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OPINION EXCHANGE

A homeowner's right to go solar

Legislation could take out some barriers homeowners currently face with HOAs.

By Nancy Simmet | MARCH 13, 2022 — 6:00PM

Like more and more Minnesotans, I want to produce clean, renewable solar energy from my rooftop. But for me, there is a problem.

My home is part of a homeowners association (HOA) and my HOA has blocked my effort to go solar. I have learned that this is a common occurrence for HOA homeowners in Minnesota who want to go solar. It is slowing the growth of rooftop solar in our state.

Fortunately, there is a legislative proposal to fix it.

I have owned my home in the Oakpointe of Eagan Homeowners Association since August of 1999, and even served on the first community board of the association. During the summer of 2020, I heard of the federal and local incentives that were being offered to put solar panels on the roof of one's home. With an interest in the environment, and COVID giving me nothing but time to research, I dug in. I gathered information on solar installations and solar companies. I found a local solar company that put together a comprehensive package that met my home's specifications.

Next, I approached my HOA board to apply for approval. I received the rejection e-mail the following day.

Fortunately, legislation has been introduced that would give HOA homeowners like me the right to go solar. [HF 257 \(https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/status_result.php?body=House&search=basic&session=0922021&location=House&bill=hf+257&bill_type=bill&rev_number=&submit_bill=GO&keyword="](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/status_result.php?body=House&search=basic&session=0922021&location=House&bill=hf+257&bill_type=bill&rev_number=&submit_bill=GO&keyword=) is authored by Rep. Ami Wazlawik, DFL-White Bear Township, and [SF 2267 \(https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/status_result.php?body=Senate&search=basic&session=0922021&location=Senate&bill=sf+2267&bill_type=bill&rev_number=&submit_bill=GO&keyword="](https://www.revisor.mn.gov/bills/status_result.php?body=Senate&search=basic&session=0922021&location=Senate&bill=sf+2267&bill_type=bill&rev_number=&submit_bill=GO&keyword=) is authored Sen. Karin Housley, R- Stillwater. This legislation would allow HOAs to place reasonable restrictions on solar arrays but not block them outright. If this bipartisan legislation passes, my dream to go solar can become reality.



"With proper restrictions, HOA homeowners have a right to put solar energy panels on their own roofs," Nancy Simmet writes.

Twenty-seven other states have similar legislation in place, including neighboring Iowa and Wisconsin. We have 7,725 HOAs in our state, making us 15th in the country for number of HOAs. There are 1.5 million Minnesotans living in these HOAs, just over 1 in 4 Minnesotans. Many HOA homes like mine are perfect for solar arrays, with large, flat roofs with no shading from trees.

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There are no doubt thousands of HOA homeowners like me who want to invest in solar. This legislation will immediately make more solar possible to meet our clean energy needs. It would mean more jobs for solar installers. I believe in renewable energy and that the consequences of not moving forward are real.

Minnesota can be a leader in solar energy by developing businesses and manufacturing jobs to meet our future head-on.

With proper restrictions, HOA homeowners have a right to put solar energy panels on their own roofs. Architecturally attractive, such equipment is an update that marks an association as a forward-thinking community.

Nancy Simmet, of Eagan, is a member of Solar United Neighbors.

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