

From : Greg Reis

To : letters@latimes.com

Date : Mon, 21 May 2001 20:42:37 -0700 (PDT)

Subject : SCE is forcing its customers to waste electricity

At the end of April I had a solar electric grid-intertie system installed on my house. It is designed to feed power back into the grid during the day (running my electric meter backwards), and take power from the grid at night. I will thus require no net electricity from the grid and I'll supply additional electricity to the grid on summer afternoons when demand is highest.

Unfortunately, I can't turn it on. I have been waiting for two weeks for SCE to give me written permission--something it can do by simply faxing me. Apparently there is only one person at SCE that can sign the agreement that I need to legally flip the switch, and he is on Davis' energy task force which, I have been told, "takes precedence."

I understand that 16-hour negotiations can take time away from office paperwork, but it would seem that as blackouts roll across the state, a simple signature on a document that would help solve the problem isn't too much to ask. Certainly he can delegate this important responsibility that he does not have time for anymore.

The state of California paid for 1/3 of the cost of installing my system that has sat idle for two weeks now, mostly bright sunny days. Numerous other SCE customers must be waiting to turn their generating facilities on as well, all the while using expensive electricity from the grid that would not be needed but for a signature. I would have needed 75-100 kWh less electricity from SCE so far this month if I had been able to turn my system on when it was ready.

The tens or hundreds of kilowatts that are offline due to one man's elusive signature may not seem like much in the grand scheme of California's dysfunctional energy market, however every little bit helps.

Consider that instead of California paying \$15 billion in continued extortion to out of state generators, the state could instead spend the money on the

buydown program that paid for 1/3 the cost of my solar installation. Even if the state began paying for 1/2 the cost as an added incentive, \$15 billion would be enough for installing 3,000 megawatts of additional generation. This is 7-10% of the state's energy needs. We would get a long-term investment in California's homes and businesses, and a non-polluting distributed energy source the size of which would be unequalled in the world. Passing on the entire cost of electricity to consumers in a progressive and reasonable way (after the dysfunctional market mechanisms are overhauled) would encourage additional conservation, resulting in no more rolling blackouts and no more generators unwilling to sell to us for fear of being stiffed.

Instead, we leave newly-installed solar panels throughout Southern California turned off, we turn on inefficient pollution-belching power plants to make up the difference, and continue throwing money away that is enriching fat Texas energy corporations--money that could otherwise have been invested in a sustainable future.

Sincerely,
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