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## **P R E S S R E L E A S E**

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### **Going Solar: Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors Approves Plans to Help County Resident Harness Power of the Sun**

The Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors today, June 23, unanimously approved two items initiated by First District Supervisor Salud Carbajal that will help county residents leverage the power of the Sun to increase local energy independence.

The Board voted 5-0 to direct staff to work on a countywide Energy Efficiency Improvement Financing Program and to streamline the permitting process through the County Planning and Development Department as residents install new roof-top and free-standing solar systems.

“Santa Barbara County has a long history of leadership and innovation on environmental issues, and I’m extremely excited that we’re able to move forward with these solar energy initiatives today,” Supervisor Carbajal said. “We have a unique opportunity to encourage and empower residents to do the right thing by investing in solar energy systems in a simple and financially feasible manner.”

The Board’s action came on the same day that President Obama held a press conference promoting the need for Congress to approve new energy efficiency legislation on a national level. The national and local initiatives are seen as key policy and legislative directions to promote energy independence, sustainability and investments in alternative energy sources.

Developing a countywide Energy Efficiency Improvement Financing Program was authorized under state law AB 811, which enables cities and counties to set up local finance programs to give property owners the ability to install solar panels and make energy efficiency upgrades to their properties.

If the County moves forward with the program, one possible option for financing a home-based solar system could be accomplished by allowing residents to pay for the systems through supplemental assessments on local property tax bills, according to a staff report presented during the Board’s June 23 meeting. In essence, the County could act as a pass-through for payment of residential solar systems by allowing property owners to pay for the new equipment via their property taxes while, at the same time, they also receive the immediate financial and environmental benefits of solar and other energy efficient upgrades.

In other action, the Board also approved ordinance amendments to streamline the County permitting process for both roof-mounted and freestanding solar systems. Supervisor Carbajal worked with staff to look for ways to simplify the County permitting process for residential solar facilities after learning about concerns from community members who had gone through the permitting process.

The changes were previously recommended for approval by both the County and Montecito Planning Commissions

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