



RENEWABLE ENERGY:

Bill would expand tax credits for rooftop solar

Christa Marshall, E&E reporter
Wednesday, April 27, 2016

Rep. Jared Polis (D-Colo.) introduced a bill this week to boost distributed solar power on rooftops and other decentralized sources.

The bill would provide a 20 percent increase in the current investment tax credit for small solar systems under 20 kilowatts. The measure is the latest push to expand renewable tax credits that were extended last year.

According to supporters, legislation is needed partly to push back against state policies making the environment tougher for small solar systems. Nevada's Public Utilities Commission, for example, increased fees this year for rooftop solar customers and lowered the price they could receive selling electricity back to the grid.

"There are a lot of places lawmakers are trying to roll back clean energy policies," said Bob Keefe, executive director of Environmental Entrepreneurs and a supporter of the measure, called the "Solar Expansion of Distributed Generation Exponentially Act," or Solar EDGE Act. The Solar Energy Industries Association is also supporting the bill, which has been introduced in previous Congresses.

The bill would cover the taxable years of 2017 and 2018. It comes as the Center for Biological Diversity released a report yesterday concluding that sunny states with the most potential in theory for rooftop solar currently are installing less than 10 percent of national capacity. Those states tend to lack policies that can boost the resource, such as strict renewable portfolio standards, net metering, solar access laws or initiatives allowing third-party ownership of solar panels, the report said.

Residential photovoltaic development surged last year to be the fastest-growing U.S. solar sector, with 66 percent growth over the prior year, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association.