

Join the
movement
for energy
democracy!

Idaho Needs
Community Owned
Solar



Tell Idaho Power: We Need Community-Owned Solar!

What is energy democracy?

Energy democracy is a movement to shift control over electric power away from corporate monopoly utilities and toward communities.

The movement recognizes that certain members of our communities, particularly low-income and minority individuals, have historically felt a disproportionate share of the burdens of our electric power system. These burdens include high electric bills, the negative health impacts of fossil-fuel generation, and the destruction and/or forced taking of cultural and natural resources.

The energy democracy movement also recognizes that because the corporate utility structure is designed to benefit utility shareholders, the individuals who are most burdened by the power system are also the least likely to receive the financial benefits that accrue from power generation.

Energy democracy asks us to invest in electricity resources that are not only good for the environment, but also give control over power and its benefits back to the people. One resource that meets these criteria is called **community owned solar**.

What is Idaho Power’s proposal, and what are its shortfalls?

Idaho Power recently proposed a clean energy subscription program (“Clean Energy Your Way”¹) that will give customers the option to receive a portion of their electricity from a newly built renewable energy resource. Because this program will result in additional clean energy resources, it is a step in the right direction. However, **this program does not go far enough to promote energy democracy.**

Idaho Power’s program will likely result in a few large-scale solar projects located far away from most customers that are entirely owned by Idaho Power. Therefore, the program a) does not create a path for **community ownership** of renewable energy, and b) does not promote the construction of small-scale solar **distributed generation** located within communities.

Community Ownership

Why does Idaho Power want to own its clean energy resources?

Utilities want to own all of their infrastructure (power plants and power lines) because utilities generate profits for their shareholders from that infrastructure. In fact, owning infrastructure is the only way that utilities can generate profits because they are not permitted to collect extra money from their customers for any other costs.

Why is community ownership a good thing?

Community ownership of renewable energy resources includes ownership by any non-utility third party such as a cooperative, a municipality, or a nonprofit.

Community ownership of renewable energy generation increases job creation and economic benefits in local communities.² In addition, community ownership allows communities to vote with their dollar. They can have greater control over where their power comes from, what their power sources are, and where their money goes. Community ownership ensures that the profits from electric generation are reinvested in the community rather than profiting wealthy, out-of-state investors.

Distributed Generation

Why does Idaho Power prefer large, centralized power sources?

Small-scale distributed renewable energy projects are time consuming and troublesome for utilities. They would rather invest in a single large project that is miles from the nearest city. This also helps them justify building more power lines, which, as mentioned above, produces more profits for their shareholders.

¹ <https://www.idahopower.com/energy-environment/green-choices/proposed-clean-energy-your-way/>

² https://ilsr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Advantage_Local-FINAL.pdf

Why is distributed generation a good thing?

Distributed generation describes small-scale power generating resources (like solar panels) that are located close to the users of the power. Distributed generation is often associated with rooftop solar on people's homes or in their communities.

Distributed generation promotes community energy resiliency. If a storm knocks out a power line that provides power to a community hospital, a nearby solar array can provide power to the hospital while the power line is repaired.

Distributed generation reduces the need for new power lines and the maintenance and repair of existing power lines. It also reduces the electricity losses that result when power moves across long distances. These benefits save customers money.

Finally, increased distributed generation increases the reliability of the electric grid and will lower costs to utilities and customers in the long term.

What are we asking Idaho Power to do?

Idaho Power should work with community groups to develop a **community owned solar subscription program**. This program will:

- 1) Permit entities other than Idaho Power to install and own solar arrays (*community ownership*)
- 2) Promote the installation of solar arrays that are located within communities (*distributed generation*)
- 3) Provide a mechanism for community members to subscribe to third-party owned solar
- 4) Support mechanisms within the subscription program that directly benefit low-income customers

TAKE ACTION!

1. [Sign the petition](#) telling Idaho Power to develop a community owned solar program
2. [Send a comment to the Public Utilities Commission](#) (the government body that oversees Idaho Power) by May 12 urging them to require Idaho Power to do this. Reference case # IPC-E-21-40.

For more information or to get more involved, contact:

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