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[1](#) Minnesota lawmakers considering whether to allow plug in or balcony solar power [Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization](#)

Minnesota Public Radio May 8 Two Thousand Twenty Six A Sixty Three year old Dilworth Minnesota man now drives a plug in hybrid He is looked at installing solar panels to power his home But [his roof cannot support the panels](#) And the price tag would be prohibitive It would cost a lot of money because we would have to upgrade our entire electrical system and we just cannot afford to do that he said Residential solar systems can cost Twenty Thousand to Thirty Thousand Dollars or more But now there is an attractive alternative for homeowners whose properties are not good fits for a big solar panel installation or for renters who do not own their rooftops It is called plug in or balcony solar The smaller systems consist of just a few solar panels that can be placed on a deck or balcony or mounted on the ground outside a home The systems reverse the typical flow of electricity instead of pulling power off the grid plug in solar pushes power back into the outlet and into the wires of a home A typical plug in solar system set up costs around One Thousand to Two Thousand Dollars and can power a few appliances such as a refrigerator and modem They usually provide about Twenty percent of the electricity used by a typical home [The technology has taken off in Germany in recent years](#) There are over a million of the mini solar systems installed there The price of electricity is going up and this could help alleviate that problem for people the Dilworth Minnesota man reasoned So he went to a town hall meeting hosted by Democratic State Sen Rob Kupec of nearby Moorhead and gave him some information on the technology For those people who live in apartments who cannot put up a solar array or if your house just does not take one it is a great opportunity [But to install one of these mini solar systems now in Minnesota a homeowner would have to jump through all the same interconnection hoops with their power provider and pay the same fees as someone putting in a big rooftop system That can be costly time consuming and complicated](#) Kupec has introduced a bill in the Minnesota Senate to streamline that [interconnection process for certified plug in solar systems](#) It is the companion legislation to a proposal from state Rep Larry Kraft a Democrat from St Louis Park Kraft told MPR News he has never seen so much excitement around a clean energy bill It is a great thing for energy affordability and it is also just a great thing for individual freedom Kraft said for people who want to tap into the power of the sun that is shining on their property That notion of personal freedom and consumer choice broadened the appeal of plug in solar Deep red Utah was the first state to adopt a plug in solar law last year It was introduced by a Republican legislator and passed unanimously A handful of other states followed suit this spring [And about Twenty additional states including Minnesota are considering similar laws to allow residents to install plug in solar systems Still some in the state legislature have expressed safety concerns because the technology reverses the flow of electricity and sends it back into the electric wiring of a home](#) Jason Rarick a GOP State Senator from Pine City who is also an electrician wants to make sure proper [safety procedures](#) are in place for installation before we are actually promoting people to start using it here A new safety standard was recently developed to certify plug in solar equipment But Rarick said that has not yet been incorporated into the [National Electrical Code](#) Rarick also thinks the technology needs to be rebranded Because it is not going to be plug in solar he said There is just no way to make that work He said [in most cases an electrician will need to hook up the systems](#) Still Rarick says it is a matter of when not if the legislation will pass This is something that is absolutely coming he said Once the proper procedures have been followed to get this right I will be One Hundred percent behind it

Because it is not a mandate and it is just giving people options Kraft agrees homeowners will likely need to hire an electrician to set it up But eventually consumers will likely be able to purchase a small scale system at Menards or Home Depot said a Duluth electrician who specializes in installing solar and battery systems and who advocated for the bill at the state legislature When you start to conceptualize how much power the sun is producing on a daily basis on every square inch of land you start to realize every plot of land is its own fortress or its own microgrid he said The proposal is still alive in the Minnesota Senate But advocates concede it has a narrow path to approval in a closely divided legislature If we are not successful with passing it this year we will absolutely be coming back next year and we will have a better shot probably of getting it done said a Midwest Regional Director for Vote Solar Back In Dilworth Minnesota the man is not waiting around He has already bought plug in solar panels He is confident the law will eventually pass whether it is this year or next It should not be a partisan issue for legislators Veldhouse said Their constituents are facing growing expenditures on electricity I hope that they will understand that

