

Antonia Hover

From: Ellen Plendl
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 9:05 AM
To: Consumer Correspondence
Subject: Docket No. 20210015
Attachments: Florida Power & Light Company issues; Consumer Inquiry - Florida Power & Light Company

See attached customer correspondence and FPSC reply for Docket No. 20210015

Antonia Hover

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 6:53 PM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: Florida Power & Light Company issues
Attachments: Americans Can't Afford President Biden's Green Obsession _ RealClearEnergy.pdf; No place is safe from failing US infrastructure _ TechCrunch.pdf; Is Rooftop Solar Under Threat In Florida_ If So, Jacksonville Could Offer A Glimpse Into The Future _ WGCU PBS & NPR for Southwest Florida.pdf

23 February 2021 1900 hours

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
1-800-342-3552 (phone)
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing regarding the latest news media reports underscoring the woeful and disastrous state of the electrical grid throughout the State of Florida, despite strong documentation indicating such problems exist. To compound FPL deep contempt and disrespect of the hardworking taxpayers residents of the State of Florida, documented allegations of overbilling, overcharging and overwhelming electrical rates, surcharges, and fees (Florida Power & Light (FPL) is asking for a \$2 billion increase!) are contributing to a pervasive climate of complete distrust between customers of FPL and the FPL Corporation. Please coordinate, collaborate and cooperate on Federal, State and/or local jurisdictional levels in addressing these egregious concerns potentially impacting adversely the public's safety, health, finances, policies, trust, confidence, and quality of life issues. Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Beatrice Balboa
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008
Pompano Beach, Fl 33062-6631
USA



Americans Can't Afford President Biden's Green Obsession

By [Frank Lasee](#)
February 22, 2021

As if Biden's push for green energy hasn't hurt America enough with the cancellation of the Keystone XL Pipeline and rejoining the Paris Agreement on climate, it's now fueling the rise in utility bills for hardworking Americans across the board. And his plan to hike taxes on corporate businesses will only make it worse.

Electric rates are increasing across the country as utilities incorporate funds for green energy. In Florida, three separate utilities are asking for electric rate increases: Tampa Electric is asking for a whopping 18%; Florida Power & Light (FPL) is asking for a **\$2 billion** increase; and **Duke Energy Florida** is asking for a 3-4% rise in 2022, and 1% more in 2023 and 2024.

All of these proposed electric rate increases include paying for more green energy, yet for so long Americans have been told wind and solar are free. Um, no.

It isn't just Florida residents who will be paying more in the near future. Michigan's electric rates will **jump 12%**. New Mexico customers will see **9.2% bigger bills** for the Sagamore wind project and its infrastructure. Dominion Energy in South Carolina is asking for **7.7% more** and Louisville Gas and Electric is asking for **12%**.

It's only a question of time before everyone will be paying more for their power, natural gas, and gasoline at the pump.

On top of these green-driven rate increases, Biden wants to also increase the corporate income tax, arguing companies will pay this and consumers will not.

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This is simply dead wrong.

Americans enjoyed lower utility costs because of the corporate tax cut in 2017. There is a long [list of utilities](#) that passed their tax savings on to their customers or used the savings to offset planned rate increases.

When businesses save money because of a lower tax burden and lower utility rates, it's a double win, because the savings are often passed along to consumers used to offset increased costs elsewhere. When a business saves money in one area, they can lower prices, increase investments, pay off debt, increase profits, pay their employees more and hire new workers.

Likewise, just as the tax savings of 2017 saw [reduced electric rates](#) or offset increases, increased taxes will have just the opposite effect. There will be more upward pressure on utilities and other businesses to increase their prices.

Everything goes up, not just utility bills. For instance, grocery stores are low margin businesses that make a [profit of just 1 to 3%](#). They make their money from volume, after all everyone must eat. When a grocery store has to pay higher taxes and higher utility bills, (lights, refrigeration and freezer units, heat in winter and air conditioning in summer), they will pass these costs along to their customers.

