

Mixed Results for Renewable Energy as State Assembly Goes on Recess

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Three out of four is an exceptional batting average, but renewable energy advocates are undoubtedly disappointed by the one big loss they suffered in the recent legislative session.

Three bills related to solar energy and one on net metering went to bat. The one that died in the Assembly after passing the Senate was [SB 843](#), which would have established a Community Based Renewable Energy Self-Generation Program that allowed all homeowners and renters to receive a credit on their energy bills based on their share in solar gardens around the state. We previously wrote on this subject [here](#) and [here](#).

The bills which passed were more targeted in nature but do advance certain goals. They include:

1. [AB 2249](#) – Solar Water Heater Incentives For Commercial Pools

This bill will allow non-residential pools, such as those at schools and community centers, to access incentives previously made available to residential pools that install solar hot water systems. The existing law for residential has been anything but a success as delays in implementation, lack of consumer awareness and competing energy sources have resulted in few homeowners taking advantage of the financial incentives made available by the law for installing such systems. With financial pressure and budget cuts causing the closure of many public pools, this bill could help alleviate some of the pressure. The [Bill Analysis](#) notes that high schools in the Bay Area spend \$30,000-\$60,000 a year to heat their pools, according to the California Solar Energy Industries Association.

2. [SB 1222](#) – Caps On Solar Installation Fees

This bill limits the permit fees that local municipalities can charge for rooftop solar energy systems, as further incentive for residential and commercial customers to consider solar as an option. Existing law requires that such fees “not exceed the estimated reasonable cost of providing the service for which the fee is charged” in most circumstances. SB 1222 goes further by stating that, unless certain conditions are met, the reasonable cost of providing such services cannot exceed:

“\$500 plus \$15 per kilowatt for each kilowatt above 15kW for residential rooftop solar energy systems, and \$1,000 plus \$7 per kilowatt for each kilowatt between 51kW and 250kW, plus \$5 for every kilowatt above 250kW, for commercial rooftop solar energy systems”. [Legislative Counsel’s Digest]

3. [SB 594](#) – Expands Net Energy Metering Program To Customers With Multiple Meters

Net energy metering currently allows energy customers who generate some of their own power to receive compensation or a credit on their energy bill from a public utility.

This bill would allow energy customers with multiple meters on a single property (including adjacent and contiguous property) to aggregate the electrical load from all such meters for purposes of net metering. However, the program would only move forward after the ratemaking authority or public utility commission

determines there is not an expected increase in revenue obligations of customers who are not eligible to take part in net energy metering as a result of its implementation.

Therefore, it remains unclear when or if this new law will become available for property owners and renters who have multiple meters and generate their own electricity that returns to the power grid.

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