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Mass. solar industry stakeholders, legislators meet at State House to discuss lifting the state's solar net metering caps

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Solar energy advocates representing the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) Boston Chapter, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 103, and solar energy developer, Next Step Living, met with Massachusetts legislators at the State House on Thursday, May 21 to discuss the importance of immediately lifting the net metering caps, an issue that, according to solar industry leaders, puts the vibrant Massachusetts solar industry at risk. Their message was simple: raising the caps as soon as possible will allow the legislature time to review and act on the state's Net Metering Solar Task Force recommendations, and will enable cost-effective, long-term solar policy. It is widely held among solar industry stakeholders that unless caps are raised, thousands of solar jobs in the Bay State will be lost and costs for future solar development will rise.

Representatives from NECA/IBEW electrical contracting firms, Sullivan & McLaughlin Companies, Mass Electric Construction and All-Pro Electric, were joined by NECA/IBEW Business Development Director, Lisa Podgurski and NECA Boston assistant manager Kristen Gowin, meeting with Massachusetts state senator Ryan Fattman, representative Tackey Chan, representative Dan Donahue, representative Paul Brodeur, representative Leonard Mirra, and representative Claire Cronin in an effort to spur immediate action by the state to raise the state's net metering caps. The group was joined by solar companies, Next Step Living and Southern Light Solar as well as NECA and IBEW legislative consultants Beacon Strategies and Liberty Square Group in the solar lobbying effort. Podgurski serves on the state's Net Metering/Solar Task Force, appointed by governor Charlie Baker to research alternatives to the current net metering cap system.

The current state cap on net metering, set at 4% of a utility provider's peak demand for private projects and 5% for public projects, puts the Massachusetts solar industry, which supports approximately 12,000 jobs in Massachusetts, at risk of a significant downturn.

Massachusetts currently has solar installations totaling 776 megawatts of renewable electric capacity, according to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources. Nearly 270 megawatts of solar capacity was installed in the state in 2014.

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