When truckers have higher costs, they will pass them on to their customers, the food makers and grocery stores. They in turn will pass these increased costs to consumers.

When the food makers and grocery stores have to increase wages to a minimum of \$15 dollars, they will also

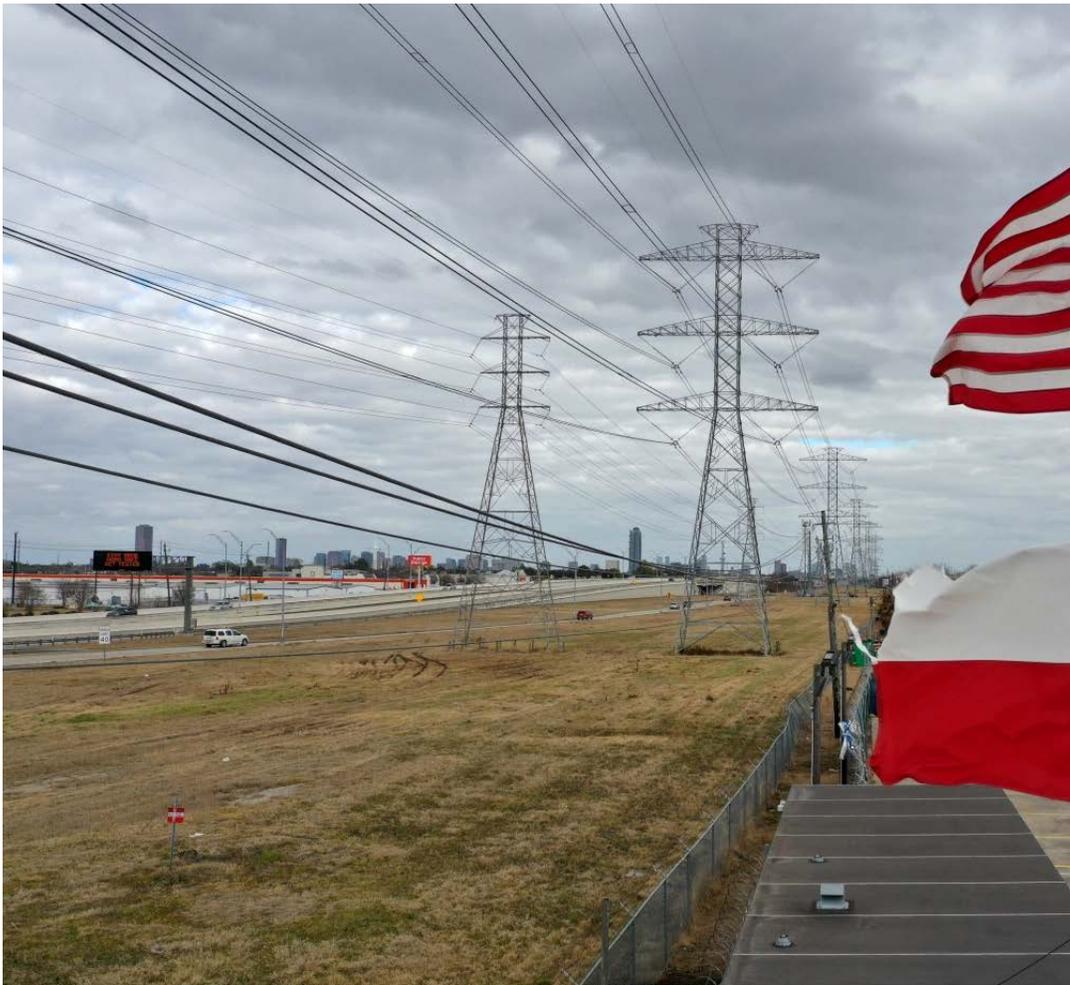


Image Credits: Justin Sullivan/Getty Images / Getty Images



In the face of rising homelessness, increasing crime and inadequate public transit in San Francisco, influencers are pulling up stakes to geographies that offer a seemingly more welcoming environment and make investments. But the ongoing disaster in Texas makes one cold truth very clear: America's failure to invest in infrastructure or take climate change seriously.

