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Georgia commissioner: Tariffs would bring solar panel industry to 'standstill'

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A proposal by two U.S. solar panel manufacturers to impose a tariff on foreign imports of panels would bring growth of the solar industry in Georgia and other states to a "standstill," a member of the Georgia Public Service Commission (PSC) said Tuesday.

Lauren "Bubba" McDonald testified in Washington, D.C., during a hearing held by the International Trade Commission, which is considering a petition filed by Norcross, Ga.-based Suniva Inc. and a second solar panel manufacturer asking the Trump administration to impose tariffs that would be aimed primarily at a glut of cheap Asian solar panels entering the U.S.



SPECIAL

Georgia Public Service Commissioner Lauren "Bubba" McDonald SPECIAL

Suniva cited losses from foreign competition as a key contributor to its decision to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy last spring.

On Tuesday, McDonald testified that the PSC has approved the addition of more than 1 gigawatt in solar power in Georgia during the last decade, with an additional 1.6 gigawatts due to come online by 2021. That's enough to power 400,000 typical residential homes.

He said Georgia is home to more than 200 solar companies that have installed 1,500 megawatts of solar energy. The industry employs more than 4,000 workers in the Peach State, he said.

"Each year, solar technologies are becoming cheaper and more efficient, bringing greater benefits to Georgia's economy and ratepayers," he said. "Any tariffs imposed would distort the market, threatening tens of thousands of well-paying American jobs and harming the economic vitality of Georgia's future solar projects."

The ITC has until Sept. 22 to conclude its investigation of Suniva's petition and send its recommendation to the president.

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