

March 27, 2018

As the Secretary of Kentucky's Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet under Governor Ernie Fletcher, we worked diligently with Kentucky's electric utilities, environmental advocates, Sen. Harris (bill sponsor), and other legislators to reach an agreement and pass Kentucky's first net metering law. That law, which passed in 2004, allowed Kentuckians to produce their own power, or at least some of it, by installing solar panels or other technologies. Developing energy independence, reducing air pollution emissions, and supporting home owners and small business people were the goals, and have been the result, of the net metering law.

The legislation passed with overwhelming support in 2004. In fact, net metering passed with no legislators voting against it. Every once in a while in government, you get to work on issues with a diverse group of constituents and reach an agreement - *an actual agreement* - to accomplish something really good! This was one of those times. It was a win-win!

Net metering provides that excess electricity being produced by a homeowner will be credited back by the utility at the same rate that the homeowner pays for electricity purchased from the utility. Since many people produce only a portion of their electricity using solar, each month there is a "net-metering" assessment that calculates how much electricity is produced compared to how much is used, and the homeowner then pays the utility for the difference, just as homeowners typically would pay for their electric bill. That's a fair deal. There are size limits to the system to ensure that the utility doesn't get inundated with excess solar power, but that hasn't happened in the past 14 years and it is unlikely to happen in my lifetime.

Every time solar panels are installed in Kentucky, utilities need a little less pollution control equipment, which costs billions of dollars for ratepayers in the state. Every case of asthma that is avoided has the potential to save taxpayers money in medical costs. These savings, and many others like them, are small, but every little bit helps if utilities don't need to install costly equipment or our medical bills are reduced.

Every time solar panels are installed in Kentucky, it saves the rest of the ratepayers and taxpayers money. Solar power installation provides jobs for small business people. And those who install solar panels can feel like they are making a difference in the world. I installed a small 2.5 kW solar system at my home in 2011. We who have installed solar systems are doing so not only for ourselves, but for the benefits solar can provide all citizens and ratepayers.

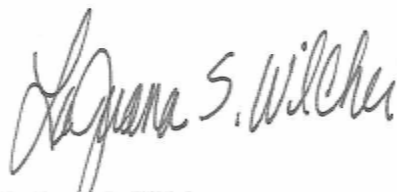
It is astounding that the utilities are now pushing HB 227, which proposed penalizing homeowners with solar panels by requiring that they pay full price for the regular electricity that they buy, but would credit them less for the electricity they produce.

Kentucky utilities are attacking net metering by saying it results in cross subsidization. Cross subsidization is the idea that one type of customer is being subsidized by another type of

customer – in this instance, utilities claim solar customers are being subsidized by all other customer classes.

Utilities, however, have presented no facts demonstrating net metering cross subsidization nor have they produced studies indicating problems due to this cross subsidization. Nor have they discussed the subsidization that those who install solar panels provide to the people of the Commonwealth in jobs, reduced need for air pollution control equipment, and medical costs, among other things.

If utilities want to change net metering, they should look to our process from 2004. Utilities should convene interested stakeholders, present data evidencing a problem, and work with stakeholders to develop a solution. This is how we should do business in Kentucky, instead of by conducting misleading robo-calls asking people to call their legislators to overturn net-metering, a program that is good for us all. I got one, and I called my Senator. But I gave him the real facts, instead of the slanted, canned drivel that came over my phone line last week. Do the right thing. Reject HB 227.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "LaJuana S. Wilcher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

- LaJuana Wilcher  
Attorney-at-Law, Farmer  
Warren County, Kentucky