



## HB 210 and SB281: The Community Solar Act (Patricia Roybal Caballero, Elizabeth "Liz" Stefanics)

Solar energy is a great way to expand clean, renewable energy and lower electric bills, but adding solar panels to roofs isn't an option for everyone in New Mexico. The Community Solar Act (HB 210/SB281) aims to change that by broadening access to solar for renters, low and moderate-income residents, municipalities, counties, indigenous communities, and other customers throughout New Mexico. Similar to models in Colorado and Minnesota, community solar provides people the choice to subscribe to a local community solar project. These projects will support New Mexico's solar industry and related businesses, a sector that already has more than 2,500 solar jobs and pays its workers far above the living wage and will grow New Mexico's economy.

This bill is a community led and market driven project that has the support of the Coalition of Sustainable Communities New Mexico (Albuquerque, Las Cruces, and Santa Fe), as well as a variety of other business and environmental stakeholders dedicated to expanding renewable energy, some represented here.

Key points include:

Allows Pueblos, First Nations and Tribes or their entities, municipalities, counties, for-profit and non-profit entities to construct, own and operate, or contract with other parties to construct, own and operate Community Solar Facilities at a single location connected to an Investor Owned Electric Public Utility's Distribution System within or adjacent to the county where a "subscriber" resides, without being regulated as a "public utility" under the Public Utility Act;

- Provides subscribers to a community solar facility a "bill credit" on their monthly electricity bills that reflects their portion of solar production;
- Ensures each utility is able to recover reasonable costs associated with its use of its distribution system, as well as costs for system integration and program administration;
- Provisions for consumer protections;
- Allows a maximum of 10MW per community solar facility and co-location with energy storage. Practical issues of costs, land availability, and community demand will determine the ultimate size of a project;
- Requires that the PRC adopt regulations that set targets for participation in Community Solar Facilities by "low-income customers" and individuals qualifying for assistance under the NM. Affordable Housing Act. This will include practices such as setting statewide targets for reservations of capacity and discounted subscription rates for those customers and "low-income service organizations," and allow the use of funds available for low-income energy assistance programs to enable the participation of low-income residential customers in programs authorized by this bill.

If passed, New Mexico will join 19 states and the District of Columbia with community solar programs.

