

## **Testimony in support of H7269: Portable Solar Generation Devices**

Dr. Hans Scholl, 71 Fales Avenue, Barrington, RI 02806

Date of Hearing: March 19, 2026

To Chair Solomon and the honorable Members of the House Corporations Committee:

Portable solar generation devices, also known as “balcony solar”, or “plug-in solar” offer a breakthrough in energy democracy and equity, opening solar power to millions of Americans who cannot participate in rooftop solar and who are otherwise excluded from lowering their bills by generating solar electricity: renters, condominium owners, and those who cannot afford rooftop solar.

These systems consist of a solar panel (up to 1,200 W) that plugs into a standard wall outlet, like a household appliance.

Due to their inherent safety, they require no electrician, no permits, no roof-work, and no utility approval. Installation takes 10-15 minutes and can save households \$100-400 annually on electricity bills. The systems pay for themselves in three to five years, their life time is 20+ years.

### **No tax-payer dollars are required to implement or to run plug-in solar.**

**Safety.** Eligible systems comply with rigorous safety standards (UL certification and National Electrical Code compliance). The primary safety feature is that an active grid connection is necessary to function. The system immediately shuts down

- when it gets unplugged: nobody can get shocked by touching the prongs of the plug,
- when there is a power outage in the grid: utility workers can work safely to restore power.

**Capacity.** Though the contribution of portable solar generation devices towards renewable energy generation will be relatively small compared to community, or residential rooftop solar, it will add to reducing greenhouse gas pollution over time. Because we currently struggle meeting the 2030 greenhouse gas emission reduction mandate of the Rhode Island Act on Climate, even smaller contributions should not be dismissed, especially when they are not dependent on tax-payer money. Plug in solar is worth pursuing.

**Overseas experience.** Germany has the longest experience with portable solar generation devices, using electric safety standards that are comparable to the US standards. Overall, more than 1 million systems<sup>1</sup> have been installed, with 435,000 installations in 2024 alone<sup>2</sup>, at a penetration of about 3% of the households, with an overall generation capacity of hundreds of Megawatts and no reported safety incidents.

**US experience.** Utah blazed the trail in 2025, passing legislation<sup>3</sup> with unanimous bipartisan support: all 72 House and all 27 Senate members voted in favor. The Utah law exempts

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<sup>1</sup> DPA. 2025. “[Germany's balcony power plants double in a year to 1 million](#)”. *Deutsche Presse Agentur* (Jun 11).

<sup>2</sup> German Government. Press release. 2025. “[Growth in renewable energy in 2024](#)”. *Bundesnetzagentur* (Aug 1).

<sup>3</sup> Utah State Legislation. 2025. “[H. B. 340 Solar Power Amendments](#)”.

compliant portable solar generation devices from burdensome interconnection requirements, giving residents accessible, affordable clean energy without red tape.

Virginia just passed legislation in the Senate and with unanimous bipartisan support in the House.

More than ten others States are introducing portable solar generation device bills in 2026.

**Rhode Island.** H7269 is an exact copy of the bill that passed in Utah, and gives Rhode Island the opportunity to become a leading State to empower its residents with this simple, proven technology, with the added benefit that it will not cost tax payer money.

**Potential for drastic reduction of permitting and red-tape.** Portable solar generation devices also provide a strategic opportunity to challenge and re-think permitting of renewable technologies, in general. If H7269 passes, it will supplement other bills that simplify the permitting requirements for rooftop solar, like the 2026 Solar Cost Reduction Act. This is overdue, because the main reason that we pay three times as much for solar a installations in the US compared to countries like Australia<sup>4</sup> is the excessive waste of time, money and red tape during our costly permitting processes.

**Connecting portable solar generation devices is safer than connecting portable generators.** Despite years of experience with the technology as being safe, Rhode Island Energy has expressed concerns about the safety of portable solar generation devices and likely will oppose the bill as written—a position that is unnecessary and out-of proportion.