The shock of seeing the cradle of America's energy industry crippled by its inability to prepare its own infrastructure for "a century storms" that increasingly look to be coming every 10 years ([a phenomenon that Texas Tech Hayhoe calls "global weirding"](#)) underscores a point that should have been plain years ago: By refusing to invest in public infrastructure, the country's leadership has failed to perform the basic duty of protecting the health and safety of its citizens.

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Decline

This failure reaches from the woefully inept response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is on track to the U.S., to the millions across the country who faced a week without adequate heat, water and some from the bitter cold bearing down on the nation.

The catastrophe also crystallizes the inanity of many of the issues currently consuming the technology itself in such high esteem as a pillar of rational discourse and as the architects of America's future.

The investors who decried California's broken, over-regulated dystopia, are now trying to change their *under*-regulated dystopias.

The problem is that they're moving without confronting the substantive issues that make these regions portions of the population. And that's caused by a historic failure to engage in any politics that isn't directed of the corporations these entrepreneurs have created or their investors have financed.

As Michael Solana, a vice president at Founders Fund, [noted in a great piece on his Pirate Wires Substack](#)

The truth is, had tech workers actually assumed a significant measure of political influence, and led in local politics today be one of the greatest cities in the world. But not only was such political influence not achieved, it was never. In the most recent technology boom of the last fifteen years, there has been almost no meaningful engagement in the industry.

Not that the deregulatory streak prized by many in the tech community would have solved Texas's problem (California is a different kind of disaster).

In Texas, lack of regulations around construction and the state's independent energy grid have made catastrophic climactic events — [whether that's 2017's Hurricane Harvey](#) or this year's deadly winter storms [in their homes, vehicles and backyards](#).

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After Harvey, ignore the climate debate and focus on building better, more resilient infrastructure

As Tropical Storm Harvey made its second landfall near the border of Louisiana and Texas this week, New Orleans marked the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.



California can claim that its grid failed by fewer megawatts than Texas's — but the overall result from the blackouts, billions of dollars lost and scores of deaths are much the same.

Surveying this broken world, many in the tech community have decided that the best result is to try their best. But they're going to face many of the same problems in Florida or Texas.

Homeowners concerned about construction lowering the value of their properties? [Check](#) Remortgage.com

Don't think that I'm merely being cynical about what some tech companies are doing when commenting on climate change and decrepit American infrastructure.

Why else would Elon Musk commit \$100 million to a carbon capture prize while his publicly traded company is worth \$100 billion in bitcoin? Some analysts estimate that the deal and the resulting skyrocketing price of the cryp

the gains in emissions offsets from the use of every Tesla ever made.

Tesla buys \$1.5B in bitcoin, may accept the cryptocurrency as payment in the future

Today in an SEC filing, Tesla disclosed that it has acquired \$1.5 billion in bitcoin, the popular cryptocurrency. Moreover, the company says it may accept bitcoin in the future as a form of payment for its cars, though it did allow that there is some regulatory uncertainty around that. [Continue reading](#)



“The immediate impact of Tesla’s buy is that the Bitcoin price went up by more than \$5,000. We can estimate that the Bitcoin network is consuming an additional 34 TWh of electrical energy per year. That’s about the size of a country’s annual electrical energy requirement. We can also estimate this will result in an additional 17 million tons of CO2 emitted out by the network every year,” wrote Alex de Vries, [the founder of the cryptocurrency analysis site, Digital Coin](#). Tesla, [the amount of CO2 saved by Tesla vehicles adds up to 3.7 million tons](#). The amount of additional CO2 emitted by the Bitcoin network, as a result of Tesla’s buy, would thus amount to more than four times the amount of CO2 saved by Tesla vehicles to date.”

Some argue that bitcoin mining uses a disproportional amount of renewable energy to produce the cryptocurrency. This argument is complicated by the seasonal sources of some renewables that miners (especially Chinese miners, the bulk of bitcoin) rely on for power.

