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July 11, 2008

California Energy Commission
Dockets Office, MS-4
Re: Docket No. 08-IEP-1 and No. 03-RPS-1078
1516 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814-5512

RE: FEED IN TARIFFS - A RATEPAYER PERSPECTIVE

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I write to you as a very active, educated ratepayer, environmentalist and renewable energy advocate. Over the past five years or so, I have watched Germany, Japan and Spain conceive, legislate and implement marvelous, wildly successful renewable energy programs and have been constantly disappointed that my state, which I used to see as an environmental and business leader, has sat idly by and waited for Big Energy to frame and dominate what could have been a marvelous, free market for all ratepayers in local, point of use renewable power, and instead has become a "gold rush" to permanently obliterate millions of acres of our wilderness, force thousands of families from their homes via eminent domain for the unneeded transmission lines to service these monopolies, and to deny ratepayers an opportunity to participate in the fight against global warming as more than mere spectators and consumers. Where did we, as a state, go so wrong?

Let's put that ignominious scenario in the past. You have an amazing opportunity now to create programs similar to those in Germany, Spain and Japan that serve US, the ratepayers, rather than serving to re-entrench Big Energy monopolies, and as MY representatives in energy policy, I and millions of others sincerely hope you will rise to the occasion. We have allowed you to experiment with "mandatory RPS" which excludes us and treats utilities as the only players on this field, and, for the most part, your program will have failed at the 2010 point. Fine, it was an experiment, but it's time to move on to something that actually works - substantial feed-in tariffs to ratepayers who generate renewables on their own property and intertie to the grid.

I have spoken to thousands of people on this issue, attended forums, workshops, hearings, meetings, reviewed legislation, met with representatives, etc. Not one single person, from across the political spectrum, outside of those with a vested interest in Big Energy, has ever opposed a VASTLY leveled playing field for ratepayer producers of renewable energy. The environment, the economy, and the citizenry of this state and this planet are counting on YOU to stop these massive killing fields from destroying the lifestyles and intact ecosystems CA residents enjoy. We are counting on YOU to make good decisions about not only "allowing" us to sell power into the grid, but actually "compensating us fairly" for doing just that. We want to do it - can you please just make it possible and palatable?

I don't have to tell you the millions of ways Big Energy gets to externalize 100% of its costs across the grid and across the environment. I don't have to tell you at what enormous disadvantage that places the residential or business ratepayer, both as a potential generator of renewable power, and as a victim of the types of supply and pricing manipulations Big Energy is so famous for. Nobody knows that better than you. The subsidies, tax breaks, cheap public land, the devastating exercise of eminent domain, the water waste, the poisoning, the GHGs - you know all about it. How can you, then, in good conscience tell a ratepayer like myself and the millions of others out here, that we must go find the money to pay for our own PV systems, then either "net meter" or collect measly, fabricated "wholesale" rates from utilities (per the current CPUC pilot program), especially when you know that those wholesale rates are built on the back of the aforementioned anti-competitive business practices, and do not reflect the true costs or benefits of generating point of use, clean renewable power? No doubt you have run the numbers and seen that, even in the Prime Solar Resource area of the Mojave, nobody could actually break even on any sized system under the "feed in tariff" structure set by the CPUC, EVEN IF THEY DO NOT USE ANY POWER THEMSELVES? Is this the best we can do to implement the stated goals of AB 32?

To be frank, I am truly embarrassed that 37 nations are out ahead of our state on this issue. I realize there is massive pushback from Big Energy, but that is no excuse, because at the end of the day, you work for ratepayers, and you owe us a fair shot at this new energy marketplace. Net metering is a panacea, which disproportionately benefits utilities, and has proven to DISCOURAGE conservation. Having the utility companies in charge of both the conservation programs (as if any exist!) and the distributed generation programs is an enormous conflict of interest, designed to fail the ratepayers and inappropriately strengthen the position of the utilities in an era when, at most, they are needed as a load-balancing infrastructure and metering service. Foxes guarding the henhouse. No doubt you are aware of the recent City Attorney's report from San Diego, setting forth the myriad conflicts, the abuses of power, the deliberate raising of barriers to entry for ratepayer/generators, and the manipulation of supply and pricing done by SDG & E and Sempra, to bolster their Natural Gas monopolies and pricing. This is exactly what the future holds for all of us if you do not implement drastic, immediate changes in the system, stop the anti-competitive generation/rate biases, and establish a fair free market - which happens to be a thousand times better for the environment at the same time.

We want Japan, Spain and Germany levels of support for massive buildouts of local, point of use renewables, **especially oversized systems**. No more government-enabled monopolies. No more wilderness-killing remote power plants. No more transmission lines. More reliability, more public participation, more rewards for conservation, and more green collar jobs. Most of all, no more delays, and no more excuses. The word is out about the enormous successes of these other programs overseas, and people are taking note - does the Emperor have any clothes or not? I look forward to swift, decisive action on your part.

Very truly yours,

Sheila Bowers