Construing a necessity for additional safety requirements, or even for permits or interconnection review would arbitrarily single out plug-in solar:

Currently it is common practice—and supported by Rhode Island Energy—that a home owner can connect a portable gasoline or gas-powered generator (available up to 28,000 W<sup>5</sup>, a much larger capacity than the 1200 W of plug-in solar) to their home, with leaving it to the homeowner to *remember* to disconnect the home from the grid when doing so (refer to REI's guidance for generator owners in the Attachment to this testimony). Here it is actually very easy to accidentally feed a large amount of electricity into the grid and endanger a repair crew—which is impossible with portable solar generation devices due to their inherent built-in safety that doesn't require to remember, but *automatically disconnects* during a power outage.

Please bring the bill to a vote in 2026.

Thank you very much for considering my input, and thank you to Representative Speakman for introducing this important bill.



Dr. Hans Scholl

Mar 13, 2026

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<sup>4</sup> Roberts, David. 2026. "[How to make rooftop solar power as cheap in the US as it is in Australia](#)". Volts Podcast (Jan 28).

<sup>5</sup> Home Depot. "[Westinghouse 28000 Peak Watt Home Backup Portable Generator](#)." Accessed 2026-02-02.

# Safely operating generators for standby power

Putting safety first with electric generators



The electric generators referred to in this flyer are typically engine-driven and may be permanently installed or portable. These may run on gasoline, fuel oil/kerosene, natural gas or propane.

If you have or are planning to buy a standby generator for use when there's an outage on Rhode Island Energy's system, please observe these guidelines to protect yourself and your family:

- Have a licensed or qualified electrician install your generator. It's not something that untrained people can do safely. The wiring installation must be done according to local codes, the National Electrical Code (NEC), and Rhode Island Energy's Specifications for Electrical Installations.
- Make sure you get a generator that has enough capacity for your needs, including inrush for large motors. If it's too small, you could put too much strain on it, causing it to break down. Check manufacturer's instruction for sizing.
- Your wiring system must be disconnected from Rhode Island Energy's system before you operate the generator.
- When using a portable generator, make sure the main circuit breaker in your electric service panel box is in the "OFF" position. If you have a fuse box instead of breakers, pull out the main block, remove the fuses and reinsert the empty block. This is necessary to prevent your generator's electricity from going back into Rhode Island Energy's system, which could endanger the lives of line crews and your neighbors. Also, it is required by the NEC.
- For permanent installations, a double throw switch will allow you to easily and safely disconnect from Rhode Island Energy's system and connect your generator during an outage. Be sure your switch is the type that disconnects your system from Rhode Island Energy's system before the generator takes over. It is just as easy to reverse the process when Rhode Island Energy power is on again. This



is called "break-before-make" transfer. Have a double throw switch installed. It must be rated for its intended use according to the NEC and listed by a recognized independent test laboratory.

- A generator in a garage or outside building should be properly ventilated, since its exhaust (carbon monoxide) can cause serious injury and even death. Never install an electric generator inside a house. Operating a generator indoors, even with a door or window open, is NEVER safe!
- Generators make a lot of noise. Find a place for it where it will disturb your family and neighbors as little as possible.
- If possible, locate the standby generator close to where Rhode Island Energy's electric service connects to your house or business. Consult your local city, town or village for any requirements or permits.
- Please notify Rhode Island Energy's Customer Service Contact Center with the installation of a permanent standby generator fueled by liquid propane (LP) or natural gas (NG) when you install your generator. It may require a qualified electrician and need an electric service upgrade.

If you have any questions, please contact a licensed or qualified electrician or a Rhode Island Energy customer service representative at **1-800-870-1664**.

Smell gas. Act fast. **1-800-640-1595**. | To report a power outage call **1-855-RIE-1102**. | For downed wires call **1-855-RIE-1102**.

<sup>6</sup> RIE4414. [Safely operating generators for standby power. Putting safety first with electric generators](#)". Rhode Island Energy.