Tesla could potentially make more money from that investment than it has from the sale of cars, and from the emissions-spewing mining processes that make Bitcoin’s digital printers go brrrrr. All of which makes the idea of combating climate change look a bit specious.

Tesla’s Bitcoin investment could be bad for the company’s climate reputation

Tesla’s \$1.5 billion investment in Bitcoin may be good for Elon Musk, but it’s definitely risky for the company that made him a household name. Investors, analysts and money managers at some of the country’s largest banks. As a standard bearer for the consumer electronics industry, Tesla’s climate tech ... [Continue reading](#)



Some hope?

The most frustrating thing about all of this is that entrepreneurs and investors are working on solutions. Clean technologies exist that can help address some of the issues that confront these cities. And there’s still

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New US report says that climate change could cost nearly \$500B per year by

A new report from the U.S. government on the impacts of climate change on society indicates that unless action is taken, climate change could cost nearly half a trillion dollars annually by 2090. The National Climate Assessment is a Congressionally mandated report on the impacts of climate change from the work ... Continue reading



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Jason Lundbloom

19 hours ago

"In the face of rising homelessness, increasing crime and inadequate public transit in San Francisco, many tech influencers are pulling up stakes to geographies that offer a seemingly more welcome climate to conduct business and make investments. But the ongoing disaster in Texas makes one cold truth very clear: No place is safe from America's failure to invest in infrastructure or take climate change seriously."

Omg.... yawn. I was told to believe this problem would be solved by this administration. Sure the Paris Climate Accord will take care of us. Again.... yawn. Btw, down to 11 years by AOC's count.

Reply 5 6

Tanon Ymous

11 hours ago

Wow, nice apples to oranges comparison there.

A more honest discussion of the costs/benefits of government regulation on energy production reliability, however, wouldn't try to conflate the consistent, yearly blackouts that California experiences during totally routine weather, to the blackouts that Texas experienced the past few weeks during a once-in-a-century cold freeze.

Reply 3

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Is Rooftop Solar Under Threat In Florida? If So, Jacksonville Could Offer A Glimpse Into The Future

WGCU | By [Brendan Rivers](#)

Published February 23, 2021 at 10:49 AM EST



When Pete Wilking founded A1A Solar in Jacksonville in 2010, the rooftop solar industry was still in its infancy. Just three years later, the company was “very financially viable.”

Then Jacksonville’s city-owned utility company [changed its rooftop solar policy](#) in 2018,

doubled the amount of time it takes for solar owners to recoup their investment. Demand soured, and Wilking was forced to lay off 25 people, about half of his full time staff.

JEA says it changed the policy to keep regular customers from having to subsidize solar customers.

That's an argument that has gained political traction around Florida recently, although solar businesses and advocates say the small number of solar owners don't have the impact utilities claim they do.

"When they're making disingenuous statements, I think we need to be sure to call that out," said Alissa Schafer, a communications and research associate for the [Energy and Policy Institute](#) (EPI), a national watchdog organization.

Schafer and others are worried that Florida's powerful investor-owned utilities are pushing regulators to scale back the state's rooftop solar policy, as JEA did, or get rid of it all together. If successful, the rooftop solar industry across the Sunshine State could start to look a lot like it does in Jacksonville.



