

The decision made by California regulators on Thursday to dramatically lower the amount utilities must pay homeowners who have rooftop solar panels for the electricity they deliver to the electric grid could harm the rapidly expanding renewable energy industry.

The commission, according to Roger Lin, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity's energy justice program, "has taken a step backward by extending the gulf between those who can afford solar and those who can't," in a statement.

Low-income areas are the ones most affected by the climate problem, so this is an insult to them, said Lin. "We'll do all we can to persuade the commission to correct the serious errors in its plan," Lin said.

California wants to switch to only renewable energy by 2045 as it battles drought and wildfires brought on by climate change. Solar installers and proponents of clean energy reject that claim, claiming that the technology's advantages—which include reduced air pollution in low-income areas and protection against utility power outages—far exceed its drawbacks.

The commissioners, however, disregarded their objections, contending that the incentive scheme must evolve to remain relevant.

They made the point that, in contrast to hot summer evenings, when the state has occasionally found itself short on electricity, California now has more solar energy than it requires throughout the day. More residents will be encouraged to install batteries that can store clean electricity for those hot evenings, according to the revised incentive scheme that they authorized on Thursday.

According to Commission President Alice Reynolds, "California is positioned to unlock the next phase of our ambitious climate change program, and this decision is part of that." "We're constructing a massive sustainable energy storage facility for grid usage at night."

Numerous environmental and community organizations, as well as the solar business, were on the opposing side of the argument. By claiming that it was incompatible with the state's attempts to prevent the rising wildfires, droughts, and heat waves brought on by climate warming, they were successful in getting Gov. Gavin Newsom to veto an earlier Public Utilities Commission plan that was much harsher to rooftop solar.

Rooftop solar is but one aspect of the transition away from fossil fuels. To reshape economies now supported by coal, oil, and natural gas, some combination of offshore wind

farms, geothermal facilities, nuclear reactors, energy efficiency, green hydrogen, electric automobiles, and electric heat pumps will almost likely be required.

However, rooftop solar is one of the most noticeable climate solutions in communities around the nation. It is also one of the most successful, with lowering costs driving up installations.

And California is seen as a leader in global climate change. Other states may be more likely to follow the same route if rooftop solar installations diminish in this state and state officials don't intervene to stop the trend.