

# UUFVB Social Justice Steering Committee News - October 2016

## Vote NO on Amendment 1 in November

Under the guise of being pro-solar, Amendment 1 inserts into the state's constitution what already exists in law — the right to own or lease solar panels. But the amendment could also land a crushing blow to net metering, a policy common across the country that requires utility companies to buy electricity from homes that generate excess solar power.

The amendment ensures "that consumers who do not choose to install solar are not required to subsidize the costs of backup power and electric grid access to those who do." If this amendment passes, the utility companies could argue that net metering is a "subsidy" and, since it's in the state constitution, lawmakers would have to ban it. Solar energy costs could then rise, making it less affordable for consumers. There's no evidence this would help save money for non-solar users.

Florida Supreme Court Justice Barbara Pariente wrote a dissenting opinion when the court allowed the amendment on the ballot. She said, "Masquerading as a pro-solar energy initiative, this proposed constitutional amendment, supported by some of Florida's major investor-owned electric utility companies, actually seeks to constitutionalize the status quo."

These are discussions that state lawmakers should be having as solar energy becomes more affordable in Florida. It makes no sense, however, to place regulations in the state constitution before we fully realize the market for solar power in Florida and understand what it means for consumers.

Excerpted from: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/opinion/endorsements/fl-endorse-no-on-amendment-1-solar-20160930-story.html> by Sun Sentinel Editorial Board

## Boycott of Wendy's Continues

With human rights for farmworkers gaining ground in tomato fields up the East Coast and in Florida strawberries, the Coalition for Immokalee Workers launched a boycott of Wendy's fast food chain in a struggle to strengthen and expand all they have fought for and won. This boycott action continues because Wendy's has not only shifted from purchasing tomatoes in Florida to buying them from Mexico, but it now purchases from a grower who in 2013 was found to be holding hundreds of workers against their will in egregious conditions. For more information and to take the pledge to boycott Wendy's, go to: [www.boycott-wendys.org/](http://www.boycott-wendys.org/)

## Some Good News

**New Marine Reserve:** In September President Obama established the nation's first fully protected marine reserve in the Atlantic Ocean. The Northeast Canyons and Seamounts Marine National Monument will provide a 4,913-square-mile permanent refuge for an array of ocean wildlife and habitats, including cold water coral gardens, whales, dolphins, sea turtles, seabirds, and fish.

Excerpted from:

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2016/09/15/us-makes-history-first-atlantic-marine-national-monument?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-09-15> by Ashlan Gorse Cousteau

**Solar Ovens:** A small number of communities in the Dominican Republic are buying solar ovens to cook their meals, avoiding cooking with gas stoves or wood which present financial and health problems. In the Dominican Republic 41% of the people live under the national poverty line. Purchasing gas for cooking takes a financial toll on most families. Families even further into poverty use wood as a cheaper cooking material. But inhaling the smoke can damage the lungs.

The solar movement was initiated by a U.S.-based nonprofit, Solar Oven Partners, which presented workshops on how to use the ovens. The organization reported between 200 and 250 solar ovens sold in the Dominican Republic between August 2015 and July 2016. Each oven costs 1,000 pesos, or about \$22. Although funding to build and transport the ovens comes from donations in the U.S., the purchase price pays for the workshops throughout the country.

Excerpted from:

<http://www.takepart.com/feature/2016/08/31/solar-ovens?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-09-05> by Makenzie Huber

**Less Sugar:** According to NPD Group, which tracks consumer trends, sugar tops the list of ingredients diners want to avoid. A recent survey found that 65 % of consumers wanted either to reduce the amount of sugar they eat or to stop eating it altogether, according to *QSR* magazine, a fast-food industry publication.

The NPD survey suggests that the demand for less sugary foods has arrived. So does the historic low that soda consumption hit this year. While the new FDA requirements for nutrition labels don't go into effect until 2018, the new label which will feature a line for "added sugar," should make efforts to cut back easier.

