

2024 -- H 8261

=====
LC006077
=====

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- SOLAR SITING ADVISORY
TASKFORCE

Introduced By: Representatives Phillips, Morales, Dawson, J. Brien, Chippendale,
Newberry, Shanley, Perez, Costantino, and Lima

Date Introduced: May 10, 2024

Referred To: House Corporations

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. The general assembly finds that:

2 (1) Facilitating and promoting installation of renewable energy infrastructure to reduce
3 carbon emissions that contribute to climate change requires consideration of siting impacts on the
4 environment.

5 (2) Installing renewable energy infrastructure on areas ill-suited for diverse development
6 types, which includes interstate rights of way and state-owned properties such as the parking areas
7 and rooftops of public, municipal, or state-owned buildings, would assist the state to meet its
8 climate resiliency goals, including those established in chapter 6.2 of title 42 ("act on climate"),
9 while minimizing environmental impact.

10 (3) Placing solar energy systems on interstate rights of way would ensure that solar energy
11 systems are not surrounded by sunlight blocking structures, and ensure that engineers will have
12 clear access for the purposes of construction, interconnection, repair, and maintenance.

13 (4) The use of interstate rights of way to accommodate solar energy systems is permissible
14 provided such developments comply with federal laws, federal regulations, state law, and the state
15 utility accommodation policy.

16 (5) By using interstate rights of way, Rhode Island can reduce the number of trees required
17 to be removed to support the installation of solar energy systems, and promote the preservation of
18 trees.

1 (6) The department of transportation has identified at least two hundred (200) acres at
2 several sites on interstate rights of way that are potential viable locations for solar energy systems.

3 (7) The department of environmental management has developed guidelines for the
4 installation of solar energy systems on sites within their jurisdiction, and offers pre-application
5 meetings with applicants to coordinate projects that involve multiple permits, in order to decrease
6 the time necessary to process the proposal.

7 (8) Challenges to successful implementation of solar energy systems includes the cost and
8 process necessary to interconnect solar energy systems to the electrical grid.

9 (9) The state may expedite solar energy system installations by having state agencies and
10 key stakeholders with jurisdiction and/or subject matter expertise provide technical assistance and
11 professional advice.

12 SECTION 2. Title 39 of the General Laws entitled "PUBLIC UTILITIES AND
13 CARRIERS" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

14 CHAPTER 33

15 SOLAR SITING ADVISORY TASKFORCE

16 **39-33-1. Definitions.**

17 As used in this chapter:

18 (1) "Eligible property" means a property owned by the state including: the parking areas
19 and rooftops of a public, municipal, or state-owned building; an interstate right of way; or such
20 other location as the taskforce may determine appropriate and which are subject to the jurisdiction
21 of the state.

22 (2) "Interstate right of way" means the undeveloped area on highway medians, off ramps,
23 and interchanges.

24 (3) "Power-purchase agreement" means the same as that term is defined in § 39-26.8-2.

25 (4) "Solar energy system" means the same as that term is defined in § 39-26.8-2 and
26 includes devices used to store electricity as may be generated.

27 **39-33-2. Solar siting advisory taskforce.**

28 (a) There is hereby established a solar siting advisory taskforce (hereinafter the
29 "taskforce"). The taskforce shall consist of nine (9) members as follows:

30 (1) The director of the department of transportation, or designee;

31 (2) The chairperson of the state properties committee, or designee;

32 (3) The chairperson of the public utilities commission, or designee;

33 (4) The director of the department of environmental management, or designee;

34 (5) The commissioner of the office of energy resources, or designee;

1 (6) The secretary of commerce, or designee;
2 (7) One representative of an electric distribution company that does business in Rhode
3 Island to be appointed by the governor; and

4 (8) Two (2) members of the public who shall have experience with the assembly and
5 installation of solar energy systems to be appointed by the governor.

6 (b) The purpose of this taskforce shall be to provide recommendations, advice and guidance
7 to help expedite and facilitate the development of solar energy systems on eligible property.

8 (c) In furtherance of the purposes of the taskforce stated in subsection (b) of this section,
9 the taskforce shall, consistent with the provisions of chapter 2 of title 37 ("state purchases"), provide
10 recommendations to the appropriate state agencies regarding the proposed use of an eligible
11 property for the installation of a solar energy system and make any such suggestions as the taskforce
12 deems necessary to advance the successful installation of the solar energy system at the eligible
13 property.

14 **39-33-3. Annual Report.**

15 The taskforce shall submit an annual report on the taskforce's activities for the previous
16 calendar year, on or before September 8, 2025, and annually thereafter, to the governor, the speaker
17 of the house, and the president of the senate. This report shall include a cost-benefit analysis of the
18 implementation of solar energy systems on eligible properties as set forth in this chapter.

19 **39-33-4. Sunset.**

20 The provisions of this chapter shall expire and sunset on September 8, 2027.

21 SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon passage.

=====
LC006077
=====

EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS -- SOLAR SITING ADVISORY
TASKFORCE

1 This act would create a taskforce to provide recommendations, advice and guidance to help
2 expedite and provide technical assistance with regard to the development of solar energy systems
3 on property owned by the state, including the parking areas of public and municipal properties and
4 areas of interstate rights of way.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

=====
LC006077
=====