2 Europe Austria How Energy Prices Are Driving Demand for Solar Panels and Heat Pumps Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization The New York Times May 8 Two Thousand Twenty Six Already having faced an energy crisis five years ago more European consumers believe they are one Trump ignited war away from crushing costs A worker in Vienna Austria installing a heat pump for the company Heizma which said it had record sales in March and April The New York Times Reporting from London May 8 Two Thousand Twenty Six Europe the lesson from an old proverb just might be taking hold Fool me once shame on you fool me twice shame on me For the second time in under five years Europe is contending with an energy crisis set off by a war Europeans have responded to the price shock by rushing to line up heat pumps solar panels and electric vehicles They are hoping to lower their bills and reduce their reliance on imported fossil fuels In March the first month of the war in the Middle East more than Three hundred forty four thousand electric vehicles were registered across Europe over Forty percent more than a year earlier according to the European Automobile Association of Manufacturers Solar panel sales for the biggest power company in Britain Octopus Energy jumped Fifty percent And in Germany inquiries about residential solar systems doubled compared with recent months according to E dot ON an energy company Over the first three months of the year about Five hundred Seventy Five thousand heat pumps were sold in Eleven large European countries up Seventeen percent from a year earlier the European Heat Pump Association said The increases were particularly large in France Germany and Poland For Heizma an Austrian company that installs heat pumps solar panels and other residential electrification services sales in March and April broke records Since the war stopped a vast majority of fuel shipments through the Strait of Hormuz the price of European natural gas which is relied on to heat homes and power factories has risen about Forty percent As prices spiked interest in alternative energy supplies kept rising A founder of Heizma said customer inquiries were up Twenty percent Many of them invoked the importance of resilience and European sovereignty The Russian invasion of Ukraine in Two Thousand Twenty Two was a jolt for Europe which had been dependent on Russia for critical supplies of energy European governments turned to other gas and oil exporters including the United States Europeans are noticing more and more how dependent we are not only on fossil fuels but through fossil fuels on other countries and other regions The European Union has spent an additional Twenty Four billion euros on energy imports in under two months said Ursula von der Leyen the president of the European Commission Households are now seeing that they are only one Trump ignited war away from very expensive tank refueling or heating bills said an energy and climate policy expert at the Center for European Reform This shock awareness factor

means that demand for electric vehicles heat pumps and solar panels is likely to keep rising she said Demand has increased even as European governments have started to cut taxes on energy bills and diesel and gasoline at the pump to shield households The costs of solar panels and electric vehicles still out of reach for some households are becoming more affordable Last week Volkswagen the largest automaker in Europe revealed a new electric vehicle model with a starting price under Twenty Five Thousand Euros or about Twenty Nine Thousand Dollars more than Twenty Five percent below a comparable VW popular model In Britain the government said it would allow the sale of plug in solar panels within the next few months These devices which can be attached to a balcony can help curb energy bills and do not require the more expensive installation of rooftop panels They will be widely available in supermarkets and online In the meantime rooftop solar has become more popular The managing director at the Green Way Solar which installs solar panels in England has noticed a sharp increase in interest Last fall his company was receiving about Ten inquiries a week Now it sometimes gets Twenty in a single day he said But will the interest be sustained? Companies and business groups said it was too soon to know For customers there is red tape It can take weeks or months partly because of regulatory approvals for a customer to go from deciding to buy a heat pump or solar panels to installing them Then there is the push pull issue of government policies over financial incentives or subsidies which can drive consumer demand but cause it to taper if they are not designed properly Since the war started countries across Europe have already put in place short term measures to lower energy costs more than Ten Billion Euros worth according to an estimate by Bruegel a think tank in Brussels The measures such as tax cuts on gas at the pump and electricity bills are predominately aimed at large parts of the population Experts said governments should target their assistance to the most vulnerable households while spending more to subsidize low carbon energy This has echoes of the crisis from Two Thousand Twenty Two At the time Europe had suddenly shifted away from Russian gas imported via pipelines a prominent source of fuel Energy prices rose sharply Demand for electric vehicles solar panels and heat pumps jumped But when Europe found other sources of natural gas and prices dropped from their peak interest in renewable technologies waned Meanwhile governments had spent hundreds of billions of dollars to shield households and businesses from high energy costs further reducing the urgency for households to switch to renewables some analysts said An energy and climate policy expert at Bruegel Belgium said the lesson for policymakers from Two Thousand Twenty Two was that they should increase their support for low carbon technologies not broad based measures that cheapen energy from oil and gas The moment he said presents an opportunity for governments We are facing a full-fledged oil and gas crisis At the same time history shows that financial incentives needed to sustain consumer interest in technologies like solar panels must be consistent A Representative of the Green Way Solar has been in the solar industry for nearly a dozen years and has experienced the ups and downs of the market There was a boom right after the Two Thousand Twenty Two crisis he said but then sales dropped The promise of subsidies drove up interest in renewable technologies but consumers then waited to make sure they received a subsidy before deciding to install solar panels or heat pumps There is a risk that this could happen again In Austria demand for heat pumps dropped in the first three months of this year when some government funds for subsidies ran out Heizma made about Two Million Euros in revenue in April Two Thousand Twenty Six Everyone now knows electrification makes sense It makes a lot of sense to switch to heat pumps to solar and green electricity

