

JOBS, ENERGY SAVINGS, & A CLEANER FUTURE

What Solar Brings to Maryland

Who We Are — The **Maryland-DC-Delaware-Virginia Solar Energy Industries Association (MDV-SEIA)** represents manufacturers, installers, developers, distributors and component suppliers of solar power. MDV-SEIA delivers on policy formation and advocacy, market representation, networking, education, and additional benefits to our 180+ members representing over 10,000 direct jobs implementing long term new electricity generation in our region.

Solar Jobs for Our State — A product of good public policy and market growth, Maryland currently supports **165 solar energy companies** and employs **5,429 solar workers**. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the national average compensation for solar installers is **\$18.87 per hour**. In 2016, Maryland added **1,160 new solar jobs**, a 27% increase from the previous year.

Beyond creating jobs and uplifting the local economy, investing in solar demonstrates a community's commitment to sustainability and presents the opportunity for savings. Solar can also protect communities from rising energy costs and provides an opportunity for homeowners to boost their property values. Businesses can lock in low electricity prices for decades by investing in a solar array.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to work with and serve counties throughout the state. Our industry members have grown over the years and continue to learn and strengthen our collective experience with delivering low cost clean energy systems of all sizes and locations.

Larger solar projects provide tax revenue to counties. Assuming a 2% solar property tax, a 100 MW solar farm can generate approximately **\$1 million in tax revenue per year**. Depending on the location of the farm and type of equipment used, a 100 MW farm sits on 400-800 acres.

How Can Counties Support Solar?

Community Engagement

Our members understand that for a project to be successful, the local community is well informed of all the facts on solar project development. Many of our members commit large amounts of resources into projects before they even are approved for interconnection, such as local landowner and community outreach, site evaluation, and environmental and historical landmark impact studies. Many of our members work to preserve the rural character of a county by planting trees along the edge of a solar project, a process known as vegetative screening.

Avoid Zoning-Out Projects

Ordinances can unintentionally prevent large-scale solar development by placing burdensome regulations on landowners and developers. For example, setback ordinances force projects certain distances from neighboring properties or roads, which may create unusable “strips” of productive agricultural land. Similarly, by limiting the size of a project, counties inherently make solar development more costly, diminish local tax revenues, and the likelihood a project will come online.

Advance Agriculture and Solar Generation

The vast majority of Maryland’s over 2 million acres of farmland, including farmland adjacent to transmission infrastructure, is not suitable to solar development due to transmission and market constraints. Each overhead power line has a limit to the amount of electricity it can carry and many of the lines traveling through Maryland are currently at or near capacity. If a solar project were proposed along a power line that is at capacity, the project would bear the responsibility of upgrading the line, challenging the project economics.

Responsible, thoughtful solar development would diversify the farming community’s revenue streams, control local energy costs, add jobs to the local economy, generate tax revenue, and help meet the state’s renewable energy target. Furthermore, the few acres of farmland that can be used for solar return significantly higher tax revenues to the county, produce far less water discharge/solid waste (essentially none) while requiring no new services of local communities. Counties can support agricultural needs by encouraging pollinator-friendly plants around the perimeter of a project and native turf grass on the farm. Studies have shown that the nutrient loading of agricultural land improves over the life of a solar farm making the property ready for prime agricultural production following the end of a solar farm’s life cycle when the equipment is removed and crops are replanted.

Implement Model Solar Ordinances

Successful solar ordinances balance economic development, property rights, land preservation, and environmental impact interests. Ordinances should be passed through collaboration from the Maryland solar industry, local planning officials, representatives from various state departments, conservation organizations, and many others. Some examples of model ordinances are included here:

- ▶ Virginia DEQ: “Model Ordinance for Larger-Scale Solar Energy Projects in Virginia”
- ▶ Massachusetts DER: “Model As-of-Right Zoning Bylaw: Allowing Use of Large-Scale Ground-Mounted Solar Photovoltaic Installations”
- ▶ North Carolina: “Template Solar Energy Development Ordinance for North Carolina”

Build Maryland's Energy Independence through an Increase to the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS)

Today, Maryland imports over 40% of its electricity from other states and could increase further as the state's conventional power plants are aging with many scheduled to be retired or decommissioned. Renewables and solar generation systems can help. Currently, Maryland utilities are required to generate just 2.5% of electricity from solar energy by 2020. The state rapidly surpassed that goal, leading to oversupply that has caused installers and developers to lay off employees or invest in projects in neighboring states. By supporting an increase to Maryland's RPS, counties will keep jobs, investment, and energy generation within state borders.

About three-quarters of Maryland's solar power is produced from rooftop and distributed solar. If that pattern continues, Maryland's RPS can be realized with solar on less than 1/10th of 1% of its agricultural land. It is important we continue solar job investment in Maryland by supporting an increase to the state's Renewable Portfolio Standard.

Prepared by:
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