put Vermont on track to achieve **100% renewable electricity by 2035** - **faster than any other state except for Rhode Island**.



Despite these dramatic increases in the amount and pace of renewable energy deployment and use, the bill is projected to increase total spending on electricity in Vermont over the next decade by only 5% or less. Why? Because even the Department of Public Service predicts the price of new renewables is going to keep dropping, making them a more affordable way to meet new demand than fossil fuels.

From IPL & Creation Justice Ministries

Urge Congress to Pass the Farm Bill

Far too many of our neighbors struggle with hunger and the ability to put food on their tables. Some communities have no access to fresh, healthy options—while elsewhere, food goes to waste.



Climate change and hunger are related. As global temperatures and sea levels rise, extreme weather conditions make it difficult for farmers to grow food and for communities in need to access food. Furthermore, industrial agriculture practices lead to more harmful greenhouse gas emissions, making our food systems even more vulnerable.

Thankfully, we have an opportunity to change course. This year, Congress will authorize the Farm Bill—a package of legislation passed every five years. The Farm Bill determines what food is grown in the U.S., how it's grown, and how affordable it is. It also determines international food aid.

Interfaith Power & Light is joining together with Creation Justice Ministries to urge Congress to pass a Farm Bill that works for all people.

A Farm Bill for both people and the environment could ensure a future where all people have reliable access to healthy food, while prioritizing sustainable farming practices, and dignified treatment for those who work the land.

We're calling on lawmakers to:

- invest in climate-smart agriculture,
- invest in small and medium-scale farms while supporting the transition away from hazardous industrial farming practices, and
- support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (through measures such as the reduction of food waste)

By supporting:

- the Agriculture Resilience Act (ARA)
- the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Improvement Act
- the Opportunities for Fairness in Farming (OFF) Act, and
- protecting the \$20 billion designated in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for climate smart agriculture.

[Click here to take action and contact Congress](#)



Energy Incentive Calculator

From "Vermont Digger," read about a new tool to help Vermonters electrify their homes. Read the article [here](#)

Thank you for supporting Vermont Interfaith Power & Light. We are grateful to collaborate with you on behalf of the human community and all of Creation.



Colchester Pond (Photo by Paul Chevette)

[**Donate Now**](#)



©2024 Vermont Interfaith Power and Light | PO Box 3095, Burlington, Vermont 05408