3 Germany Why Friedrich Merz decided to risk Donald The Trump wrath Jörg Lau Jörg Lau The Trump retribution is painful for Germany and Nato but Merz is not backing down He knows the status quo is untenable Excerpts edited by Residents Against Wood Smoke Emission

Particulates a 501C3 nonprofit organization

The New York Times

May 5 Two Thousand

Twenty Six

What began as a spat between Friedrich Merz and Donald Trump over the Iran war is rapidly turning into a historic rupture between Germany and the US. Its significance is hard to overstate. In Germany the transatlantic falling out adds to the domestic woes of a coalition government in crisis, overshadowing the first anniversary of Merz becoming chancellor tomorrow. May 6 Twenty Thousand Twenty Six. More importantly it proves the futility of the Merz attempt to be the Trump whisperer of Europe and puts the credibility of Nato into question. But the dispute also boosts the ambition that the conservative leader of Germany set out on the night of the election victory of his party which is to make Europe more independent from the US security umbrella. This rupture started with the remarks of the German Chancellor last week about the stalling talks between the US and Iran. The Iranians Merz observed to an audience of secondary schoolchildren are obviously very skilled at negotiating or rather very skillful at not negotiating letting the Americans travel to Islamabad and then leave again without any result. An entire nation he concluded is being humiliated by the Iranian leadership. It was an unexpected moment of truth telling one that may turn out to be rather costly. Merz has replaced Pope Leo as the favorite target of Trump. In the Oval Office with Trump in March Merz had explicitly agreed with The Trump war aim of getting rid of the Iranian regime. Germany did not close its airspace nor even consider restricting the use of US bases on its territory. Stay on the sidelines offer post conflict assistance but do not poke the bear that had been the German policy. So why did Merz suddenly decide to go straight for the jugular of The Trump narcissistic self-image his supposed dealmaking prowess? Was it just one of the impulsive comments the chancellor is notorious for? There may be more to it. Merz is not backing down. In a long interview on primetime TV on Sunday the chancellor tried a more conciliatory tone but he did not walk back his remarks despite being pressed several times. This is all the more remarkable because severe punishments are incoming. Five Thousand US troops are to be withdrawn from German bases maybe even many more. A furious Trump hinted at the weekend. No Tomahawks and other middle range missile systems will be stationed in Germany despite a standing agreement dating back to Two Thousand Twenty Four. That deal was supposed to close a dangerous deterrence gap with Russia which has stationed nuclear capable missiles in Kaliningrad threatening European capitals. European countries are working on their own capabilities to counter Russia but they will come online in six to eight years at the earliest. double quotation mark. The military power of Germany is on the rise. This time it must be firmly embedded in Europe. Taken together with the troop withdrawals the cancellation of the missile battalion significantly weakens the Nato position. Nobody in the strategic community of Germany thinks it is a coincidence that The Trump announcements came after he had another productive Ninety minute phone call with Vladimir Putin. On top of all that European carmakers are being saddled with a Twenty Five Percent import tariff effective immediately according to Trump which obviously will harm German industry most. The Merz comments while certainly a departure from diplomatic protocol hardly warranted such retribution. After all it was Merz who set in motion a big rearmament drive for the Bundeswehr dispensing with the constitutional debt brake of Germany to finance it. This was exactly the burden shifting in conventional defense the US had long called for. In Europe Germany has taken over most of the financing of the Ukraine military support. It was Merz who pushed for the Five Percent of GDP spending pledge at the Nato summit last year so Trump could claim he got the Europeans to pay more for collective defense. The folly of the war against Iran has turned out to be the last straw however. This war is undermining European security. Air defense systems urgently needed by Ukraine and on the Nato eastern flank are diverted to the Middle East. While Kyiv has to beg for every single Patriot interceptor more than One Thousand have been used against Iranian attacks. The consequences of the US Israel excursion also threaten to sink the German economy and with it

