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Natalie Herzog <nherzog@dgf.k12.mn.us>
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Lauren Brorby, CPA
CEO

THE CEO'S REPORT

Solar energy too costly, another tax burden

Too often catchphrases dominate politics and discussion on proposed legislation concerning renewable energy, specifically solar.

Words like "sustainable" are thrown around by those advocating for a solar mandate. If a TV reporter says wind is free or that the sun is free, then there must be no downside, right? What gets lost when we use catchy phrases is meaningful discussion on the merits of whether solar energy is a reliable producer of energy and whether you can afford it.

In my opinion, solar energy is not yet reliable enough and still way too costly for state legislators to impose a heavy-handed mandate. Simply stated, proposed solar legislation (HF 956, SF 901) at the state Capitol would cost Minnesotans hundreds of millions of dollars for an energy source that only works when the sun is shining. Large-scale batteries are still prohibitively expensive. Just as troubling, this legislation adds another tax burden onto you that most likely will be used to fund solar installations for upper-income earners who can already afford to install solar panels.

I don't want to speak for our elected legislators, but Sen. Kent Eken, Rep. Paul Marquart and Rep. Deb Kiel have indicated they are very receptive to our message voicing serious concerns about making our members pay for this very expensive solar mandate. Voting on all solar legislation will most likely happen in late April or early May so make your voice

heard. And remember, the energy you receive from Red River Valley Co-op Power is already 42 percent renewable!

Below are excerpts from just a few of the communications we have sent our elected officials.

"At last week's annual meeting, we discussed HF 956 along with all the other solar legislation that has been introduced this year... the wind mandate from 2007 has cost this state in excess of \$70 million for wind energy we don't need, can't use and must sell into the market-place for a loss. For our power supplier, Minnkota Power Cooperative, we are losing in excess of \$25 million every year."

"The proposed solar mandate would add billions of dollars to the cost of electricity across the state of Minnesota and hundreds of millions of dollars to the Minnkota system alone. We are already paying more because of the wind mandate. We, along with our membership, are steadfastly opposed to HF 956 extracting even more money to support the solar industry. Furthermore, we, along with our membership, are outraged at the prospect of having to pay an additional 1.33 percent tax on our energy bills to further support solar. This policy is entirely regressive in nature, and impacts low-income earners in a disproportionate way while subsidizing those of means."

"We strongly urge you to oppose the mandates and taxes included in HF 956."