

# Ohio Missed Out On Solar Revolution, Thousands Of Jobs

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — Ohio has missed out on thousands of manufacturing jobs in the solar industry because it was slow to phase out certain taxes and make other adjustments to lure factories, a newspaper reported Sunday.

Industry analysts say Ohio is fighting both the perception and reality of having a noncompetitive tax structure compared with other states. Despite having successful solar research companies in the Toledo area, the state hasn't seen that translate into thousands of factory jobs, The Blade reported in the first of a three-part series.

In the past decade, dozens of manufacturing plants have opened or are near completion in California, Oregon, Massachusetts and other states.

Ohio was hampered in its ability to attract solar industry jobs because the corporate franchise tax and tangible personal property tax weren't completely phased out until this year, the newspaper said.

The state also continues to subsidize coal. The Ohio Constitution says state funding for coal projects can be in the form of grants, but funding for alternative energy projects, such as solar, must be in the form of loans.

While Ohio does offer loans for solar projects, it doesn't offer tax credits specifically targeted toward solar equipment manufacturers like those offered in Oregon and Michigan, The Blade said.

Gov. Ted Strickland said his state was late in constructing policies to attract solar companies. But he also believes Ohio is now competitive because of progress made by his administration.

Ohio offers a job creation tax credit between 25 percent and 55 percent to qualifying companies, a job-retention credit for any company maintaining 500 employees and committing \$50 million in investment, and grants for companies to pay for employee training in renewable energy technology.

Ohio has seven solar energy equipment manufacturers, according to the Solar Energy Industries Association.

By comparison, California has 140 solar manufacturers. There are 37 in Arizona, 26 in Florida and 23 in New York. In the Midwest, Illinois and Michigan each have 15.

"There hasn't been a market for solar energy in Ohio," said Rhone Resch, a lobbyist for the Solar Energy Industries Association in Washington. "The state bends over

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backwards to protect coal jobs. It needs to put more money in the next generation of energy and technology."

Ohio's new energy standards, adopted in 2008, have yet to produce a large market for solar panels, The Blade said. The state is requiring 12.5 percent of electricity sold in Ohio to be from renewable energy resources by 2025.

"Ohio has a supportive governor and is making strides," said Julie Blunden, vice president of public policy at SunPower, a multinational corporation that will establish a U.S. manufacturing operation within a year in either California or Arizona. "But there are hurdles to implementing the state's new standards, and it's just not a good time for manufacturing there."

Strickland said he never had a conversation with SunPower to convince its executives otherwise. He said the work his administration has done to improve Ohio's tax structure and other incentives for manufacturing will result in the announcements of new jobs in the coming months.

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