



Opposition Testimony to SB 294
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Chairman Chavez, Vice Chair Landis, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Senate Energy Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill 294 (SB 294).

My name is Will Hinman. I am the executive director of the Utility Scale Solar Energy Coalition of Ohio (USSEC), the trade association representing solar developers, manufacturers and industry leaders in our state working to meet the demand for energy and drive economic development benefiting Ohio's communities, schools, and rural landowners.

Just last year, House Bill 15 became law. It was an innovative and major policy change that was passed overwhelmingly. USSEC and its member companies applaud the work of this committee and the Ohio General Assembly on HB 15 to create market-driven, all-of-the-above solutions to help meet Ohio's energy demand.

We appreciate the sponsor's efforts to put forth legislation to increase energy generation in the state of Ohio. However, Senate Bill 294 would unwind the momentum of HB 15 by picking winners and losers in the free market.

Senate Bill 294 does not incentivize new energy generation or help address Ohio's power shortfall risks. Instead, it adds new policy filters that discourage certain forms of energy development – making it harder, not easier, to build the generation Ohio needs.

The legislation does not accelerate permitting timelines; it does not reduce siting risk or regulatory uncertainty; it does not encourage developers or independent power producers to build new capacity; or offer other market incentives.

Instead, it moves away from free-market-driven investment. Rather than being tech neutral, it elevates preferred technologies and fuels regardless of cost, timing, or feasibility. And it layers new criteria into the siting process that can be used against certain types of energy generation based on subjective definitions.

Furthermore, solar already faces unique hurdles that no other forms of non-renewable energy generation face due to Senate Bill 52.

In October 2025, proponent testimony on Senate Bill 294 took direct aim at solar, but relied on outdated data, incorrect assumptions, and misleading characterizations of how the power grid and modern solar projects operate. Across cost, land use, environmental impact, jobs, grid reliability, and energy security, the claims are contradicted by current realities and evidence.

I will briefly address three of those claims. USSEC is also submitting supplemental materials to the committee with additional details.

First, proponents claimed that solar costs \$413 per megawatt-hour and is more expensive than other forms of generation.

- Lazard’s 2025 Levelized Cost of Energy Report shows utility-scale solar costs between \$38 and \$78 per megawatt-hour, making it one of the most cost-competitive sources of new generation, even without subsidies.
- All types of power generation – including coal, gas, and solar – as well as agriculture and manufacturing, receive federal and local economic support.

Second, proponents claimed that solar does not create American jobs.

- The solar industry employs nearly 300,000 Americans across manufacturing, construction, development, and operations.
- More than 8,000 Ohioans work in the solar industry, ranking Ohio 8th nationally.
- Ohio is the leading solar manufacturing state in the country, with facilities such as Illuminate USA in Pataskala and First Solar in Northwest Ohio employing thousands of workers.

Third, proponents asserted that solar makes the grid less reliable.

- Solar adds predictability and reliability to the power grid by providing forecastable generation and diversifying supply.
- Grid operators routinely balance multiple resources to meet demand, and solar production often aligns with peak daytime usage.
- Battery storage paired with solar allows excess generation to be stored and delivered when needed.
- Solar does not rely on fuel purchases and is insulated from price volatility, geopolitical disruptions, and supply constraints.
- Speed of deployment matters. Solar and battery storage are the fastest energy resources that can be brought online, while gas turbine backlogs often stretch five to seven years. Solar is the bridge fuel until more gas and/or nuclear can come online.
- Texas has added more solar and storage than any other state, their grid has repeatedly set [new all-time peak demand records](#) since Winter Storm Uri without experiencing rolling blackouts or curtailments. Those reliability gains are being [driven by solar and battery deployment, not by new natural gas generation](#).

I have addressed only a few of the many misleading claims made during proponent testimony. Please see the supplemental materials for additional response details on these claims and responses to other claims.

Not only was the argument for Senate Bill 294 centered around false claims about a particular energy source, the bill would harm our state's ability to increase energy supply to meet growing demand.

USSEC believes that we should not be picking winners and losers.. For those reasons, we need to let HB 15 finish the rulemaking process and let the market adjust and develop.

I'll close with a mention that Republican and Trump voters are supportive of utility-scale solar. A [poll this year from President Trump's pollster Tony Fabrizio](#) shows that a majority of Trump voters, Republican voters, and GOP-leaning independents favor utility-scale solar; support is 70% if panels are made in domestic factories; and 68% agree that we need all forms of electricity generation, including utility solar, to be built to lower electricity costs.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENT – USSEC Opponent Testimony - Senate Bill 294

This supplemental document lays out and responds to the claims made during proponent testimony for SB 294.

