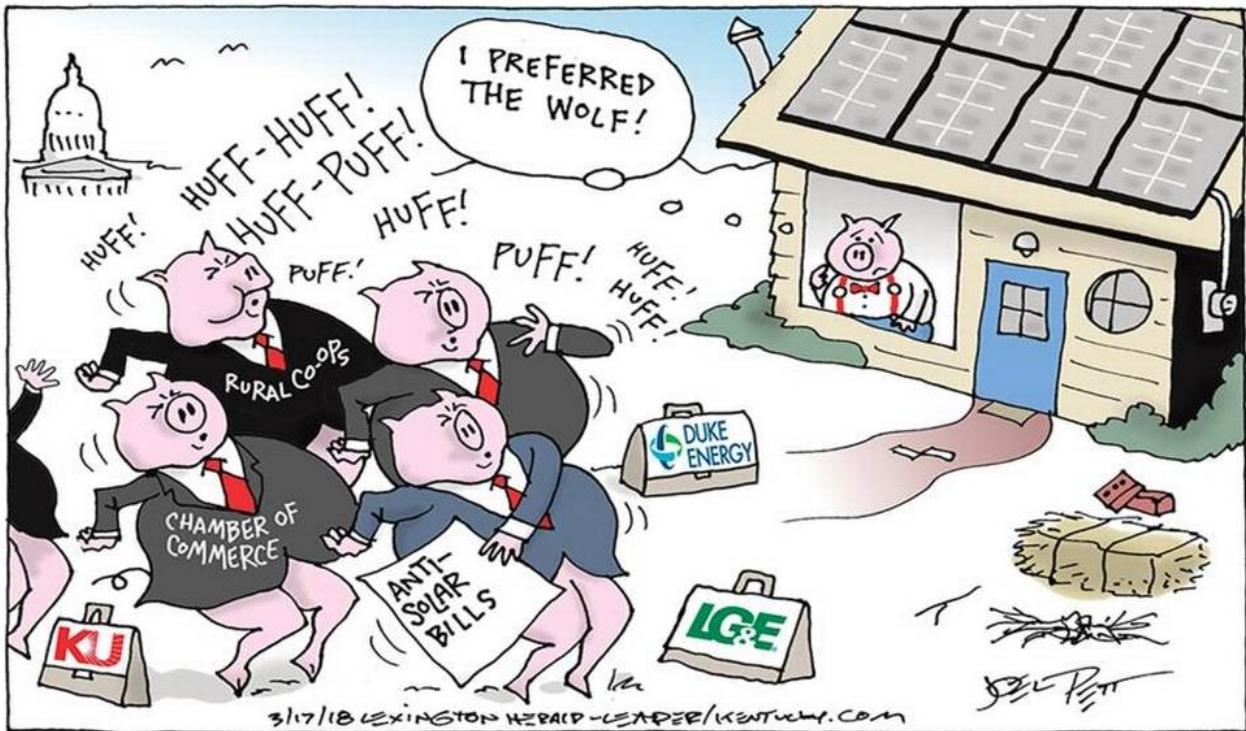


EDITORIALS

# Kentucky Senate must block utilities' move to corner the market on solar

BY HERALD-LEADER EDITORIAL BOARD

APRIL 06, 2018 08:50 PM, UPDATED APRIL 08, 2018 11:38 AM



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Looking at the money spent lobbying this General Assembly, you might think Kentucky's most pressing issue is a thousand households producing electricity from the sun.

Every argument in favor of a bill aimed at crushing rooftop solar has been meticulously debunked by small business owners who are creating renewable-energy jobs. Nonetheless, when the legislature convenes Friday for its final two days, the utility industry and its allies will keep pushing [House Bill 227](#). They've spent too much to stop.

Accept for a moment (and we don't) the industry's contention that solar customers are being subsidized by other customers. The annual cost of the alleged subsidy would be about what four utilities reported spending in just two months on their quest to corner Kentucky's solar market. Their campaign is [on track to break state](#)

[records for spending on lobbying and advertising to influence lawmakers.](#) (And that doesn't even include campaign contributions.)

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We don't yet know how much they spent in March, but the total in January and February came to \$204,557 for LG&E-KU Energy, the Kentucky Association of Electric Cooperatives, Big Rivers Electric Corp. and Duke Energy. Throw in the \$28,087 reported by the [deceptively-named Consumer Energy Alliance](#). Don't count the \$105,285 spent by the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce because it's lobbying for more than just rooftop solar's demise.

That's more than \$3,900 a day to end a subsidy that if it really existed (and it doesn't) was estimated by LG&E/KU in 2015 to cost each non-solar customer 12 cents a year.

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Cooperative Solar Farm One, located along I-64 between Lexington, and Winchester, Ky., is a 60-acre solar farm. The solar panels are available to be licensed by homes and businesses served by Kentucky's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives. BY ALEX SLITZ

HB 227's backers have provided no evidence, only hype and divisive propaganda, that non-solar customers are hurt even a tiny bit by the net metering law that allows households to receive credits on future bills for excess solar power they feed into their utilities' wires. If anything, the excess solar, which utilities sell at retail rates, strengthens the system during summer days when demand peaks.

The utilities want to cut solar's value by about two-thirds by pegging credits to wholesale rates. That would make rooftop solar less economical by extending the payback time. Multiple provisions in HB 227 would end net metering, says Tom FitzGerald of the [Kentucky Resources Council](#), dealing a blow to a promising industry and making it harder for Kentuckians to save on energy costs.

Sen. Jared Carpenter R-Berea, claims more solar constituents than any other lawmaker. He helped block a similar bill last year. But Carpenter was obviously feeling pressure to bow to the industry during a [March 29 meeting](#) when he moved a revised HB 227 through the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee which he chairs.

Carpenter's revision hands off the mugging of rooftop solar to the Public Service Commission via vague, ambiguous directives that are stacked in favor of the utilities. For example, it precludes the PSC from weighing net metering's benefits to utilities when setting rates.

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Carpenter's insistence that HB 227 represents a compromise and concessions by the utilities is wishful thinking, not reality. Nothing good can come from HB 227

for anyone other than utilities seeking a monopoly on solar.

Kentucky should follow [South Carolina's lead](#) and consider expanding solar net metering.

If senators remember that they were elected to serve the public interest, not special interests, they'll let HB 227 die.

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BY HERALD-LEADER EDITORIAL BOARD

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