

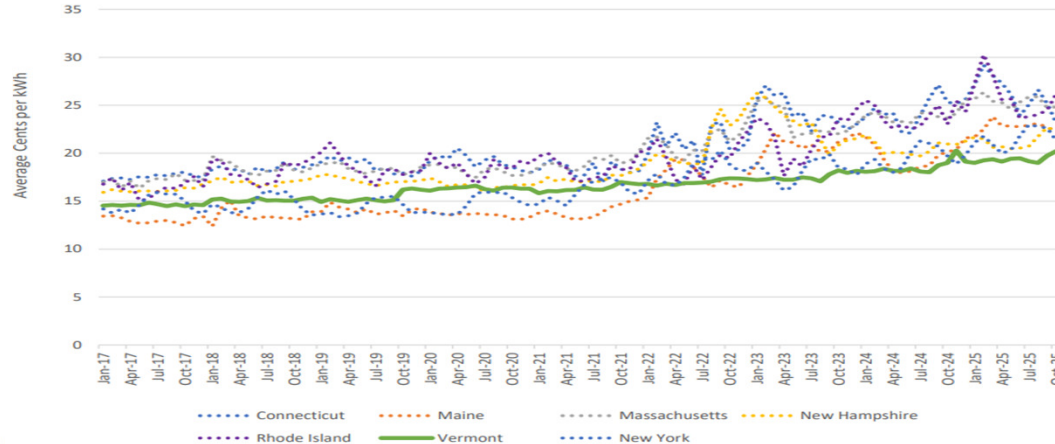


Testimony on S.323  
Peter Sterling, Renewable Energy Vermont  
Senate Agriculture Committee  
February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026



## VT's investments in long term renewables contracts have insulated rate payers from large rate spikes that occur in other New England States

Monthly Retail Cost of Electricity



Data source: U.S. Energy Information Administration



Between Q3 2015 and Q3 2025, the average residential electricity price increased by 33.39%.

The CPI for the Northeast rose by a nearly identically 33.37% over the same time period.



## The Renewable Energy Standard Deploys Wind, Solar, and Energy Storage Displacing Oil and Natural Gas Burning Power Plants



Mystic Natural Gas Generating Station

New England relies on 64 baseload natural gas plants none of which are not located in Vermont but in low income and minority communities in all other New England States.

These plants are typically 60 acres in size covers Montpelier from National Life to the Statehouse to the Library to Shaws and back to National Life



Everett LNG Import Facility



VT has 1m acres of primary agricultural soils- only 417 acres were used for distributed solar generation from 2023-2025

| County       | Acres in County  | Acres of Solar | % of County in Solar | Acres of Primary Ag Soils | Acres of Primary Ag Soils within Limits of Disturbance: Proposed CPGs 250kW-5MW 2023-2025 |
|--------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Addison      | 490,308          | 235            | 0.05%                | 137,905                   | 0                                                                                         |
| Bennington   | 431,876          | 98             | 0.02%                | 58,584                    | 0                                                                                         |
| Caledonia    | 415,204          | 112            | 0.03%                | 57,750                    | 16                                                                                        |
| Chittenden   | 343,861          | 325            | 0.09%                | 84,546                    | 62                                                                                        |
| Essex        | 424,025          | 12             | 0.00%                | 12,004                    | 4                                                                                         |
| Franklin     | 403,632          | 105            | 0.03%                | 96,945                    | 78                                                                                        |
| Grand Isle   | 52,332           | 38             | 0.07%                | 21,078                    | 0                                                                                         |
| Lamoille     | 295,842          | 53             | 0.02%                | 81,468                    | 0                                                                                         |
| Orange       | 439,802          | 104            | 0.02%                | 64,688                    | 44                                                                                        |
| Orleans      | 444,489          | 24             | 0.01%                | 69,680                    | 54                                                                                        |
| Rutland      | 595,022          | 339            | 0.06%                | 113,045                   | 63                                                                                        |
| Washington   | 439,410          | 84             | 0.02%                | 57,566                    | 29                                                                                        |
| Windham      | 502,697          | 117            | 0.02%                | 53,960                    | 30                                                                                        |
| Windsor      | 620,661          | 171            | 0.03%                | 89,509                    | 36                                                                                        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>5,899,162</b> | <b>1,816</b>   | <b>0.03%</b>         | <b>998,728</b>            | <b>417</b>                                                                                |

From 2023-2025, two projects larger than 5MW were proposed which would impact 212 acres of primary agricultural soils.

