

Montana Wind & Solar, LLC

3128 Farnam St, Billings, MT 59102

To: Public Service Commission of Montana
1701 Prospect Ave.
Helena, MT 59601

RE: Public Comment - Northwestern Energy's application for interim and final approval of revised tariff No. QF-1, Qualifying Facility Power Purchase

Dear Commissioners:

This letter is to express our concerns about the attempt by NWE to change the current tariff rates for independent power projects in Montana. Having attended the PURPA Roundtable last week – and the Greycliff Wind hearing the previous day, of which we are part owners – I am seeing an attempt by NWE to suppress all attempts by private developers in building cost-competitive wind and solar projects in the state.

The suggestions that the contracts be less than 25 years and/or float the rates based upon the current market are both deal killers for developers like us to be able finance our projects. These suggestions may sound like some kind of reasonable compromise, but NWE knows that we cannot function our businesses based upon these ideas. They know that investors in the real world need to have some sense of certainty to invest millions of dollars into these projects. It is, in fact, the same level of certainty that NWE demands from the Commission before NWE invests in its own, utility owned, resources.

With regard to NWE's request for interim QF rates, we see another attempt to deny independent power project developers a fair price and fair process before the Commission. The Commission set a fair price for small 3MW solar development in Montana and the market responded. Now, without an evidentiary hearing, NWE seeks to scare the Commission to adopting their unilaterally proposed rate filing. This plainly pulls the rug out from independent power project developers by changing the rules midstream after our team has spent hundreds of thousands of dollar in good faith. As a Montana-based company we ask that you support our efforts and the risks we take by not giving into this latest request by NWE.

We ask that you keep the current rates in place and support these projects which create substantial revenue for local companies and county taxes. It's time that the fastest job producing sector in energy development in the U.S. – renewable energy – is allowed to have positive impact on the Montana economy and meet consumer demands cost effectively.

Thank you for your consideration.
Rhyno Stinchfield, CEO