



Solar for Ohio communities

Cities can help homeowners buy panels

Ohio might not be the first state that comes to mind when you think of solar power. But solar panels don't need scorching heat to work well. The world's largest solar energy producers are in Germany and Japan—neither nearly as sunny as Ohio.

Not only do we have the potential to be a clean energy leader, we can also put thousands of Ohioans back to work on rooftops installing solar panels.

Solar cities

Ohio's state lawmakers just made it a lot easier for homeowners to take advantage of solar energy. In July, Governor Strickland signed a bill into law which allows cities and townships to help homeowners finance solar panels. The program removes the burdensome upfront cost of the solar panels, by allowing homeowners to pay off their solar panels over time through their property taxes.

Homeowners who participate will reduce their energy bills and their individual contributions to global warming, while becoming more energy independent.

Who's next?

Environment Ohio helped build support for creating the solar option, but now we need cities to take the next step and implement the program.

The city of Athens was a key driver in creating the solar program and is first in line to take advantage of the new law. Environment Ohio will be reaching



▲ Solar panels on a home in Toledo. Homeowners may soon be able to finance solar panels through their property taxes if their cities participate in the Solar Homes program.

out to homeowners in cities across the state, starting in Columbus, to show the City Council and Mayor Coleman the overwhelming support for implementing the solar homes program.

K-12 schools in line, too

A proposal (House Bill 113) that would require the largest K-12 schools in Ohio to go solar has received a bi-partisan vote of support in the Alternative Energy

Committee. "Putting solar panels on schools is a no-brainer," said Rep. Louis Blessing, Jr. (Cincinnati). "This bill will boost our economy by putting Ohioans back to work installing solar panels on schools while also making us more energy independent."

The bill will be considered by the full House in the fall, and we'll work to see it over the finish line.



more online

For more information on Ohio's solar energy potential, and to tell your city officials and state representatives to support solar cities and solar schools, visit www.EnvironmentOhio.org.



To our members

Ohio has been working hard on a clean energy future. Last year, we adopted a strong renewable energy standard, mandating that 12.5 percent of our electricity come from renewable sources.

In July, Gov. Strickland signed a law allowing cities to help homeowners finance solar panels through their property taxes, instead of paying the upfront cost. We're helping homeowners around Ohio encourage their town leaders to participate, with the city of Athens leading the charge. This fall, lawmakers will consider requiring the state's largest K-12 schools to go solar, too.

Sen. Sherrod Brown can take Ohio's example to D.C., making sure we pass a strong national energy policy that will lead the United States into a clean energy future. This fall, we will need your support more than ever. Make sure to sign up for our email actions online, or by emailing us at action@environmentohio.org. Thanks as always for your support.

Sincerely,

Program Director

Recent action

Renewables redefined: trash and tires?

Last year, Environment Ohio helped pass one of the strongest renewable energy policies in the country. But over the summer, lawmakers nearly turned it into a pollution policy when they considered redefining the word "renewable" in state law. Had they done so, polluting energy sources such as burning trash, tires, black liquor and coal methane would have enjoyed the same encouragement in Ohio as clean wind and solar energy.

But Environment Ohio organized a coalition of renewable energy businesses, consumers and environmental advocates to voice their opposition to the dirty "renewables" proposal. After a media blitz in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Columbus Dispatch and Associated Press exposed the unpopular polluting proposal, lawmakers backed down.

Midwestern governors consider climate action

After over a year of negotiations, on May 12, the Midwestern Governors Association's advisory group made its recommendations for a policy to limit greenhouse gas emissions in the region. The final recommendations include cutting global warming pollution by 18 to 20 percent below 2005 levels by 2020, and 80 percent below 2005 levels by 2050.

Environment Ohio's Amy Gomberg, who was appointed to the committee alongside a broad group of advisors that included utilities, oil companies, manufacturers, state government liaisons and environmental groups, fought for stronger pro-environment recommendations during the negotiations.

Six governors--from Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin--signed onto the Midwestern Greenhouse Gas Reduction Accord's principles, and are currently reviewing the advisory group's recommendations. Gov. Strickland signed on as an "observer," allowing Ohio to participate in negotiations, but not committing the state to any action. Environment Ohio will continue to encourage Gov. Strickland to support strong energy and climate policies at the state, regional and federal levels.

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▲ Lake Erie's shoreline is projected to recede more than 3 miles in some areas due to global warming.

Will we get the change we need in energy policy?

On August 24, Environment Ohio's Program Director Amy Gomberg was invited to the White House for a series of meetings on our national energy policy. Commerce Department Secretary Gary Locke and other top officials addressed around 100 environmental, labor, clean energy business and faith leaders, encouraging our support for their historic clean energy and climate policy.