## S.323 Adds Unnecessary Time, Money and Uncertainty to the Existing Public Utility Commission Process

S.323 states that before the PUC can grant a CPG, the applicant must hire an engineering firm to perform “... a full-spectrum audit of energy payback time and carbon dioxide emissions at the cost of the applicant. The audit shall include a cradle-to-grave calculation, including resource extraction; mining and procurement; production manufacturing and transportation; deployment and of all technologies required, including solar panels concrete, footings, transformers, and batteries; forest ecosystem destruction; foregoing 25 years of agricultural crops; and construction and landscaping of the project.”

The PUC already reviews new solar projects to ensure they have no undue adverse effect on “aesthetics, historic sites, air and water purity, the natural environment, the use of natural resources, and the public health and safety.” The PUC also gives specific consideration to primary agricultural soils as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001 and to greenhouse gas impacts including energy payback time.

These unnecessary additional requirements would supersede the already robust and extensive review of projects by the PUC while adding potential six figure costs, uncertainty, and burden to new solar projects in Vermont.

Renewable energy projects would be the only form of development subjected to this requirement in their application process.



## S.323 Would Effectively End 1-5MW Distributed Solar in Vermont

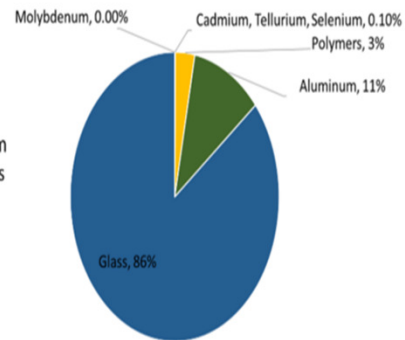
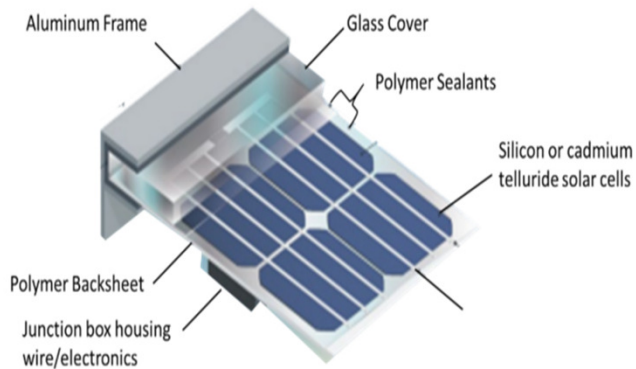
S.323 states that before the PUC can grant a CPG it must consider “... agricultural soils of statewide importance or local importance as defined in 10 V.S.A. § 6001 and as designated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and greenhouse gas impacts. **The siting of a facility or group of physically adjacent or interrelated facilities such that facility structures and related infrastructure preclude the tilling of soil, seeding, growing, or harvesting of agricultural crops on greater than five acres primary, statewide, or local importance agricultural soils, or reduce future Vermont-based food security or will result in the destruction of forest ecosystems, forest soils and their unique biology, or increased volatilization and release of forest soil carbon on more than five acres shall be considered undue and not in the public good.**”

Simply put, enacting this language would end solar development of distributed solar 1-5MW in size in Vermont. Distributed solar 1-5MW in size is currently the cheapest and fastest to deploy new energy resource available in New England. The end effect of this language is Vermonter’s electric bills would significantly increase as utilities would be forced to buy more expensive power, both from renewables and non-renewables elsewhere

Renewable energy projects would be the only form of development subjected to this requirement in their permit application process.



## Solar Panel Recycling



Solar module structure and composition. Adapted from the Solar Energy Technologies Office Photovoltaics End-of-Life Action Plan



**COMMERCIAL SOLAR PANEL RECYCLING**

### How we recycle your solar panels

**ALUMINUM**  
RAW MATERIAL SHIPPED DIRECTLY TO METALS SMELTER FOR REUSE/RECASTING

**CABLES & J BOXES**  
METALS & PLASTICS SEPARATED BY DOWNSTREAM RECYCLER

**GLASS**

- Finely Ground
- Cullet
- Backing Sheet Separation
- SANDBLASTING MEDIUM
- COLORED STREET MARKING
- DURABLE PAVERS (IN PROTOTYPE)

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# Questions?

