

Why the Proposed Solar 201 Safeguard Tariff is a Bad Idea

By Lauren “Bubba” McDonald



Because I care about Georgia jobs and Georgia consumers, I am deeply opposed to the Section 201 safeguard case regarding solar cell and module manufacturing in the United States. This case now before the U.S. International Trade Commission, could impact the 4,000 Georgians working for the 200 solar companies here in our Georgia. Two flawed and foreign owned companies, one of which is based here in Georgia, want the ITC to recommend placing higher tariffs on solar cells and modules imported from China and elsewhere. I recently testified in opposition to the petition because of my unique role in promoting the development of solar energy in Georgia.

The expansion of the solar market benefits the entire U.S. solar industry, including producers of cells/modules/panels and installers, as well as many downstream industries. In 2016, solar energy was the largest source of new electricity generation capacity, with approximately 40 percent of all such capacity.

But more importantly the growth in solar energy benefits electricity consumers. Those benefits are immediate and lasting, because solar energy provides clean, reliable, and renewable energy at low prices. These attractive prices help hold down rates in the near term, and are a hedge against the price volatility of traditional fuel sources for the next 20-30 years. There is no fuel cost with solar.

We can continue this progress without additional government intervention in the market. The sky is the limit, provided we don't take actions that harm the industry.

Solar is important to Georgia's economy. There are 200 solar companies in Georgia that have worked to install 1,500 megawatts of solar energy and counting, making Georgia the number eight solar state in the United States. A tariff on solar panels, in my opinion, would likely result in the loss of \$2-3 billion in solar investment and jobs to our state.

At the recent Solar Power International in Las Vegas, executives and representatives from solar companies across the country expressed almost unanimous opposition to these proposed tariffs.

Many solar manufacturing companies have risen to the challenge of competing and are not looking to the government for protection. Instead they are innovating and investing in research and development. The companies that filed the Section 201 petition represent a minority of the

marketplace. They're here because their products are not economic and their business model is not competitive.

If the requested remedies are imposed, solar energy growth will draw to a standstill. That outcome would have a corresponding negative impact on jobs, economic development, property tax revenue, and investment in rural communities. It will also deprive consumers of the benefit of competitively priced solar projects.

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