

State government

Legislators aim to save renewable-energy progra

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A bipartisan group of 23 legislators, led by state Sen. Lois Wolk, D-Davis, urged the California Public Utilities Commission on Tuesday to shelve a proposal to eliminate a program allowing energy customers with multiple energy meters to contribute renewable energy to the grid.

“The Net Energy Metering Aggregation program has been a great success at improving access to farms and schools across the state that want to affordably generate their own electricity,” said Wolk, who authored the bill (Senate Bill 594, 2012) that established the program.

“Prior to the NEMA program, a renewable energy generating system was only able to be connected to one electrical meter. This grossly limited renewable energy investment by customers with multiple energy meters, including farmers, ranchers and schools.”

Wolk and the letter’s co-authors pressed the PUC to preserve the NEMA program when it finalizes new net energy metering rules this year.

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Also supportive of NEMA’s continuation are groups including the California Climate and Agriculture Network, the Wine Institute, the California Farm Bureau and the Agricultural Energy Consumers Association.

“California farmers and ranchers are producing more renewable energy than their counterparts in any other state. And there’s potential for much more to come,” said Adam Kotin, associate policy director with CALCAN. “We are thrilled that such a diverse group of legislators sees the power of the agricultural community to help reach the state’s clean energy and climate change goals.”

Added Robert P. Koch, president and CEO of The Wine Institute, “The ability to aggregate on-site meters has made renewable energy more economically feasible for agricultural customers. This program is especially beneficial to many of California’s 4,400 wineries and 5,900 grape growers, who often have multiple meters on their property, and who seek to use renewable energy as a component of their sustainable practices.”

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