



January 28, 2026

Solar One and Vote Solar submit the following comments on the FY2027 Executive Budget.

Solar One is a New York nonprofit organization whose mission is to design and deliver innovative education, training, and technical assistance that fosters sustainability and resiliency in diverse urban environments. We provide comprehensive solar technical assistance to homeowners, affordable housing providers, renters, and community organizations to facilitate high-impact solar projects.

Vote Solar is a nonprofit policy advocacy organization with the mission of making solar more accessible and affordable across the United States. We work at the state level in 25 states to drive the transition to a just 100% clean energy future. We are a team of solar advocates using a winning combination of deep policy expertise, coalition building, and public engagement to power just and equitable clean energy progress in states nationwide.

The Governor's FY2027 Executive Budget and policy agenda, outlined in the State of the State address, correctly identifies some of the most urgent issues of this moment: the need for affordability and for New Yorkers to live in healthy, resilient homes. Unfortunately, the Governor misses the opportunity to connect affordability to the climate crisis, and overlooks the one climate solution already outperforming state expectations and decreasing energy bills for everyday New Yorkers - distributed solar.

Additionally, the Governor's budget misses the mark on getting our state on track to meet the targets set out by the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA). The CLCPA mandates the bold response that New York State needs to address the mounting climate crisis. It puts forth proven solutions that help save New Yorkers money and breathe clean air, including decarbonizing homes and buildings and generating local renewable energy to save on household energy bills; all of which should be funded through a Cap and Invest program in the longterm, and an additional \$1 billion for the sustainable futures fund in the short term.

Distributed solar is a key solution in the CLCPA: it is proven at scale, deploys quickly, and locks in long-term ratepayer savings by avoiding expensive infrastructure. It is also the most successful clean energy sector, on track to achieve the State's 10 gigawatt goal early and under budget, employing almost [19,000 workers across the state](#). Going all-in on nuclear energy, as proposed in the Executive Budget, rather than doubling down on what's working – local solar – is the wrong approach. Investing in solar means not only immediate bill relief for those who install it, but also immense economic and public health benefits through avoided peaker plants and wholesale energy prices.

Despite the industry's success, serious challenges – such as federal attacks on clean energy incentives – threaten the State's solar industry and increase the costs of solar for everyday New Yorkers and businesses. New York leaders can overcome these challenges and tackle the energy affordability crisis with a cohesive and ambitious vision, backed by goals and policies that immediately put dollars back into the pockets of New Yorkers while improving the quality of their lives.

**Distributed solar remains one of the most cost-effective tools to reduce utility cost burden and decarbonize our grid, which is why we should be doubling down on the industry's success.** Accelerating its deployment is one of the most immediate and cost-effective ways the Executive Budget can deliver on the Governor's affordability agenda. To that end, we offer these recommendations to strengthen the budget:

1. **Accelerate Local Solar and Cut Red Tape:** The State Budget should adopt the **Accelerator Solar for Affordable Power (ASAP) Act (S.6570 / A.8758)**, which would increase the State's distributed solar goal to 20 gigawatts by 2035, modernize our grid through interconnection reforms and cut red tape to bring renewable energy online more quickly and cost-effectively. Increasing New York State's goal to 20 gigawatts would create [\\$1 billion in energy savings for all New Yorkers](#), regardless if they are solar customers. Additionally, the budget should include mandatory statewide **instant residential solar permitting** for simple code-compliant solar projects, and direct funding for NYSERDA to support implementation. If adopted statewide, instant permitting is expected to reduce the cost of residential solar by as much as [\\$5,200 by 2040 and result in 355,000 additional installs statewide](#). While it certainly remains important to have diversified clean energy production strategies across the state, such as utility-scale renewables, we urge the Governor to prioritize these measures to cut red tape and increase investment in distributed resources that put clean energy on the grid in a matter of months, not years, and generate immediate savings for New Yorkers.
2. **Increase Equitable Access to Solar and Decarbonization:** As we deploy decarbonization technologies and renewable resources in New York, Disadvantaged Communities and low- to moderate-income (LMI) households must be equitably included in the clean energy transition.

