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State Lawmakers Vote to Keep Successful Low-Income Solar Programs Going
Proposed law ensures equal access to clean energy while investing in job training

Sacramento, CA—Today, the California Assembly voted to extend programs that help thousands of low-income families across California gain access to money-saving solar technology and clean energy jobs.

The Single-Family Affordable Solar Homes and Multi-Family Affordable Solar Housing Programs (SASH and MASH), offer solar rebates for families and housing developments meeting strict income and affordability requirements, while creating solar job training opportunities in a fast-growing industry. The first of their kind in the nation, the programs began in 2009 through the California Solar Initiative and are slated to end in 2016. The Equitable Access to Solar Energy Bill, co-authored by Assembly Member Steven Bradford (D-Gardena) and Senator Kevin De León (D-Los Angeles), will extend the two programs through the year 2021.

“While the upfront cost of solar has decreased in recent years, barriers remain for low-income families,” said Assembly Member Bradford. “Today, my colleagues voted to make sure that Californians can benefit from the state’s growing solar economy.”

AB 217 meets the same installation targets as the current programs (~50MW) with only half the program budget ($108 million) by capitalizing on existing program efficiencies, statewide public-private partnerships, and equipment cost reductions.

GRID Alternatives, a non-profit solar installer and administrator of the SASH program, is the sponsor of the bill. GRID has installed solar electric systems for over 3,000 low-income families throughout California and has incorporated hands-on job training and volunteerism into every project.

“This is an important win for families in our state,” said GRID Alternatives CEO Erica Mackie. “The bill’s passage will mean that all of California’s communities, regardless of their means, will continue to have access to clean, affordable energy and clean-tech job opportunities.”

The Equitable Access to Solar Energy Bill now heads to the State Senate.