



Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee

65th Montana Legislature

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The 2017 Legislature passed House Bill 219 requiring NorthWestern Energy to study the costs and benefits of net metering. Navigant completed the study for NorthWestern, and the study is available [here](#). NorthWestern submits the study to the Public Service Commission (PSC) as part of a general rate case. NorthWestern will file the rate case before the end of September.

During the rate case, the PSC will evaluate the study and may make findings regarding whether customers with net-metering systems should be classified separately from other customers for rate design purposes. Based on changes authorized in HB 219, the PSC may establish new service classifications for net-metered customers, establish rates for those customers, or establish a net billing approach where customer energy production is metered separately from energy consumption and the value of energy production offsets the price of energy consumption.

HB 219 allowed to the PSC to establish minimum information requirements for the net metering study. The Navigant study addressed the issues required by the PSC. The study examined costs and benefits over a 25-year period. Benefits and costs were reviewed from two perspectives-- NorthWestern Energy's perspective and the customers' perspective.

For benefits, the Navigant study examined avoided energy costs, capacity costs, transmission and distribution capacity costs, system losses, and environmental compliance costs. Navigant concluded that avoided costs for compliance with Montana's renewable energy standards, market suppression effects, avoided risk (reduced price volatility), avoided grid support services costs, avoided outage costs, and other non-energy benefits were minimal, zero, or subjective and not quantifiable. For costs, the Navigant study examined reduced revenue (lost sales) and administrative costs. Navigant concluded that interconnection costs and integration costs were zero and other costs, like ancillary services, were subjective and not quantifiable.

The analysis concluded the value of solar energy sent back to the grid is about \$0.04/kWh. The value of solar for net-metered customers on NorthWestern's system is currently about \$0.12/kWh for energy sent back to the grid.

At the ETIC's July meeting, committee members requested NorthWestern release additional data and background information used by Navigant to conduct the study. The PSC also is requesting additional data and materials. At the time of this mailing the materials (August 23) have not been released to the PSC or to the ETIC. However, NorthWestern stated the company will be filing the underlying data prior to the September ETIC meeting along with a protective order for certain proprietary information. The proprietary information would not be filed until the PSC acts on the motion for a protective order.

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