CLAIM: *Solar power costs \$413 per megawatt hour, more expensive than other forms of energy generation. We have been giving 30%, 40% subsidies to building out these facilities.*

Response: Solar is the most cost-competitive form of energy generation, even without subsidies.

- [Lazard's 2025 Levelized Cost of Energy Report concludes](#) that solar is the "most cost-competitive form of generation," even without subsidies.
- Lazard concludes solar costs \$38 to \$78 per megawatt-hour.
- All types of power generation – including coal, gas, and solar – as well as agriculture and manufacturing, receive federal and local economic support.
- After it is constructed, there are very few costs associated with operating a solar facility. This is not the case for other types of power power plants, including gas and coal.

FALSE CLAIM: *Solar scores badly for land conservation.*

Response: Utility-scale solar supports long-term land conservation by restoring soil health, protecting wildlife, and preserving farmland through responsible, reversible land use.

- Native grass ground cover that is planted on solar farms allows the soil to rest and rebuild nutrients – just as agriculture conservation programs recommend – and is beneficial for the soil in the long term.

- Many solar companies work with local Parks Districts, Natural Resources, and other county initiatives focused on wildlife and the environment throughout their permitting process.
- Solar provides economic benefits to the farming community, allowing farmers to diversify their income, making them less dependent on the outcomes of crop yields
- Solar projects increasingly partner with local farmers for agrivoltaics, the dual use of land for solar energy and agriculture, including sheep grazing and row crops between the panels.
- All utility-scale solar projects hold a bond with the State of Ohio to cover all decommissioning costs at the end of the life of the project. This guarantees that the land is fully restored to its original condition, likely with improved soil quality given the ability for the nutrient content to rest and improve versus continual cultivation.

FALSE CLAIM: *Solar is “uniquely badly in terms of species impacts.”*

Response: Well-sited solar projects protect and enhance wildlife by minimizing disturbance, creating habitat, and incorporating conservation-driven design that supports diverse species.

- When a project site is being considered, developers will conduct several environmental assessments, including wildlife studies to ensure there is minimal impact to the area.
- Once operational, there is very little activity at the solar project, so deer and other wildlife quickly return.
- Most projects are configured to create wildlife corridors for wildlife to pass through the project area outside of the fence line.
- Planting of native grasses and pollinator friendly groundcover creates new habitats for bees, birds, small mammals, and other wildlife.
- Conservation groups like the Audubon Society support well-sited solar projects because they understand the wildlife-friendly solutions solar projects are putting in place.

FALSE CLAIM: *“You often have leaching of [highly toxic rare earth minerals and materials] that pollute the water and the soil.”*

Response: Solar energy is safe for water and soil, using non-toxic materials and operating with one of the lowest environmental impacts of any power-generation technology.

- Solar panels sold today are considered [non-toxic by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#) as they have passed stringent hazardous waste tests.
- According to the U.S. Department of Energy, few power-generating technologies have as little an environmental impact as solar.
- An Ohio Department of Health [assessment](#) on solar sites and PV found that they are completely safe.

FALSE CLAIM: *“There’s no way to recycle [solar panels] at the end of their lives.”*

Response: Solar panels are almost entirely recyclable – and at the end of their life can be reused or recycled, returning valuable materials back into the economy.

- Almost all of the components of a solar panel can be recycled. At the time of decommissioning, panels may be reused, recycled, or safely disposed of.
- About 75% of a solar panel is glass, which is already a well established recycling industry. Additionally, panels' other main materials, aluminum, copper, and plastic [are all easily recycled](#).
- By 2030, the [cumulative value of raw materials](#) from recycled panels is estimated to be close to \$450 million, enough to produce almost 60 million new panels.

FALSE CLAIM: *Solar is imported mostly from China and Europe.*

Response: The U.S. solar supply chain is diverse and increasingly domestic. Direct imports from China are negligible, while American manufacturing is rapidly expanding, led by Ohio-based facilities producing panels at scale.

