Net Metering: How It Works and How to Do It

Five ways to help our state build renewable energy

- Get an assessment from a solar vendor
- Use Rhode Island's programs to add a solar installation to your building
- Ask your city council or town manager about virtual net metering
- If you work for the city/town, a state agency, or a nonprofit, ask them too
- Ask the governor about her renewable energy plan for state facilities

With net metering, if you install renewable energy facilities (or contract for them), your energy meter runs both ways. Incoming electricity from the grid is charged to your account. Outgoing electricity, the amount you haven't used yourself, is credited to your account. Since sometimes the sun shines and the wind blows and sometimes it doesn't, the principle is to have the amount in and the amount out balanced at the end of the year.

Household action: The first step is calling a solar vendor—you can use the Office of Energy Resource's list: http://www.energy.ri.gov/renewable/REP/ They will make a free assessment of your building's roof for its exposure to the sun, calculate how much electricity you could expect to generate in an average year, and show you—based on current programs—how quickly the initial cost of your installation will be paid back, and what its overall benefit to you will be. They can also calculate which of the two programs (Renewable Energy Growth or the Renewable Energy Fund) would be better for you to work with, based on how much electricity you can generate.

Cities and towns, government agencies, and non-profits can have the renewable energy capacity in one location and the meters being credited with the production in another location. This arrangement is known as virtual net metering. In this arrangement, the same meter still measures the electricity produced and the electricity consumed.

Community action: Call Governor Raimondo's office at (401) 222-2080 and ask that she reveal and implement her renewable energy plan for state facilities. Stress that this needs to happen soon, or project developers won't have enough time to help the state meet its goal for 2020.