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WALMART HEIRS PUTTING MILLIONS BEHIND ANTI-SOLAR GROUPS, POLICIES – NEW REPORT

Walton Family Undermining Future Growth of U.S. Rooftop Solar, Jeopardizing Job Creation and Savings on Homes' Energy Bills

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Walton family — majority owners of Walmart — are impeding America's transition to a clean energy future, a new study by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) finds. At a time when the U.S. solar industry employs 143,000 Americans and more than 500,000 households and businesses generate their own solar electricity, the Waltons are funding nearly two dozen anti-solar groups — such as the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) and Americans for Prosperity, which are waging state and national fights to roll back clean energy policies — while a Walton-owned energy company is pushing for regulations that hinder the growth of rooftop solar power.

While rooftop solar has been cited as a tremendous opportunity to accelerate the transition to renewable power, save money for homeowners, and create tens of thousands of new jobs, the report released today, [How the Walton Family is Threatening Our Clean Energy Future](#), details how the Waltons' interventions and spending threaten this future. The report finds that the Waltons have provided \$4.5 million in funds over the last four years to organizations campaigning against clean energy.

“The Waltons claim to have a deep commitment to sustainability, but their support for anti-solar initiatives tells a different story. The Waltons are investing in efforts that both undercut clean energy and prevent average Americans from benefitting economically from solar power,” said **Stacy Mitchell, a senior researcher at ILSR and author of the new report.**

The Waltons – majority owners of Walmart and the richest family in America – are also the largest stockholders of First Solar, an Arizona-based company that builds solar arrays to supply power to utilities. In contrast to the U.S. solar industry at large, as well as environmental and consumer groups, First Solar views rooftop solar as a threat to its profits and is actively engaged in campaigns in states like Arizona and Nevada to maintain a stronghold over solar electricity, at the expense of local environmental and economic benefits.

“Arizona is one of the country's leaders in solar, with more solar per person than any other state. Just as solar is poised to take off, the Waltons' funding is restricting our ability to put solar on our homes, businesses, schools and churches, and the Waltons' own solar company is actually fighting against the growth of the rooftop solar industry,” said **Russell Lowes, founder and research director of [SafeEnergyAnalyst.org](#), which**

provides technical assistance to Arizona homeowners and businesses moving to renewable energy sources. “It is time that the billionaire Waltons stop working against a sustainable, innovative solar future.”

As the report notes, these practices are inhibiting homes and businesses across the country from installing rooftop solar and accessing the utility bill savings and environmental benefits of clean electricity generation. First Solar’s business practices are also jeopardizing thousands of solar jobs. The company supports a World Trade Organization complaint opposed by leading environmental organizations that could force several U.S. states to repeal local incentives for solar manufacturing job creation. First Solar manufactures the majority of its products in Malaysia.

“At a time when solar power is more accessible and affordable than ever before, the Walton family is spending millions of dollars to undermine our clean energy future,” said **Erich Pica, president of Friends of the Earth and an expert on tax and budget policies that spark a transition to clean energy.** “Rooftop solar in the U.S. is growing exponentially and more and more Americans have access to affordable solar power that cuts their energy bills and builds a more sustainable energy future. Yet, the Waltons’ money is instead limiting average Americans’ ability to go solar and control their own energy future.”

Over the past year, [environmental organizations, including Rainforest Action Network and Energy Action, have called on Walmart to take real steps to reduce carbon pollution.](#) While other companies have taken concrete, effective steps to towards increasing renewable energy and energy efficiency, Walmart’s renewable power production has declined to 3 percent of its total energy use.

Last year, [ILSR found that since Walmart launched its environmental campaign in 2005, the company’s self-reported greenhouse gas emissions have grown by 14 percent.](#) Instead of investing in efforts to reduce carbon pollution, Walmart continues to support lawmakers who deny global warming. ILSR’s 2013 report finds that both Walmart’s and the Walton family's political donations heavily favor lawmakers who voted to keep subsidies for oil companies and prevent the EPA from regulating greenhouse gas emissions.

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The Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR) is a 40-year-old national nonprofit research and educational organization. ILSR’s mission is to provide innovative strategies, working models and timely information to support strong, community rooted, environmentally sound and equitable local economies.