- The data show that the U.S. solar supply chain is far more diversified than the claim suggests. At the same time, domestic US manufacturing is rapidly scaling.
- Direct Chinese imports, for example, are a miniscule share of U.S. solar imports. According to [U.S. International Trade Commission import data](#), the U.S. imported only 0.0035% of solar cells and 0.13% of solar panels directly from China in 2024.
- U.S. domestic solar manufacturing capacity has expanded significantly – and [Ohio is the number one solar manufacturing hub](#) in the country.
 - Illuminate USA in Pataskala is the largest single-site solar panel manufacturer in North America.
 - First Solar's manufacturing hub in Northwest Ohio is the Western Hemisphere's largest thin-film solar complex.

FALSE CLAIM: *Solar doesn't create American jobs.*

Response: Solar supports hundreds of thousands of American jobs, including thousands in Ohio.

- Solar employs [nearly 300,000 Americans](#) across manufacturing, installation, project development, operations, and more.
- With [more than 8,000 Ohioans](#) employed in the solar industry, Ohio ranks 8th in the nation for solar jobs.
- The solar industry is also a [disproportionate employer of veterans](#) – employing 9% of all solar workers in the county, compared to the 6.6% veteran employment percentage of overall workers in the economy.
- As of 2023, [there was a 4.6% annual job growth](#) rate in Ohio clean energy jobs.
- Solar panel manufacturer Illuminate USA [employs 1,500 skilled workers](#) at its Ohio facility, and First Solar [employs 1,600+ more](#) in Ohio.

FALSE CLAIM: *Solar makes our power grid less reliable.*

Response: Solar adds predictability and reliability to the power grid by providing forecastable generation, diversifying supply, and delivering modern infrastructure upgrades.

- Solar energy is inherently variable because it depends on the availability of sunlight. Because supply and demand must be closely matched on the grid, other generation sources are used when solar is not producing. This is a natural part of balancing multiple generation sources on the grid. Solar is also particularly effective at meeting peak demand, as maximum production typically aligns with peak daytime energy usage. And as battery storage is increasingly deployed alongside solar, excess generation can be stored and delivered when needed, significantly reducing variability.
- Utilities have been investing millions of dollars into grid reliability and [still fall short in yearly metrics](#), asking the PUCO for longer and [more frequent outages](#) due to aging lines and equipment. Utility-scale solar projects provide these upgrades free of charge when their projects are greenlit, resulting in newer energy equipment across Ohio.
- As Ohio works to meet rapidly increasing energy demand and maintain a reliable grid, speed of deployment matters. Solar and battery storage are [the fastest energy resources that can be brought online](#). By contrast, the current backlog for gas turbines is upwards of [five to seven years](#). Solar is the bridge fuel until more gas and/or nuclear can come online.

FALSE CLAIM: *Texas' grid is less reliable now that renewables account for 30% of power generation in the state.*

- While it is true that Texas has added more solar and storage than any other state, their grid has repeatedly set [new all-time peak demand records](#) since Winter Storm Uri without experiencing rolling blackouts or curtailments.
- Those reliability gains are being [driven by solar and battery deployment, not by new natural gas generation](#).

FALSE CLAIM: *Solar increases costs.*

Response: As one of the most-cost competitive energy generation sources, solar helps reduce electricity costs.

- Solar can help decrease electricity costs.
- Utility-scale solar is [one of the most cost-competitive generation sources](#) on an unsubsidized basis – less costly than new-build natural gas and competitive with already-operating gas plants. Lower generation costs put downward pressure on wholesale power prices, which ultimately flow through to consumers.
- Solar has no field costs, which stabilizes prices. Unlike some other forms of energy generation, solar requires no fuel purchases, is not exposed to global commodity price fluctuations, and is more immune to geopolitical events, supply shortages, or pipeline constraints.
- Electricity prices are often highest during dry, hot, sunny times of year and parts of the day – exactly when solar produces the most power.

FALSE CLAIM: *Solar “make us more dependent upon and vulnerable to China and other hostile foreign nations.”*

Response: Solar strengthens U.S. energy independence by producing American-made power, reducing reliance on imported fuels, and relying on a diversified supply chain with minimal direct imports from China.

- Solar reduces – not increases – U.S. dependence on foreign energy by cutting reliance on imported fossil fuels, rapidly expanding domestic manufacturing, and diversifying supply chains away from direct Chinese imports.
- Utility-scale solar generates American-made electricity that cannot be imported, cannot be embargoed, and cannot be manipulated by foreign governments.
- According to [the U.S. International Trade Commission import data](#), the U.S. imported only 0.0035% of solar cells and 0.13% of solar panels directly from China in 2024.
- Foreign Entity of Concern language included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which was enacted last year, further prevents U.S. solar deployment from reliance on Chinese-controlled manufacturing.