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To: [Lee Eng Tan](#)
Subject: Request for Comments - Solar Energy
Date: Tuesday, June 23, 2015 4:50:12 PM

As the Chairman of the Florida Council for Safe Communities I have some serious reservations regarding the development of solar technologies in Florida. While I strongly encourage the quest for energy independence, and support the vision that alternative energy sources could be the wave of the future, I believe that we should proceed with extreme caution when supporting unproven initiatives.

The Public Service Commission serves as Florida's regulators. You are the best line of defense in protecting our residents from fraud and unnecessary utility rate increases. We must be very cautious not to get stuck subsidizing an industry that has a track record for over-promising and under-delivering.

Solar companies are notorious for preying on low income and elderly residents with false advertising and fear mongering. The claims that solar power equals electric rate decreases are both irresponsible and unsubstantiated. There have been several cases in recent memory where solar companies promised great things, and fell way short of the mark.

Multiple states have filed class action lawsuits (specifically homeowners in Louisiana and California), and I recently read that two solar companies in Arizona were found guilty of fraud (story here: <http://www.utilitydive.com/news/two-arizona-solar-companies-admit-fraud/371476/>). Florida has experienced our fair share of solar power failures. Two short years ago, Blue Chip presented solar panels with counterfeit Underwriter Laboratories labels and the company went belly up. Central Florida homeowners lost thousands of dollars, and taxpayers paid the bill in the form of state and federal taxpayer subsidies (story here: http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2013-07-13/news/os-bluechip-solar-company-auction-20130712_1_solar-panels-solar-company-safety).

Safety hazards are another issue. Roof-mounted solar panels create a number of concerns for firefighters. The panels can block water from reaching the roof in the event of a house fire; they can present electrocution hazards when water contacts the damaged panels; and they have been known to compromise the structural integrity of a roof, which makes it more likely to collapse during a fire.

While a common initial claim is that solar energy will offer electric rate decreases, more often than not the rates increase. Florida's ratepayers must be protected from unnecessary rate increases. When we artificially subsidize an energy market in an attempt to promote an initiative like solar energy, the taxpayer ultimately loses. Programs that manufacture a market rather than allowing the free market to create a demand for solar energy will force all of the energy consumers in the state to end up paying the bill.

My intention is to protect the residents of Florida from cost shifts (disguised as savings for a limited few), increased rates, fraudulent claims, and safety hazards that I believe will all result from a solar industry that is unregulated or subsidized by taxpayers. The free market works; please allow it to.

John Giotis, Chairman
Florida Council for Safe Communities