



# CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD

Fighting for Illinois Consumers

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **CUB, MREA, Chicagoland Counties Launch Fall Solar Switch Program** *After Successful Summer Program, Fall to Offer Solar Panel Discounts, Future Electric Savings*

**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 Thursday as the program launched its Fall program.

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). This year, the program has added the expertise of iChoosr, a company that manages and administers solar group buy 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 selects installers through a competitive vetting process and then runs a reverse-auction to secure a low base-price.

"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," said Marina Minic, Solar Programs Coordinator at CUB. "As a watchdog we are concerned about education and consumer protections, and that's why we promote this program."

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 around 60 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.

"Combined with the Inflation Reduction Act's clean energy incentives, Solar Switch Chicagoland makes solar more accessible than ever," said Taylor Ball, Solar Program Manager for the MREA.

Here's how the program works:

- Chicagoland residents are invited to register for the program at [solarswitch.com/Chicagoland](https://solarswitch.com/Chicagoland). There residents can fill out a questionnaire to see if their roof is suitable for solar. Registrants will also have access to free, educational webinars.
- iChoosr will organize a December 12 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.

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- Registrants receive a personal recommendation by Jan. 17, 2024, after which qualified installers will conduct remote and onsite roof assessments with those who accept an offer. The deadline to approve personal recommendations is Feb. 21.
- 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 August 2024.

The more people who register by the auction date, December 12, the more competitive the offer will be. After that point, anyone can register and benefit from the offer until the decision deadline of Feb. 21.

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.

During the most recent program, participating households saved an average of \$4,000 on a typical-sized solar installation. The combined federal and state tax credits can reduce costs by around 60 percent. The Solar Switch program provides an excellent opportunity for Chicagoland residents to take advantage of these savings and make the switch to renewable energy.

Register for free, educational webinars without obligation at [solarswitch.com/Chicagoland](https://solarswitch.com/Chicagoland). Consumers with questions should email [hello@solarswitch.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org).