Give South Carolinians “the Sun” by removing barriers to solar energy investment.

As the cost of solar drops and utility rates rise, South Carolinians are demanding more access to solar energy. Legalizing free market options like solar leasing can help homeowners, businesses, churches, schools, military installations, and hospitals realize immediate monthly savings with less upfront capital investment. Solar leasing has become the predominant method of financing solar in many states around the country. Over a dozen states have explicitly made solar leasing legal. As noted in the awaited SC Energy Advisory Council report on solar, “How state policymakers structure the legal, regulatory, and economic environment will be critical in setting the stage for successful development and promotion of distributed generation in South Carolina.”

In the absence of a statewide energy policy, we look to the General Assembly to set a high standard for its appointed Public Service Commission. Regulators in Georgia and North Carolina are leading those states towards renewables like wind and solar and our PSC has the authority to ensure that our investor owned utilities (Duke and SCE&G) are adequately evaluating how new and varied energy sources can meet future energy demand. The Governor, through her appointed Santee Cooper Board, can also ensure that opportunities for increased investment in solar, wind, and landfill gas power are properly assessed. PSC seats for the 2nd, 4th and 6th Congressional Districts will be selected in 2014 and we urge legislators to carefully consider the qualifications of the PSC candidates. More information about how the PSC functions can be found at www.upowersc.com.

Energy efficiency should remain SC’s first fuel. Bipartisan legislation was adopted in 2007 requiring new state buildings to meet LEED standards, which reduce energy usage and operating costs. New state buildings have only recently been required to meet LEED standards. We oppose efforts (H.3592) to weaken these basic efficiency standards. We also support residential and commercial energy programs that offer building assessments, technical assistance, education, and incentives for upgrading the performance of existing buildings.

We urge legislators to join the Green Schools Caucus headed by Senators Ray Cleary and Katrina Shealy and by Representatives Anne Thayer and Mandy Powers Norrell. Increasing efficiency in public school buildings improves the health and performance of students and saves precious taxpayer dollars.

For more information, visit www.commonagendasc.org

Pass third party leasing of solar energy legislation (H.3425/S.536).
Carefully consider the qualifications of Public Service Commission candidates.
Uphold LEED standards for public buildings and support “win-win” energy efficiency benefits: reduced costs and a healthier environment.
Support recommendations of the Green Schools Caucus.
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