

March 21, 2019

Chairman Masterson, Ranking Member Francisco and members of the committee.



We have appreciated your support and willingness to talk about how best to move Kansas toward an energy future that includes customer choice about the integration of solar technology on their homes.

Advancing SB 124 – the Energy Fairness Act – has been our number one priority this session. It’s a piece of legislation that provides assurance not only to customers who received a retroactive rate hike because of their solar investments, but would also lift the barriers that the approved demand charges put on the residential solar industry.

In advocating for this bill, recognized nearly universal agreement by committee members that the demand charges were not a preferred way to charge solar customers and that we should not have policies that impede Kansas businesses from doing their work. We also took seriously your request that we find common ground.

Finding common ground is a core value of the work I’ve done for a decade. I’m pleased to report today that we did work with our utility opponents to find a compromise.

Those discussions led to the following agreement: Evergy will file a new tariff with the KCC to request that Westar customers with installations prior to October 1, 2018 and KCP&L customers with installations prior to December 20, 2018 are grandfathered into the old rate and not subject to mandatory demand charges. This agreement to compromise will positively impact the vast majority of existing Westar and KCP&L Solar users.

Our compromise also includes an assurance from Evergy that by September 1, 2019 Evergy will sit down with our organization and industry partners to find a longer term solution that works for solar customers and the industry and present it collectively to the KCC for approval.

This compromise reflects a good faith effort by all parties to protect existing customers and we are pleased with Evergy’s agreement to submit a filing with the KCC to grandfather existing customers. We hope this can be done quickly as demand charges for customers on the DG Tariff rise to \$9 kW of demand beginning in June.

In reaching compromise, there is always something given. In this case, we remain concerned that this agreement doesn’t provide the immediate solution we were seeking to give the Kansas-based solar industry businesses certainty about their ability to install solar in Kansas. We trust our utility partners are sincere in their commitment to have these discussions with us in the coming months so we can get our solar companies back to work in Kansas.

We polled our members last week and since the demand charges were approved in the fall, less than 10 residential systems have been installed by them in the combined Evergy territory.

I believe there are solutions that will allow the rooftop solar and small wind industry to provide economic benefits to our state in a way that benefits all Kansas ratepayers and I am committed to finding solutions that work for everyone.

With these assurances from Evergy, we have agreed to stop pursuing SB 124 during this legislative session and look forward to advancing this dialogue in collaboration with them for approval by the KCC.

We look forward to standing before you next year to report our progress and ideally, share that the solar industry is back in business in Kansas at the residential AND commercial level.

Dorothy Barnett  
Executive Director  
Clean Energy Business Council, a project of the Climate + Energy Project