the Merz urgent domestic reform agenda The already meager growth forecast for Two Thousand Twenty Six has been slashed by half because of the war This adds stress to the already **fraying coalition of conservatives and Social Democrats** But it might also help them find new purpose For a year now Merz has tried to manage Trump through concessions and appeasement The failure of this policy is the real reason Merz snapped in front of the students Dependence on a US administration that punishes its allies while accommodating the enemies of Europe is untenable More than a year ago on the night of the victory of his party in the general election in Germany Merz said he wanted to create unity in Europe as quickly as possible so that step by step we can achieve independence from the US Those words ring even truer today

Headlines

United States Dirty Energy Trump and his oil and coal oligarchy should face sanctions for their war on the environment Alexander Hurst The Guardian United States Republicans Are Building an Advantage in Redistricting How Much The New York Times United States Trump Plans to Fire FDA Chief Report Says MedPage Today **Minnesota lawmakers considering whether to allow plug in or balcony solar power** MPR News Tennessee Democratic Candidates and Voters Challenge the New Map of Tennessee The New York Times Tennessee See How the GOP Cut Up the Only Majority Black District in Tennessee The New York Times United Kingdom Wales Elections Two Thousand Twenty Six live Labour suffers historic defeat in Wales as Reform surges in English council elections and Greens make gains United Kingdom Wales Even in Labour Loyal Wales Voters Are Looking to Other Parties The New York Times United Kingdom If Labour now decides the PM is no longer up to the job there is just one problem neither is anyone else The Guardian United Kingdom Keir Starmer under pressure to agree exit plan after election mauling Keir Starmer The Guardian United Kingdom Far Right Nigel Farage hails historic shift in politics after Reform UK election gains May Two Thousand Twenty Six elections The Guardian United Kingdom Scotland SNP the Scotland Pro Independence Party Benefits From the Labour Struggles With Voters The New York Times United Kingdom Starmer will hope he has dodged the axe for now but these elections leave Britain more fragmented than ever Jonathan Freedland The Guardian United Kingdom Far Right Trump may be a liability and Orbán is gone but the far right of Europe is not in decline The Guardian United Kingdom UK elections The Labour status as a national party in Britain could be under threat The Irish Times United Kingdom Labour Party UK local elections Keir Starmer will not walk away despite election losses The Irish Times United Kingdom Voting Rules Whoever wins the elections of today democracy is the loser under first past the post Guardian **Europe** **How Energy Prices Are Driving Demand for Solar Panels and Heat Pumps** The New York Times Germany We love our Americans the German town rocked by The Trump plan to withdraw US troops Germany The Guardian Germany military power is on the rise This time it must be firmly embedded in Europe Timothy Garton Ash The Guardian **Germany** **Why Friedrich Merz decided to risk Donald The Trump wrath** Jörg Lau The Guardian Ukraine Russia and Ukraine confirm three day ceasefire from May 9 Ukraine The Guardian