



CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

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CONTACT: Jim Chilsen

(o) 312-263-4282, (c) 312-513-1784

CUB, MREA, Chicagoland Counties Partner to Launch Solar Switch Program
Program Offers Deep Discounts on Solar Panels, Opportunity for Future Savings on Electric bills

CHICAGO— A unique partnership among five Chicagoland counties, nonprofit advocates and expert solar professionals will educate consumers on how they can install solar panels at some of the deepest discounts in the state, the Citizens Utility Board (CUB), Illinois’ top utility watchdog, said Monday as the program launched.

The Solar Switch program, formerly called Grow Solar Chicagoland, is a partnership among Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will Counties, along with nonprofits CUB and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), and iChoosr, a company of solar experts who manage similar programs around the world.

Solar Switch is a “group-buy” program, which means it secures volume discounts for quality solar installations, based on how many residents of those five counties, along with residents of Kendall and McHenry counties, participate. The program runs a reverse-auction process that vets quality installers to serve participants.

“Thanks to strong state and federal policy, there has never been a better time to go solar—and Solar Switch makes it an even better deal in the Chicago region,” said Marina Minic, Solar Programs Coordinator at CUB. “As a watchdog we are concerned about education and consumer protections, and that’s why we’re proud of this program. Solar Switch gives consumers an introduction to solar power, and it offers a safe and reliable process to connect interested participants with qualified, vetted and affordable solar installers.”

Minic said legislation, such as Illinois’ 2021 Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA), and the federal Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, offer multiple incentives that can cover up to 70 percent of installation costs. That’s on top of volume discounts the Solar Switch program offers.

Solar has the potential to save customers hundreds of dollars a year on their electric bills. It is vital that affordable solar is an option for Illinois consumers who have been battered by high energy prices and now face a state-record \$1.5 billion rate-hike request from Commonwealth Edison, the electric utility for northern Illinois.

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309 W. Washington St., Suite 800, Chicago, IL 60606
Phone (312) 263-4282 | Toll Free 800-669-5556 | Fax (312) 263 4329

"The last two years of unpredictable energy prices are causing many to consider ways to lower their utility bills, and solar is a great option," said Taylor Ball, Solar Program Manager for the MREA. "Our program helps community members learn if solar is right for them, with guidance from experts on every step of their solar journey."

Here's how the program works:

- Chicagoland residents are invited to register for free, educational webinars without obligation at solarswitch.com/Chicagoland.
- iChoosr will organize a July 5 reverse auction—a process in which the traditional auction roles of buyer and seller are reversed. That means for each auction there is one buyer (a household or small business) and iChoosr invites qualified, pre-vetted providers to compete to offer the lowest bid and win the participant's business.
- Registrants receive a personal recommendation by August 8, after which qualified installers will conduct remote and onsite roof assessments with those who accept an offer. The deadline to approve personal recommendations is Sept. 13.
- Participants have a chance to review and approve their final quote, and if they want to go forward, they will then schedule the installation. All installations will be completed by February 2024.

The more people who register by the auction date, July 5, the more competitive the offer will be. After that point, anyone can register and benefit from the offer until the decision deadline of Sept. 13.

CUB, MREA and the counties have been involved in a similar group-buy program since 2019, helping more than 280 properties go solar and educating more than 3,000 consumers about the science and benefits of solar. Involving iChoosr this year opens the door to a more streamlined process that involves multiple solar installers and can reach even more consumers.

Past group-buys have saved participants an average of \$820 a year on their utility bills. Plus, the solar arrays installed through the program have offset about 3.7 million pounds of carbon pollution—that's the equivalent of the yearly greenhouse gas emissions caused by about 1,300 gasoline-powered cars.

Register for free, educational webinars without obligation at solarswitch.com/Chicagoland. Consumers with questions should email hello@solarswitch.com.

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Solar Switch Chicagoland is a no-cost solar group-buy program offered to residential customers and small businesses through nonprofits [MREA](#) and [CUB](#), and in partnership with Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake and Will counties. The program is managed by [iChoosr](#), an independent solar group-buying specialist. Founded in 2008, iChoosr is active in five countries worldwide and its collective programs in energy and solar panels have helped more than 2.2 million people save more than \$760 million.

The MREA was incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit shortly after the first Energy Fair in 1990. MREA's mission is to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable living through education and demonstration. To learn more, call 715-592-6595 or visit www.midwestrenew.org.

The Citizens Utility Board (CUB) is Illinois' leading nonprofit utility watchdog. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Since then, it has saved consumers more than \$20 billion by helping block rate hikes, secure refunds and fight for clean, low-cost energy. For more information, call CUB's Consumer Hotline, 1-800-669-5556, or visit its website, www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org.