Excerpted from:

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2016/09/03/sugar-consumption?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-09-05> by Willy Blackmore

## Help Support Haitians in the Wake of Hurricane Matthew

The powerful hurricane that slammed into Haiti displaced tens of thousands and put already vulnerable families in tremendous peril. UUSC is working with our on-the-ground partners to meet the humanitarian needs of marginalized groups overlooked by other relief efforts and to begin laying the groundwork for sustainable recovery from this disaster. In responding to any humanitarian crisis, speed is essential. Please, give whatever you can today. To donate, go to: [donate.uusc.org/checkout/donation?eid=98992](http://donate.uusc.org/checkout/donation?eid=98992)

### Good News from Washington for the Everglades:

The Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) has passed both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives and includes two key projects for the Everglades. This is a big win for restoration. The bill will authorize the Central Everglades Project (CEP), one of Audubon's top restoration project priorities. The Senate and House need to reconcile differences before the bill becomes law, which will likely occur when Congress reconvenes in November. Authorizing this project makes it eligible for federal construction funding. Once this Congressional approval is finalized, work on these projects must begin as soon as possible to help bring life back to the Everglades. CEP will have the most impact of any Everglades restoration project to date. Once built, it will finally begin to reconnect flow from Lake Okeechobee, through the River of Grass, and down towards the Southern Everglades and Florida Bay.

Excerpted from: [Audubon Florida e-mail](#)

### Should you turn the lights out when leaving a room?

Compact fluorescents bulbs that finally pushed out inefficient incandescent bulbs back in 2012, actually do require a small surge of electricity to light up. But that surge is so tiny as to not really matter. This is true not just of newer, twisty CFLs but also of old-school fluorescent tubes.

However, wantonly toggling fluorescent bulbs on and off shortens their lifespan. Why? Every time you flip the switch, the mercury within the bulb degrades its electrodes a bit. Just like anything else, bulbs have an environmental impact from production, so it's wise to keep them in operation as long as possible.

The Department of Energy recommends turning off the lights if you'll be gone for at least 15 minutes.

Experts at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory say if you'll be out of the room for 5 minutes.

Of course, we would do even better by replacing fluorescents with LED bulbs. Not only do LEDs use the least power of the lighting options by far, but they also have no problem with on/off cycling, so you can flick the switch off whenever you leave the room. They cost more than CFLs up front, but they're so long-lasting (25 times longer than incandescent bulbs), they'll make up for that cost over years of use.

Excerpted from:

[http://grist.org/living/should-you-always-turn-the-lights-out-when-leaving-a-room/?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=edit-daily&utm\\_campaign=daily-static](http://grist.org/living/should-you-always-turn-the-lights-out-when-leaving-a-room/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=edit-daily&utm_campaign=daily-static) by Ask Umbra

### Some Bad News

**Limiting Solar Energy:** A report released in April by the Center for Biological Diversity identified the 10 states with the highest potential for rooftop solar energy production but the worst records for enabling households to generate electricity from the sun. Rooftop solar potential is calculated by analyzing the annual strength and amount of sunlight and the total rooftop space for solar panels in each state.

"All 10 of these states are bad actors in the distributed solar policy game, but two in particular stand out as the worst: Florida and Texas," the report said. Florida has the third-highest potential for rooftop solar, and Texas is ranked No. 2, after California. Florida and Texas make up more than 16 % of total solar rooftop potential but account for just 2.7 % of the current capacity, the report said.

Excerpted from:

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2016/04/27/sunny-states-sabotaging-solar-energy> by David Kirby

**Elephant Deaths:** New research shows that poachers are killing off 8 % of savanna elephants a year while the number of forest elephants has fallen 62 % since 2002. Although the census found that 84 % of savanna elephants live within officially protected areas, they offered little protection; elephant carcasses were frequently observed in national parks and other supposedly secure areas. To sign a petition to support efforts to protect the elephants, go to: <https://takeaction.takepart.com/actions/help-support-greater-protections-for-elephants?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-09-08>

Excerpted from:

<http://www.takepart.com/article/2016/08/31/africa-has-lost-30-percent-its-elephants-just-7-years?cmpid=tpdaily-eml-2016-09-05> by John R. Platt