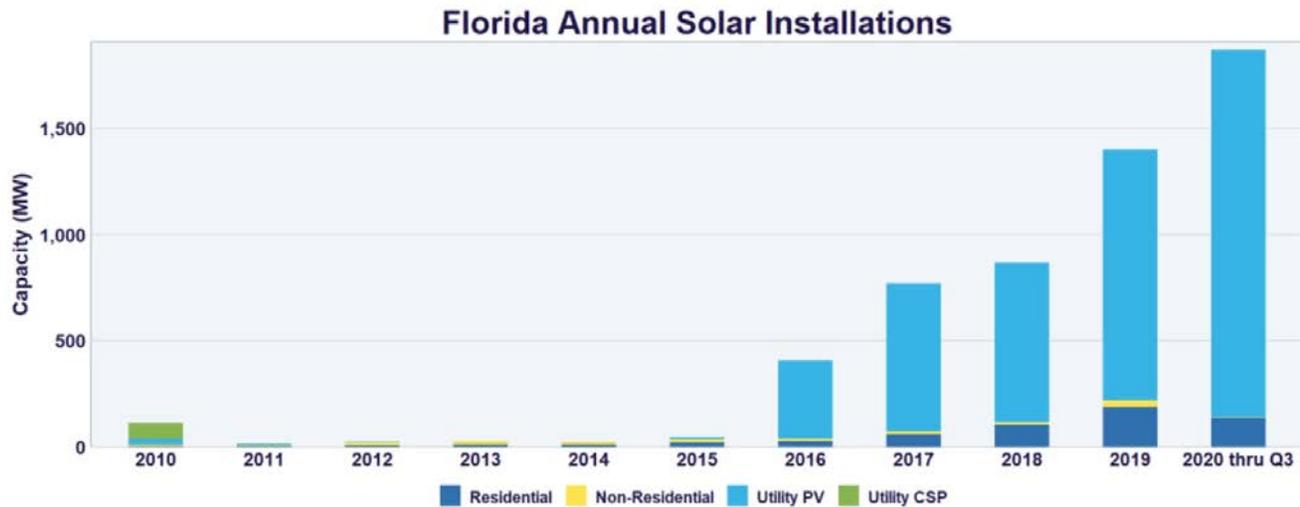
JEA

JEA's downtown Jacksonville headquarters.

Net Metering

The Florida Legislature unanimously enacted a policy called net metering in 2008, requiring utility companies to reimburse, or offset, solar customers for excess energy generated. The state's investor-owned utilities were required to offer one-for-one net metering, meaning they had to reimburse solar owners at the same rate they charge other retail customers. City-owned utilities like JEA followed suit.

The policy helped solar grow in Florida by 10,000%, [according to Solar United Neighbors \(SUN\)](#), a national solar advocacy nonprofit, although total numbers remained low.



Solar Energy Industries Association

When JEA lowered its net metering reimbursement rate from 10.3 cents per kilowatt hour to 3.25 cents, existing solar owners were grandfathered in. But for new customers, instead of the seven to nine years to recoup their investment on a solar system with a 35-year life, the time increased to about 20 years, said Wilking.

“That’s going to slow solar adoption,” he said. “It’s going to slow clean energy and we’re going to still be more reliant on fossil fuels.”

[TerraWise Homes](#), a Jacksonville-based homebuilder, also felt the effects of JEA’s solar policy change.

Initially, nearly every home the company built had rooftop solar panels. Thanks to [the available 26% federal tax credit](#), a TerraWise home with solar was less expensive than one without.

“[S]ay adding the solar to your house is going to raise your mortgage by \$65. But then you're going to save \$75 a month on your electricity bill. So your payback was virtually immediate,” Director of Operations Jacob Shacter explained. “Mathematically, it just made sense.”

But not after JEA changed its net metering policy.

“We went from basically 100% solar to none overnight,” Shacter said.



JEA, as a city-owned utility whose oversight comes from its board and City Council, didn't need outside approval for the net metering change. But the state's investor-owned utilities are regulated by [the Florida Public Service Commission](#) (PSC), which sets the policy on net metering.

[The PSC reaffirmed the state's net metering rule](#) in 2019, calling it an "effective" way to promote solar.

Not long after, a freshman legislator asked the commission to review the policy again.

"Low and middle-income families are paying more on their electricity bills than they should so their wealthy neighbors can have solar panels on their rooftops," [Rep. Lawrence McClure \(R-Dover\)](#) wrote to the group, citing a familiar argument.

In response, the PSC held a workshop in September 2020, to discuss net metering, in which the utilities argued that customers without rooftop solar were subsidizing those who had it.