**The New York State Residential Solar Tax Credit** is crucial for helping New Yorkers access distributed solar, and even more so as the federal government cuts solar incentives, but it remains out of reach for many households. A quarter of owner-occupied households in New York State make less than \$50,000, but they have only received five percent of the state's residential solar tax credit incentives, meaning that rooftop solar is not accessible for the people who stand to benefit the most from bill reductions. New York could address this disparity by modernizing the NYS Residential Solar Tax Credit (S.2626 / A.1373A) by increasing the per-household cap and amending the tax credit to be refundable to low-income homeowners and seniors.

**While we are glad to see funding for the Green Affordable Pre-Electrification (GAP) Fund and Empower+** in the Executive Budget to help low-income households make key health and safety upgrades and decarbonize, the budget allocations for these programs fall short of the demonstrated need. We urge state leaders to increase the GAP Fund budget allocation to \$200 million to adequately address the scale of housing upgrades needed among LMI communities. The need for these funds is staggering: studies show that up to [1.1 million low- and moderate-income \(LMI\) households could benefit from home remediation support](#) before accessing energy-efficiency programs, and investing \$200 million per year could support remediation in at least 10,000 homes annually. Additionally, we call for the State Budget to allocate \$200 million for Empower+. The Empower+ program provides insulation, air sealing, and electrification measures for 30,000 low- and moderate-income households each year, but needs more investment to ensure that the program can meet the need.

**Finally, increasing community solar is critical to ensuring that solar benefits** low-income New Yorkers, renters, and others who can't install rooftop solar. However, in New York, expensive, outdated, and time-intensive interconnection processes to connect new community solar projects to the grid are forcing companies to take their business, jobs, and investment elsewhere. The ASAP Act, mentioned above, would reform interconnection, reducing costs for community solar, and ensuring more low-income ratepayers have access to bill savings.

Taken together – a refundable state solar tax credit, increased GAP and Empower+ Funding, and cost-saving interconnection reforms for community solar – these policies advance New York's mandate to secure clean energy benefits for our Disadvantaged Communities.

- 3. Adequately Resource Low-Cost Retrofit Financing Programs** We applaud the Governor for increasing the **Green Jobs Green New York (GJGNY)** loan cap to \$50 thousand for residential households. This increase will expand below-market loan terms to more comprehensively cover the cost of retrofits, including weatherization, electrification, solar, and storage.
- 4. Expand Virtual Power Plants for a Reliable and Affordable Grid:** We are happy to see the emergence of the Excelsior Power program to incentivize grid reliability and reduced utility costs for New Yorkers. This policy signals a recognition that New York needs stronger, more ambitious demand-response programs that incentivize households to contribute clean energy to the grid, particularly at times of high demand. Solar One and Vote Solar encourage the Governor to expand on this approach by investing in robust virtual power plant (VPP) programs that also include distributed solar and storage resources. VPPs enhance the benefits of our distributed solar and storage and further help avoid expensive infrastructure costs. Across the country, we have seen VPPs shed peak grid load by dispatching customer-sited batteries - just last summer during a terrible heat wave, VPP operators [Sunrun](#) and [Energyhub](#) were able to dispatch over 1.2

gigawatts of distributed storage load in a single day and shift energy during peak demand. As the state faces an increasingly strained grid, New York should prioritize VPP solutions because they address grid reliability while generating income for homeowners.

**5. Expand Virtual Power Plants for a Reliable and Affordable Grid**

In conclusion, thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to advocate for additional policies that are needed to both increase clean energy and reduce New Yorkers' bills. We are in a pivotal moment, facing federal hostility towards clean energy progress. New York must now rise to the challenge and lead. Distributed solar is already delivering on affordability, and the recommendations here would strengthen and accelerate its benefits for all New Yorkers. New York leaders have the chance to drive a just transition, a decarbonized grid, all while centering affordability and equity for all New Yorkers.

Sincerely,

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