

# Fight intensifies over bill by former Edison executive to gut rooftop solar credits



Owners of rooftop solar panels protest outside Assemblymember Lisa Calderon's office in the City of Industry on Wednesday. (Allen J. Schaben / Los Angeles Times)



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April 23, 2025 6:21 PM PT

- Calderon's AB 942 would limit the energy credits provided to those who purchased the systems to 10 years — half the 20-year period the state had told rooftop owners they would receive.

- Edison and the state's two other big for-profit utilities have long tried to reduce the energy credits that incentivized Californians to invest in the solar panels.

A bill to sharply reduce the energy credits given to homeowners with rooftop solar panels is pitting union electrical workers and the state's big utilities against people who benefit from the solar credits — and one of the first skirmishes took place in the City of Industry on Wednesday.

Waving signs and blowing whistles, dozens of rooftop solar owners protested outside the office of Assemblymember Lisa Calderon (D-Whittier), who proposed Assembly Bill 942 to [slash the credits](#) for people who installed the systems before April 15, 2023.

Jim Matthews, one of the rooftop solar owners at the protest, said he doubts he would have purchased the panels if he would have known the state would be reversing the incentives.

“Stuff like this tears my heart,” said Matthews, who lives in Hawthorne. “I think it’s scandalous.”

Calderon worked for Southern California Edison and its parent company, Edison International, for 25 years before she was elected in 2020. Her last position included managing the parent company’s political action committee.

Edison and the state's two other big for-profit utilities have [long tried to reduce](#) the energy credits that incentivized Californians to invest in the solar panels. The rooftop systems have reduced the utilities’ sales of electricity.

“Calderon: For the People or for Edison?” said one sign waved by protesters outside Calderon’s office in the City of Industry. “Stop SCE’s Revolving Door in Sacramento,” said another.



Solar panel installers in Watts on June 18, 2021. (Gary Coronado/Los Angeles Times)

Calderon told the Times she introduced the bill because she had learned that 97% of the people in her district were paying higher electric bills because of the solar credits going to the remaining 3% when they sent the unused electricity from their solar panels to the grid.

“From an equity standpoint, that’s not fair,” she said. “I would love for everyone to have solar, but we need to do it in a fair and equitable way.”

Calderon said Edison, Pacific Gas & Electric and San Diego Gas & Electric have all sent her letters supporting the bill.

AB 942 would limit the energy credits provided to those who purchased the systems to 10 years — half the 20-year period the state had told rooftop owners they would receive. It would also end the incentives if the house was sold.

Uniting in the effort to oppose the bill are dozens of environmental groups, including the Sierra Club and the Environmental Working Group, which point out that the state has long said the solar contracts would last for 20 years.

Also attending the protest were representatives from the California Solar & Storage Assn., a trade group that represents companies selling the rooftop solar systems. The protest was organized by the [Solar Rights Alliance](#), a statewide association of solar users.



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Jeff Monford, a spokesperson for Edison, said the company sent Calderon a letter Wednesday backing the bill. He said the bill has “nothing to do with utility profits. It will result in savings for our customers.”

The company estimates that those customers who don’t have solar would save \$500 million by 2030 if AB 942 passed, or about 3% of the average household electric bill.

The unions of electrical workers who install and repair equipment built by Edison and other electric companies are lobbying to get the bill passed.

In an email, a spokesperson for the California State Assn. of Electrical Workers said the group “strongly supports” the bill, which it said would “alleviate the financial burden on non-solar ratepayers.”

At a meeting in Sacramento in late March, leaders of the group, which represents 83,000 electrical workers in the state, [said a top goal](#) was to reform the rooftop solar incentives.

“It is unjust, unreasonable and unsustainable for Californians to continue shoveling billions of dollars every year to an industry when it is no longer justified nor fair to non-solar customers, particularly when the burden falls hardest on low-income customers,” Scott Wetch, a lobbyist for the electrical workers, wrote in a letter to the chair of the Assembly Utilities and Energy Committee.

Calderon and the electrical workers point to [an analysis](#) by the state Public Utilities Commission’s public advocates office that said the credits given to rooftop owners for the electricity they send to the grid is raising the electric bills of customers who don’t own the panels by \$8.5 billion a year.

The rooftop solar industry and environmental groups disagree with that analysis, saying it was flawed.



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In a recent letter to the Assembly committee, the environmental groups pointed to an analysis that economist Richard McCann performed for the rooftop solar industry that found that electric rates had risen as the utilities spent more on infrastructure. That equipment includes the transmission lines needed to connect industrial-scale solar farms to the grid.

Even though homeowners' solar panels helped keep demand for electricity flat for 20 years, the three utilities' spending on transmission and distribution infrastructure had risen by 300%, McCann found.

“To address rising rates, California must focus on what’s really wrong with our energy system: uncontrolled utility spending and record utility profits,” the environmental groups wrote.

In December 2022, the commission voted to cut incentives for anyone installing the panels after April 15, 2023, by 75% but left the incentives in place for legacy customers.

AB 942 would not apply to rooftop solar customers who live in territory served by the state’s municipal utilities, including the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

A hearing on the bill is scheduled for April 30.

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