



Energy Reform Priorities

The abandonment of the VC Summer nuclear project begins a new era in South Carolina energy policy. We face a choice – will South Carolina double down on failed energy policies of the last two decades **OR** will we learn from our situation, adapt proven energy solutions, and chart a path towards a clean and responsible energy future?

Past policies guaranteed that ratepayers would invest in a huge, risky project, even if it became economically uncompetitive and unneeded. A flawed energy decision-making system failed to effectively vet the project and removed any consequence of failure or mismanagement. Further, these policies discouraged investment in the energy efficiency and renewable opportunities that would have given customers control of their bills and given the state as a whole an economic advantage. We must act now to improve review of utility planning, give consumers the ability to take control of their energy bills, remove market barriers to efficiency and renewables, create clean energy jobs, and institute a culture of transparency and accountability for energy decision-making in South Carolina.

The South Carolina Conservation Coalition, therefore, outlines the following priorities to protect ratepayers, create clean energy jobs, and clean up the VC Summer mess.

- **Repeal the BLRA going forward and require utilities to prove prudence.** The BLRA shifted all risk to ratepayers, regardless of project completion. Instead, SC should repeal the BLRA and prohibit power plant construction costs from being put into rates until after the plant is proven to be completed and prudently constructed.
- **Improve energy planning** (also called integrated resource planning or IRP) by requiring more transparent, thorough vetting of utility decisions and greater opportunity for public input.
- **Require utilities to conserve energy when it costs the same or less than other options.** As the single most effective policy to reduce customer bills in the long-term, efficiency improvements will keep ratepayer money in their pockets. To ensure progress, utilities should meet modest energy efficiency targets in initial years, rising gradually to 1.5% of energy sales.
- **Implement net-metering improvements.** SC is approaching limits for net-metering set in Act 236, threatening another self-inflicted job crisis involving thousands of workers. Raising the cap, extending net metering to Santee Cooper customers, and making net metering permanent would avoid another energy jobs crisis.
- **Allow businesses to invest in their own clean energy generation.** South Carolina law should allow businesses maximum flexibility to buy low-cost renewable energy through power purchase agreements or other methods.
- **Clarify property tax treatment for solar facilities,** allowing the solar industry to continue to grow in South Carolina and approach the \$1 billion solar market threshold seen in GA and NC and add to the thousands of solar industry jobs already in SC.
- **Establish a Ratepayer Consumer Advocate** that is an independent advocate for consumers with a mission focused on residential, small commercial, and low-income ratepayers.
- **Alter the mission of the Office of Regulatory Staff** by eliminating its conflicting task of preserving SC's public utilities' financial integrity while also protecting ratepayers.
- **Modify the PSC** to increase accountability, establish stronger qualifications for Commissioners, and to oversee the decisions of Santee Cooper.
- **Establish statewide targets to spur renewable energy growth.** South Carolina should establish renewable energy goals or targets to encourage large-scale investments in these cost effective renewable efforts, building on the success of Act 236.

*Though not an exhaustive list, the following bills each include some element of the above-mentioned policies
H.3079, H.4375, H.4376, H.4377, H.4378, H.4379, H.4380, H.4421, H.4425, S.44, S.754, S.770*