

New State Bill to Bring Community-Based Renewable Energy to California

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Environmentally minded renters who are unable to install solar panels on their roofs because they don't own their buildings, will have a new way to take part in the generation of solar power, and benefit as a result, if [SB843](#) becomes law.

SB843 authorizes the Community-Based Renewable Energy Self-Generation Program, which would authorize a retail customer of an electrical corporation to acquire an interest in a community renewable energy facility, for the purpose of receiving a bill credit to offset all or a portion of the retail customer's electricity usage.

The Bill defines a "Bill credit" as "an amount of money credited each month, or in an otherwise applicable billing period, to one or more benefiting accounts based on the percentage share of the electrical output of a community renewable energy facility that is assigned to the account pursuant to the methodology described . . .".

In order to take part, a retail customer of a public utility will purchase, lease, finance, or subscribe to an interest in one of the new community renewable energy facilities. These facilities are sometimes referred to as solar gardens.

According to a recent [article](#) on KCET.org, "[u]pfront costs for buying into a solar garden and the amount of credit a participant receives per kilowatt-hour generated would largely be up to the facility operator."

Under the bill, a community renewable energy facility shall have "generating capacity of no more than 20 megawatts of alternating current."

As previously [reported on this blog](#), Pacific Gas & Electric and Southern California Edison have announced opposition to SB 843 and argue that the cost of energy from their own grids may rise for those who don't take part in the program.

San Diego Gas & Electric supports the bill.

Also, the KCET article linked above notes that at least one environmental group, the Local Clean Energy Alliance, has criticized the Bill, arguing that it won't do much to support community based development of solar power because (a) the 20 megawatt capacity is too large and (b) retail customers can acquire interests in a community renewable energy facility located anywhere in the state, so long as the facility is in the service area of the public utility serving the retail customer.

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