

Future Remains Bright for Solar Energy Industry - Tariffs Setback Only Temporary

Thursday, March 15, 2018, *By Daryl Lovell*

According to the quarterly solar market report released March 15 by GTM Research, U.S. solar energy installation growth is expected to slow in the coming years, due in part to new tariffs on panel imports and new federal tax laws.

Eric Schiff is a professor and Physics Department Chair at Syracuse University's College of Arts and Sciences. He doesn't see steel tariffs as a problem for the solar installation industry. Schiff believes the cost savings of unsubsidized solar electricity will keep it thriving in the long run.

Schiff says:

"I don't think that the problem with solar installations is the steel tariffs. Tariffs were already applied to solar module imports last year. These tariffs protect the rather small number of surviving solar module manufacturers in the U.S. They also make the price of solar modules higher in the U.S. than in the rest of the world. As the media has reported, the main impact of the U.S. solar tariffs will be a temporary decrease in the number of U.S. jobs installing solar modules.

"Despite these difficulties, the future for solar installations is very bright in the U.S. For veterans such as myself, it is amazing that the price of electricity from solar modules has decreased almost 100 times since I started my own research work in semiconductors almost 40 years ago. And the price of solar modules is still declining rapidly on the world market, which is unaffected by the U.S. tariffs.

"In many locations, and despite the tariffs, unsubsidized solar electricity is still cheaper to add than electricity from other sources such as natural gas-fired generators. The setback to the U.S. industry should only be temporary."

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