As the U.S. Senate considers the legislation, we're building support to ensure it passes--and that it remains strong enough to help us avert a climate catastrophe. The U.S. House of Representatives' approval of the American Clean Energy and Security Act this summer marked a clear break from the inaction that characterized the federal government's response to global warming during the past eight years. If the Senate follows suit this fall, we'll see billions of dollars invested in energy efficiency and renewable power, new green buildings sprouting up across America, and significant, mandatory reductions in carbon pollution.

It's not perfect

Still, the energy bill passed by the House doesn't do all that's necessary. In order to win enough votes for passage, the bill's sponsors agreed to compromises that benefit oil and coal companies, agribusiness and other interests at the expense of taxpayers and the environment. But given the closing window of opportunity to solve global warming and the potential for this bill to transform our energy systems, we decided to support, and work extremely hard for, passage of the bill.

Building support for change

Environment Ohio staff focused much of our energy on building support from the constituencies that could influence key votes. We released our research on global warming and agriculture at events around the state. Our analysis found that lower corn crop yields resulting from climate change could cost Ohio an average of

\$50 million a year. Working with state leaders such as Rep. Ted Celeste (Grandview Heights), we organized town hall meetings, and with Green Energy Ohio we helped plan and speak at a series of clean energy jobs events at community colleges across the state. Many of these events were attended by key members of Congress including Reps. Mary Jo Kilroy (Columbus) and Steve Driehaus (Cincinnati), and Senator Sherrod Brown.

But we didn't stop there. We went door-to-door, talking to almost 20,000 Ohioans to raise awareness and help citizens make their voices heard. Through this outreach we collected more than 4,000 postcards and 200 "photo petitions," and generated more than 400 phone calls in support of the bill to congressional offices.

Looking ahead

Our work paid off in the House, but our opposition is ramping up its efforts. Coal interests are spending millions on TV and radio ads across Ohio. We'll need continued support of our members and volunteers to guide the bill that holds our clean energy future through the Senate. Stay tuned for ways to take action at www.EnvironmentOhio.org.



more online



Check out the photo petition we sent to Congress to show them broad public support for clean energy at www.EnvironmentOhio.org/energy/repower-america.



Bright efficient building ideas

America is the largest consumer of energy in the world, and Ohio is one of the largest energy consumers in America. Much of the energy we use is simply wasted through inefficient buildings that suffer from poor insulation, leaky windows, out-of-date lighting, heating or cooling systems, and poor construction techniques.

Environment Ohio's report, "Building a Better Future: Moving Toward Zero Pollution," outlines specific policy steps that local, state and federal officials can take to significantly cut energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, such as upgrading building energy codes to require better efficiency, constructing only zero-net energy buildings by 2030, and retrofitting existing buildings. The Clean Energy and Security Act proposed in Congress would take some of those steps on a national level.

Provisions for energy efficiency in the bill would save Americans an estimated \$25 billion per year and keep 250 million tons of carbon pollution out of the atmosphere. It would require that all new buildings must be twice as efficient as required by today's standard within seven years, and the standard ratchets up by 5 percent every three years after that.

Read the rest of the report on highly efficient homes and businesses at www.EnvironmentOhio.org

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Fall Report

VOLUME 3 | NO.3 | 2009



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Environment Ohio

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind Environment Ohio. We focus exclusively on protecting Ohio's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Parks push pays off

Working together with a coalition of environmental and citizen groups this summer, we made sure Ohio's state parks, forests and nature preserves stay off-limits to the oil and gas industries' trucks and drilling rigs.

After months of face-to-face meetings with key decision-makers, hundreds of emails sent from our members, and delivery of a beautiful photo book of our members' favorite state lands, Ohio's lawmakers decided to scrap a proposal that would have opened up our remaining protected public lands for drilling. Your support and grassroots action helped ensure that Ohio's natural areas remain open and protected.

But while we were working to block the drilling proposal, the state legislature cut back funding for our state nature preserves. We're continuing the fight to ensure that Ohio's special places are protected and maintained for future generations.

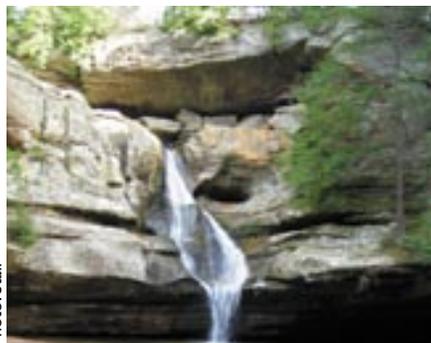


Photo: Staff

See all of the beautiful photos our members sent in to make the photo book that helped convince our leaders not to open our favorite places to oil and gas drilling at www.EnvironmentOhio.org/preservation.