

Testimony of Carl Meiss
Pennsylvania State Grange
Before the House Consumer Affairs Committee
January 11, 2012
Regarding House Bill 1580

On behalf of the Pennsylvania State Grange, I would like to thank the House Consumer Affairs Committee for allowing the Pennsylvania State Grange to submit written testimony regarding House Bill 1580, which increases the percentage of solar energy credits that utilities are required to purchase in order to comply with the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act.

My name is Carl Meiss and I am the Master of the Pennsylvania State Grange, a family fraternal organization that is dedicated to the betterment of the American quality of life through community service, education, legislation and fellowship. Currently, the Grange represents approximately 15,000 Pennsylvanians across the Commonwealth and is the oldest agricultural and rural advocacy organization of its kind in the United States.

I am here today to ask for your support and, ultimately, passage of HB 1580. HB 1580 proposes to adjust the required Tier 1 solar energy credits for 2012 through May 2015 from half a percent to 1 ½ percent with a gradual increase that brings the percentage to just under 2 ½ percent in June 2014 through May of 2015 when the percentage mandate by statute increases to 2 ½ %. This minor change would allow Pennsylvania to remain competitive with surrounding states which require utilities to purchase from 2 to 3 ½ percent of their power from solar production. It would protect current investments and ensure the continued development of solar energy.

Currently, Pennsylvania's solar energy production is in trouble. Our solar energy development at one time was second in production only to California and was a thriving industry in the Commonwealth. Farmers/producers installed solar units in order to be more competitive and to better comply with the alternative energy portfolio requirements of larger buyers. However, surrounding states soon recognized the benefits of solar energy and quickly got on board with pursuing it, too. With the aggressive development of solar energy installations in these surrounding states, once profitable solar energy credits

available to Pennsylvania farmers and other landowners who supported this burgeoning clean energy industry have exceeded the amount Pennsylvania utilities are required to purchase through the Alternative Energy Credit Act. Consequently, farmers and other landowners are seeing a significant drop in the value of solar energy credits, a loss of solar-related jobs, and a drop in solar investments. Many farmers who made the initial investment in solar energy panels are now having difficulty recouping their investments. HB 1580 seeks to rectify this situation and to restore the value of solar renewable energy credits.

In summary, the Pennsylvania State Grange strongly supports HB 1580 and its promotion of a required increase in the percentage of solar energy credits purchased within the Commonwealth by utilities. In passing this legislation, Pennsylvanians will benefit from the continued development of solar energy through reduced energy costs and job opportunities for the Commonwealth and its citizens.