Watch the video [here](#).

The Cost Shift Argument

The state's four major investor-owned utilities claim they've paid \$39 million in "subsidies" for rooftop solar customers.

"For the average net metered customer, the subsidy they enjoy is about \$75 to \$80 per month," said Terry Deason, representing Florida Power and Light (FPL), Gulf Power Company and Tampa Electric Company (TECO).

He said the utilities project another \$700 million in subsidies between 2020 and 2025, assuming rooftop solar adoption continues to grow significantly. While not advocating for a change in net metering at the meeting, he did say “at some point, it needs to be addressed.”

But EPI’s Schafer said those numbers don’t add up.

“The percentage of people that have solar on their business or on their home is so incredibly low, it's ridiculous to imply that this is causing a cost shift,” she said.

Rooftop solar adoption statewide today is only at .5% or around 60,000 customers. In Jacksonville, the percentage is similar, with 2,106 residential and 104 commercial customers.

FPL, Gulf Power, TECO and Duke Energy have paid a total of \$1,193,160 to net metering customers since 2008, [according to documents](#) the utilities submitted to the PSC last year. [JEA has paid \\$250,982.](#)

A [2017 report](#) from the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory at the University of California found the effect of net metering reimbursements on retail prices to be “negligible for the foreseeable future.” [New research from Michigan Tech University](#) published this month suggests that homeowners with rooftop solar are actually subsidizing their neighbors who don’t have rooftop solar.



Vote Solar

Graph based on results from Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory report.

Solar United Neighbors was also impacted by JEA's net metering change. They [had to scrap plans for a rooftop solar cooperative in Jacksonville](#). A solar cooperative (or co-op) is a group of homeowners who come together to qualify for a bulk discount.

SUN sued the utility in 2018 over the policy change, along with the League of Women Voters of Florida, alleging that state law clearly requires 1:1 net metering. JEA maintained the reimbursement is not specified.

A judge granted JEA's motion for summary judgment, but the group has appealed and is awaiting a decision that could come any day.

An attorney with Earthjustice, the law firm representing SUN, said there's more than one

“If the legislature repealed the net metering requirement, you would see many utilities push for a policy similar to JEA’s, and as a result I think you would see solar installations by customers really plummet as you’re seeing in Jacksonville,” said staff attorney Bradley Marshal.

No legislation has been filed as of yet for the March session, although the deadline isn’t until February 26, 2021. Even if nothing comes out of the legislative session, a policy change could be sought through the PSC.

Follow The Money

Advocates also have been following campaign funding closely. EPI’s Schafer worries the flow of money might hint at what’s to come.

During the fall 2020 election cycle in Florida, investor-owned utilities donated more than \$9.2 million to candidates and their political committees on both sides of the aisle, [according to the EPI](#).

That's far more than they've paid out to net metering customers since the rule was adopted in 2008, Schafer said.

"Florida utilities, like Florida Power & Light, have spent tens of millions of dollars to craft and preserve a political environment that delivers exactly what the power companies and their investors want, from our city commissions all the way to our legislature and Public Service Commission," said Schafer.

And advocates like Schafer are watching more than just dollars; they're also looking at political appointments

Former legislator Michael La Rosa applied to be a member of the PSC in June and, [as *The Miami Herald* reports](#), just days later he transferred \$50,000 from the political committee he controls, [Floridians for Opportunity](#), to the fund used to elect Republicans to the state Senate — the body that would eventually confirm La Rosa’s appointment to the PSC. [He was sworn](#) in as the PSC’s newest member last month.

For most of its 130-year history, the PSC was a three-person elected body. In 1978, it was expanded to a five-member appointed commission. Integrity Florida, a nonprofit research institute and government watchdog, has [labeled the PSC a “captured” regulatory agency](#), meaning state politicians have “considerable influence” on it.

