Senate Committee Votes 7-3 in Favor of Historic 'Solar For All' Bill

*Senate Appropriations is next step for AB 1990, which will bring clean energy to disadvantaged communities in San Diego and statewide*

July 3, 2012 – Sacramento, Calif. – Today the Senate Utility, Energy and Communications Committee voted 7-3 in favor of AB 1990, "Solar For All," a state bill that will bring green jobs and small-scale renewable energy to low-income communities disproportionately impacted by pollution. Authored by Assemblymember Paul Fong (D-Cupertino), AB 1990 passed favorably out of the Assembly in May and moves to the Senate Appropriations Committee in August."

In San Diego County, this bill means we can close the green divide by bringing renewable energy and jobs to our low-income communities that bear a high burden of pollution and unemployment rates," said Nicole Capretz, an associate director with Environmental Health Coalition's (EHC) Green Energy/Green Jobs campaign. "It also means we can sustainably meet our region's energy." Capretz points to a 2005 report, authored in part by SDG&E's smart grid chief engineer, which shows that solar rooftop potential in the region is more than enough to meet peak demand. She says, "Seven years later, we've barely scratched the surface of our solar potential."

According to California Watch, the City of San Diego currently has 2,600 solar residential rooftops, more than any other city in the state, but its lower-income neighbor, National City, only has a dozen. In California, AB 1990 would require utilities to purchase energy from about 1,000 new small-scale renewable energy projects in disadvantaged communities like National City between 2014 and 2020. The article also says that the program would create as much energy as a medium-sized power plant and have costs at the lowest end of the range. "This bill will spur private investment in rooftop solar generation, create high-quality jobs, generate economic growth in low income communities across California, and help the state meet its 33% renewable energy goal," explains Assembly member Fong.

The California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), a coalition of grassroots groups that includes EHC, joins Fong as sponsors of the bill. CEJA Coordinator Strela Cervas says AB 1990 would bring jobs that reduce climate change and provide a living wage to low-income communities and communities of color, which have been heavily hit by the recession. If passed, Solar for All will create up to 9,000 new jobs. Cervas said, "We have a huge opportunity to rebuild California's economy with clean energy, and it has to start in the areas that need it the most." Research from Los Angeles has shown that some of the best areas to build small-scale solar projects, in terms of energy generation potential, are
also areas of high economic need. In San Diego, this clean energy bill comes on the heels of recent proposals for gas power plants in open space near Mission Trails Regional Park and on protected Pueblo land near Rose Canyon. Last week, both projects failed to progress for different reasons and will each resurface in the appropriate public policy arena on their own timeline. These proposals follow the end of a historic multi-decade battle to shut down the South Bay Power Plant, which polluted air quality in nearby communities. Solar For All would help San Diego and California transition from such fossil fuel power plants to locally sourced renewable energy. The bill would also play a role with the City of San Diego as it prepares to release and implement its plan to combat climate change.

"The state has told California utilities to prioritize energy efficiency, conservation, demand response, and onsite renewable generation first," said Capretz. "In San Diego all signs point to small-scale solar projects as the best step to meet new energy needs and build a green economy."

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION: Founded in 1980, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) builds grassroots campaigns to confront the unjust consequences of toxic pollution, discriminatory land use and unsustainable energy policies. Visit us online at http://www.environmentalhealth.org/.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE: The California Environmental Justice Alliance is a statewide coalition of community-based groups working to achieve environmental justice by organizing in low-income communities and communities of color – those most impacted by environmental hazards – and pushing for statewide policies that protect public health and the environment. Our members are: Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment, Communities for a Better Environment, Environmental Health Coalition, and People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights. For more information, please visit: www.caleja.org