

“Community Solar Champions” recognized in Virginia

Coalition for Community Solar Access honors individuals, organizations for dedication to advancing Virginia’s Shared Solar Program

Richmond, Va. (October 19, 2021) – The Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA) is marking a year of significant growth and momentum for community solar by recognizing five Virginia legislators and advocates as Community Solar Champions for their work in supporting and protecting community solar programs in 2021. They are among 26 Community Solar Champions nationwide, which include state legislators, environmental and sustainability advocates, labor leaders, advocates for disadvantaged communities and farmers and agricultural groups.

The Virginia Community Solar Champions include:

- **State Senator Scott Surovell (D-36) and Delegate Jay Jones (D-89).** Surovell and Jones are the prime patrons of the Virginia Shared Solar Bill and were instrumental in passage of a foundational shared solar program for the commonwealth. The legislators worked to develop an efficient and effective program that protects ratepayers.
- **Virginia Energy (formerly Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy (DMME)),** for being a thought leader for the Commonwealth's Shared Solar Program and for their flawless facilitation of stakeholders to develop strong and protective regulations. The department's facilitation of the group of stakeholders has set a model to be used across the country.
- **Carmen Bingham,** for her work in helping to establish low-income programmatic rules and consumer protections for customers of shared solar programs. Bingham serves as Affordable Energy Project Coordinator with the Virginia Poverty Law Center.
- **Chelsea Barnes,** for her instrumental work in legislative and regulatory efforts on Virginia’s shared solar program. Barnes, who serves as Legislative Director of Appalachian Voices, was instrumental in expanding the local coalition working to develop a shared solar program and ease the energy burdens of residents of Appalachia.

“It has been a privilege to work with Senator Surovell, Delegate Jones, staff at Virginia Energy, Carmen and Chelsea to bring the benefits of shared solar to Virginia residents,” said Leslie Elder, Mid-Atlantic Regional Director for CCSA. “From the passage of legislation establishing a shared solar program in 2020 to today, they have been steadfast in their efforts to develop a program that will expand access to solar energy for all and deliver its benefits to those who had been left out of participation. Together, we have developed a program that will serve 30 percent low-income residents, help to meet Virginia’s clean energy and climate goals, and create a stronger, more resilient energy grid by investing private capital in Virginia’s economy. I thank them for their commitment and hard work and am proud to honor them as CCSA 2021 Community Solar Champions.”

Through shared solar, customers can enjoy equal access to the economic and environmental benefits of solar generation by subscribing to small local solar arrays. They then receive a credit on their utility bill for their share of the power that is produced, just as if the panels were on their own roof.

This is significant because more than 75 percent of American households don't have access to solar power because they either rent, live in a multi-tenant building, or have roofs unable to host a solar system.

There are currently 21 states and the District of Columbia with policies in place that permit third-party community solar and multiple states advancing legislation to enable new programs.

Enacted in 2020, Virginia's shared solar capacity is currently 150 megawatts (MW) with a requirement that 30% of customers serviced be of low income. The program will receive an additional 50MW once 30% low-income customers have successfully been subscribed. While this is a strong foundation, only those living or doing business in the Dominion utility service region are eligible to participate. It is important that the opportunity to participate in shared solar programs gives ALL Virginians equal access to solar no matter where they live, as well as offer significant benefits to a segment of customers that have been traditionally left out of the solar economy: low-income customers.

Shared solar will help Virginia achieve its ambitious renewable energy goals of 30% carbon-free electricity by 2030 and 100% by 2050, while positioning the state as a national solar leader and ensuring all Virginians can participate in the plan. Deploying small scale shared solar projects reduces costs to the consumer, increases grid resiliency, and empowers residents and businesses to participate in Virginia's clean energy transition.

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About Coalition for Community Solar Access

The Coalition for Community Solar Access is a national Coalition of businesses and non-profits working to expand customer choice and access to solar for all American households and businesses through community solar. Our mission is to empower every American energy consumer with the option to choose local, clean, and affordable community solar. We work with customers, utilities, local stakeholders, and policymakers to develop and implement policies and best practices that ensure community solar programs provide a win, win, win for all, starting with the customer. For more information, visit <https://www.communitysolaraccess.org> and follow the group on [Facebook](#).