Another notable recent change was at [the Office of Public Counsel](#) (OPC), which provides legal representation for residents in utility related matters. [As *The Tampa Bay Times* reported](#), J.R. Kelly, who was the head of that office for 14 years, was effectively forced out last year when Sen. President Wilton Simpson — a top recipient of utility contributions, with his political committee Jobs For Florida accepting \$220,000 — successfully pushed legislation to impose a 12-year term limit on the position.

In the past, the OPC has viewed rooftop solar as an “important part” of Florida’s future energy mix. Kelly himself fell “somewhere in the middle” of current net-metering arguments, meaning he supports reimbursement but not necessarily at the 1:1 ratio solar advocates want.

The position of Kelly’s successor, Richard Gentry, is not yet clear, although he spent the last year lobbying for the utility-backed nonprofit [Floridians for Government Accountability](#).



AP Photo/Matt York

In this July 28, 2015, photo, electricians install solar panels on a roof.

Florida's Solar Future

Utility scale solar is expanding rapidly in Florida and across the country. JEA has installed 8 solar farms over the past decade and has plans to build five more. Once all of those are online, they will produce enough renewable energy to power about 62,000 Jacksonville homes, or about 15% of JEA's customers.

JEA declined to be interviewed for this article, citing the ongoing litigation, but said in an email they believe utility-scale solar is more cost efficient than rooftop.

But even with that rapid expansion, scientists and environmental activists say it's not nearly enough to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. So does JEA — which is under new management and a new board after [a botched attempt to privatize](#) — plan to reinstate 1:1 reimbursement for net metering customers?

“There are no plans to change the policy as it currently stands because it equitably spreads the associated costs among JEA’s customers (solar and non-solar) dependent upon the electric grid,” said Media Relations Coordinator Simone Garvey-Ewan.

Power Source Disclosure (% of Energy)¹

Energy Mix - Sources	2018	2019	2020
Nuclear	0%	0%	0%
Coal	22%	16%	12%
Natural Gas	48%	49%	63%
Petroleum Coke	12%	9%	12%
Oil	0%	0%	0%
Renewables ²	1%	1%	1%
Other ³	17%	25%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%

¹Source: JEA Annual Report and Rating Agency presentation; adjusted for the renewable breakout.

²Renewables include JEA Solar and methane gas, but does not include renewable generation whose environmental attributes have been sold as Renewable Energy Credits (RECs) to benefit JEA customers.

³Other includes electricity from inter-regional interchange transactions that are not traceable to specific generation sources and other system purchases.

Brendan Rivers

A1A Solar's Pete Wilking says that Florida's rapid growth, plus the increase in electric

space, like rooftops, for solar expansion. But he's concerned about his industry's ability to compete in the political realm.

"Little guys like us, we don't have big coffers to give massive campaign donations to lawmakers. We just don't have the resources," Wilking said. "The biggest problem right now is that utility companies don't know how to morph their business model to nicely accommodate rooftop solar. That's where the rub is right now."

This story was produced in partnership with the Florida Climate Reporting Network, a multi-newsroom initiative formed to cover the impacts of climate change in the state. It first appeared at [ADAPT](#).

Tags

News

WGCU News

Environment



Brendan Rivers

Brendan Rivers comes to WJCT News with years of experience reporting and hosting news for several stations in the Daytona Beach area.

[See stories by Brendan Rivers](#)

Antonia Hover

From: Ellen Plendl
Sent: Wednesday, February 24, 2021 9:04 AM
To: 'beatricebalboa@gmail.com'
Subject: Consumer Inquiry - Florida Power & Light Company

Ms. Beatrice Balboa
beatricebalboa@gmail.com

RE: Inquiry 1364048C

Dear Ms. Balboa:

This is in response to your February 23 E-mail to the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC), regarding Florida Power & Light Company (FPL).

You expressed a concern about FPL's petition for a rate increase. We will add your comments to the correspondence side of Docket No. 20210015.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at 1-800-342-3552 or by fax at 1-800-511-0809.

Sincerely,

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
1-800-342-3552 (phone)
1-800-511-0809 (fax)