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New Report: Outdated Solar Permitting Rules Stand in the Way of Families Lowering Utility Bills

Researchers grade states on permitting obstacles, suggest ways to make solar, home energy storage installations faster, easier, cheaper

American families are rightly frustrated that their electricity bills have been rising too high and too quickly as state governments debate solutions. As electricity bills keep climbing, rooftop solar and home batteries offer families one of the fastest ways to take more control over their monthly energy costs. Yet in most states, outdated permitting rules still make those systems more expensive and slower to install than they should be.

Millions of Americans interested in adding rooftop solar and battery storage to their homes face unnecessary bureaucratic barriers, according to a report released by [Permit Power](#), Environment America Research & Policy Center, and Frontier Group. [SOLAR PERMITTING SCORECARD: Grading all 50 states on removing obstacles to rooftop solar and home batteries](#) grades every U.S. state and makes policy recommendations to help more Americans install rooftop solar and batteries, resulting in lower utility bills and increased grid capacity.

“Home solar and batteries can reduce a family’s electricity bills by over 80 percent. Yet, the savings of rooftop solar are out of reach for many because of costly red tape,” said [Nick Josefowitz](#), **Founder and Chief Executive at Permit Power**. “If American families could install rooftop solar and home batteries at the price that families can in other countries, it would enable millions more families to install rooftop solar and lower their utility bills.”

Across America, permitting and inspection policies largely determine the cost and speed of installing residential solar and battery storage. Despite the availability of [automated or instant solar permitting platforms](#), in many places, getting approval to install a solar energy system is a needlessly complex, uncertain, and slow process.

Most states have adopted few, if any, policies to reduce costs and delays in the permitting process, while a handful have established important policies that demonstrate the feasibility of reducing red tape. These bureaucratic barriers can add an estimated \$6,000 - \$7,000 to the cost of the typical residential solar system.

According to the National Laboratory of the Rockies, [one in five](#) home solar projects that begin the permitting process are cancelled, and installers [cite permitting delays](#) as the biggest reason for the cancellations.

Only California and Texas received a “B” in the scorecard. New Jersey and Colorado received a “C.” All other states earned a “D” or an “F.”

According to a recent Permit Power report, [How cutting red tape can lower the cost of rooftop solar and offset rising utility bills](#), if the United States could cut state level red tape and bring solar in line with the cost in peer countries, by 2040, we'd see 18 million more families installing solar, resulting in \$1.2 trillion in utility bill savings and nearly 200 additional GW of residential solar nationally.

“Millions of Americans want to power their homes with plentiful, reliable, solar energy; most states have done little to adopt common-sense permitting practices that reduce costs and delays,” said [Emily Rusch](#), **senior director of state offices for Environment America Research & Policy Center**. “Unreasonable red tape burdens residents, installers and local authorities. States should make ‘going solar’ as quick and smooth as possible, without compromising health and safety. Opportunities to do that abound.”

States have the power to enact policies that streamline the process of issuing permits and conducting inspections for solar energy and battery storage systems on homes. In the past few years, [California](#) and [New Jersey](#) have led the charge and passed legislation that requires local governments to offer instant permits for home solar and battery systems. Cheap home solar and batteries are one of the only climate interventions that can immediately deliver sizable bill savings to American families.

“This report makes it clear: cutting solar permitting red tape is a low-cost way to help families lower their electricity bills,” said New Jersey Sen. John McKeon and Asm. Robert Karabinchak in a joint statement. “Through unanimous bipartisan legislative action, New Jersey passed practical reforms that save time and money for homeowners, installers, and local governments. This is one of the most immediate, low-cost steps states can take to deliver real ratepayer relief while strengthening the grid.”

“Automated, instant solar permitting is one of the most powerful tools we have to get solar on rooftops faster and cheaper,” said California State Senator Wiener. “This scorecard highlights that too many states are still stuck in slow, outdated processes that raise costs for families.

California is leading on implementation, and we should continue to expand modern permitting and inspection practices so homeowners can cut their bills and strengthen reliability.”

To produce the scorecard, researchers reviewed permitting and inspection policies for residential solar and energy storage systems in all 50 states. They assigned grades based on the extent to which those policies enable residents and installers to access automated or instant permitting, as well as other policies that help streamline solar installations, such as allowing remote inspections, creating protections from homeowners associations, and standardizing building codes.

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About Permit Power

Permit Power is a nonprofit organization making it cheap and easy for American families to power their lives. We do research, education, and advocacy to break down the bureaucratic barriers that get in the way of American families installing rooftop solar, home batteries, and other energy upgrades.