



# P E R S P E C T I V E S



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## “Jabberwocky”

*PG&E and Edison are at it again!*

Investor-Owned Utilities (“Utilities”) are plotting to kill California’s solar program. Apparently, avarice, and the ability to get away with causing 85 percent of area lost in recent forest fires in California, are not enough, and they are now coming up with ways to dramatically reduce all new solar installations in California.

Can you believe that sentence? It is hard to express our shock at the magnitude of this solar crisis at a time when civilization’s very survival is being threatened by accelerating climate change. The Utilities’ unholy shared monopoly has become so bold that they are now proposing to unwind California’s Net Energy Metering (“NEM”) program in an unconscionable “profit grab” that could set solar adoption back by decades, and by negative example, across the country as well. How to describe such farcical financial scheming? The best word is “Jabberwocky.”

Best known for “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”, Lewis Carroll published a sequel entitled “Through the Looking-Glass” shortly thereafter in 1871. The book’s premise is simple: Alice wonders what reality would be like on the other side of the mirror. In pursuit of this reverse image, she jumps through her reflection and stumbles upon a poem written in “mirror writing” that can only be deciphered and read by holding it up to a mirror. The moral of the story: some things can only be “read” if you read them in reverse to discover what is really being said.

Such is the duplicitous nonsense that the Utilities want us to believe is the “logic” behind a proposed solar tax aimed at unfairly penalizing most solar rooftop owners unless they are very rich. Alice was living in a dream state—but unfortunately, we’re not, so we have to deal with this threat head-on.

Currently, California has a “Net Metering” statute that allows rooftop solar owners the ability to send excess power to the grid at a retail price equal to what the Utilities pay themselves for energy. Under a proposed CPUC decision issued in December, existing and potential rooftop solar owners will be assessed a fixed charge of \$8/KW of system capacity, regardless of whether the energy generated is actually exported to the grid. This charge is also retroactive, undermining the economic feasibility of purchases made years ago by early adopters.

Such a fundamental reversal of existing policy could only come about with the passive acceptance of Governor Newsom, and any readers who know him should call at once and let him know that this proposed regulation by his Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) will produce a political firestorm which he may not survive.

Over 650 separate environmental and “good government” groups, our congressional Delegation, business leaders, municipalities, etc. have already weighed in.

According to a statement by Save California Solar, a coalition made up of more than 600 diverse organizations, here’s what’s at stake:

*“Despite the overwhelming popularity of rooftop solar in California and more than 120,000 public comments submitted in support of net metering, the CPUC proposed a giveaway to investor-owned utilities that would boost utility profits at the expense of energy consumers, family-supporting jobs and California’s clean energy future. Solar advocates around the state are disappointed the CPUC fell for the utility profit grab by proposing the highest solar penalty fees in the nation and drastically reducing the credit solar consumers receive for selling the excess energy they produce to their neighbors.”*

All of you Tesla fans should also know that the company is working hard to “Stop the Solar Tax.” Sammy Roth at the LA Times also has a great explainer on the subject titled, “Everything You need to know about California’s Plan to Slash Solar Incentives.”

So, what do you need to know? The CPUC is planning a monthly “solar penalty fee” of \$8/kW (an added \$57/month for average solar installs, but much higher for larger installations) going forward, and retroactively. Should the law go into effect, even with a proposed partial credit of \$15/month for the first 10 years, the deal stinks!

Should this proposed decision be adopted by the CPUC, California would have the worst solar tax of any state in the nation! We, as early adopters who put solar on our roofs are supposed to be “grandfathered” against this type of ex post facto tax which will indefinitely be about \$80/month for larger houses. In addition, although they will continue to charge 19¢/kWh to us for Utility supplied energy, we will be forced to sell any sunshine excess for less than 5¢/kWh, instead of the current better, though still miserly, 15¢/kWh. Those bandits! Forcing us to receive even less so they can mark up the solar energy we generate by 400-500 percent when they sell it to our neighbors.

Here’s how the Executive Director of the California Solar & Storage Association (CLSSA), Bernadette Del Chiaro, summarized this “clean energy and jobs disaster” (her words):

*“With this proposal, California would abandon its long-held position as a clean energy leader, threatening the jobs of tens of thousands of hard-working men and women who provide clean, reliable energy for millions of consumers today. Governor Newsom needs to clean this mess up and get California back on track as a solar leader.”*

Here’s how Abigail Ross Hopper, President of the Solar Energy Industries Association (the largest US national solar trade association) summarized it:

*“The only winners today are the Utilities, which will make more profits at the expense of their ratepayers. We urge Governor Newsom to act quickly to change this decision — at risk are 65,000 solar jobs, the security of our electricity grid, and the health of California residents and our planet.”*

There is so much on the line and everyone who uses electricity should be shining our communal flashlight on this mega Utilities gift.

So where is the “jabberwocky”? Simple: the “rationale” for this giant heist is that the poor won’t be able to pay for the grid if everyone puts solar on their roofs. What a crock of nonsense. Universal adoption of solar by all customers will save so much money to the point that the poor, renters, and all energy users can be subsidized indefinitely, and our utility bills will still go down! That’s “mirror logic” of the first order. Read the Utilities/CPUC rationale yourself and you’ll see that it’s all jabberwocky.

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