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A West Virginia lawsuit exposes the reality of state solar mandates.

The Real Reason Electric Bills Are Rising

Are data centers to blame for surging electric bills? Progressives say yes. But this ignores the high cost of their cli--mate policies, which are highlighted by West Virginia Attorney General John McCuskey in lawsuits filed last week against New Jersey and Washington, D.C.

New Jersey and the capital district require that an increasing share of their electricity comes from solar power generated within their borders. Mr. McCuskey says this scheme illegally interferes with interstate commerce by discriminating against his state's solar producers, while also increasing costs for New Jersey and D.C. residents. Directly discriminating against businesses in other jurisdictions violates the Constitution's Commerce Clause, his suits say.

Washington, D.C., New Jersey, West Virginia and 11 other states belong to the PJM regional grid. The purpose of regional transmission organizations like PJM is to ensure "competition in the wholesale bulk power marketplace and to bring more efficient, lower cost power to the Nation's electricity consumers," the lawsuits say. Local solar mandates do the opposite.

D.C. requires solar to make up 5% of retail sales this year and 15% by 2041. Only solar facilities within the capital's 68 square miles or directly connected to utility Potomac Electric Power Company's "feeder" power lines qualify. This shuts out cheaper sources of solar from PJM states like West Virginia.

Because nearly all of D.C.'s land is developed, most of its solar is generated from rooftop systems, which can cost two to three times more than from large-scale projects in West Virginia. Even then, the lawsuit says, D.C. has " been unable to generate enough solar energy to meet its own mandates, paying more than $50 million in compliance fees from 2018 through 2025." Compliance costs are passed along to D.C. customers, including the federal government. Mayor Muriel Bowser in June estimated the mandate adds $20 a month to every residential electric bill, which is expected to increase to $40 by 2029.

Rates would be lower if D.C. didn't exclude solar producers in other jurisdictions, but this isn't what D.C. politicians told capital residents. City Council member Charles Allen claimed the solar mandate " helps keep money in the pockets of our individuals, businesses, and places of worship that produce solar energy."

The story is similar in New Jersey, which requires utilities to obtain an increasing share of electricity from solar within the state. New Jerseyites are paying between $81.45 and $200 for every megawatt hour of solar power to comply with the mandate. This cost would be lower if West Virginia solar producers were allowed to compete, the lawsuit says.

Yes, and electric bills would be significantly lower if states scrapped their green energy mandates. Full stop. The mandates distort energy markets by requiring utilities to procure energy from what are typically more expensive and less efficient sources. Energy Secretary Chris Wright says states with renewable mandates pay 45% more for power.

While solar panels have fallen in price, they aren't an efficient way to generate power in places that aren't sunny year-round. Credit to West Virginia for shining a light on the costly truth of state renewable mandates.

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