

“Erik Curren is onto the technology that may well win the future. And he is right that it is a patriotic quest. Winning clean energy independence would serve America very well indeed.”

Bob Inglis

**Former Congressman from South Carolina
Founder, RepublicEn**

“If monopolistic utility lobbies are preventing the transition to clean energy in your state, this book is an excellent and practical guide for citizen advocacy and empowerment.”

Marshall Saunders

Founder and President, Citizens’ Climate Lobby

“Erik Curren has produced a solar-revolution manual that should inform, inspire, and energize anyone who believes in our inalienable right to a clean energy future.”

Michael Brune

Executive Director, Sierra Club

“Curren parallels today’s grassroots movements toward clean energy choices to the American colonists’ struggles for freedom from tyranny. Renewable energy IS the new patriotism.”

Mark Reynolds

Executive Director, Citizens’ Climate Lobby

“The ability to use solar power at home helps keep your family more secure while helping America achieve a greater degree of energy independence. So, it’s no wonder that support for solar and other clean energy is growing on the conservative side of the political spectrum. For conservatives and others who want to help their neighbors join America’s clean energy revolution, *The Solar Patriot* is an indispensable source of good information and inspiration.”

Mark Fleming

President & CEO, Conservatives for Clean Energy

“Democracy, patriotism, and rooftop solar go hand in hand and Erik Curren makes the case with simple, easy-to-understand stories from the front line of the modern-day battle for energy independence. Curren highlights parallels between today’s fights and some of the most iconic stories from American history. This book is a great introduction to one of the most important issues of our time.”

Anya Schoolman

Executive Director, Solar United Neighbors

“Everyone with an interest in solar, or who is a solar skeptic, should read this book. This is a highly engrossing call to arms for Solar Patriots, making insightful connections about freedom from electric utilities’ efforts to control solar and our American Revolutionary heritage

about seeking freedom from tyranny. The book informs as it engages the reader with vignettes about today’s solar revolutionaries, and making the connections with the values, tactics, and leaders who won our American freedom. I would highly recommend this to anyone who seeks new insights on how solar represents an American ideal, combined with practical solutions on how to make a difference in making rooftop solar happen, either individually, or by finding common cause with a local or national group.”

Anthony E. Smith, PhD

CEO and President, Secure Futures Solar

“Fighting for energy choice is much like arguments from Republicans around school or health care choice. It’s about the free market and competition. It’s about independence. It’s about fighting for a better future. Giving people access to solar energy is one of the most patriotic things you can do. Erik Curren understands this concept and helps lay out an important vision in *The Solar Patriot*.”

Tyson Grinstead

Director, Public Policy, Sunrun Inc.

“I loved this book. Curren is a fabulous writer and has a great story to tell. The solar revolution in this country is exciting, patriotic, and as vital to our future as the 1776 Revolution was to our past. This is that rare must-read

book for everyone, from liberal environmentalists to Tea Party conservatives.”

Mike Tidwell

Director, Chesapeake Climate Action Network

“Today’s generation of conservatives believes that we can enhance national security and promote economic growth at the same time as we protect the environment. The key is developing home-grown energy resources and clean technology. *The Solar Patriot* is a guidebook for young people and anyone else who wants to help ensure a prosperous economy now and for future generations of Americans.”

Michele Combs

Founder and Chairman, Young Conservatives for Energy Reform

The Solar Patriot

The Solar Patriot

A Citizen's Guide to Helping America
Win Clean Energy Independence

ERIK CURREN

New Sky Books

Contents

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Preface

To all brave, healthy, able bodied, and well-disposed young men, in this neighborhood, who have any inclination to join the troops now raising under GENERAL WASHINGTON, for the defense of the LIBERTIES AND INDEPENDENCE of the United States against the hostile designs of foreign enemies, TAKE NOTICE.

—CONTINENTAL ARMY RECRUITING POSTER

In the eighteenth century, the American War of Independence was a violent but necessary revolution to bring freedom to this continent and, ultimately, to much of the world.

Today, the battle for clean energy independence will be a peaceful revolution, but one just as necessary to secure the future of America and the whole world.

In the spirit of the patriots of old, this book aims to recruit you as a champion for rooftop solar power. If you're a homeowner who already has installed solar panels on your roof or in your yard, this book is definitely for you. But the book will also be interesting to anyone who supports more solar power in America. I hope the book's approach will also be appealing to history buffs, among whom I count myself.

The Solar Patriot's method is unique but simple. The book connects the story of the American Revolution in the eighteenth century to today's fight for solar rights. Our fight today for clean energy independence is peaceful but it's just as urgent and just as crucial to America's future as the war fought by George Washington's soldiers two-and-a-half centuries ago.

Each chapter starts with an inspiring quote from one of the founders of our country to frame a discussion of each step on the journey towards empowering yourself as a solar patriot armed with the weapons of information and motivation. Then, each chapter ends with a classic story from the American Revolution with a key lesson for that stage of the solar patriot's journey.

The historic War for Independence pit American patriots against the British Empire of King George III. It was a David and Goliath battle where American backwoods farmers armed with old muskets defeated professional

British soldiers supplied with the most modern weapons and backed up by the world's most powerful navy.

Today's battle for solar rights pits solar homeowners and ordinary citizens who want America to use more solar power against monopoly electric utilities and fossil fuel companies that want to stop, or at least slow down, the spread of rooftop solar. This is also a David and Goliath contest where ordinary American families must stand up to some of the most powerful corporations in the history of the United States or the world.

Fighting to create a country where the rights of all people to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness would be respected, the Americans prevailed because history was on their side. In the Age of Enlightenment, the tide was turning against the forces of aristocracy and royalty and towards freedom and equality. Grit and commitment helped the patriots to prevail against stronger forces. And so did recruiting powerful allies like France and Spain.

In today's battle to make solar power America's leading energy source and to give ordinary Americans the right to make, use, sell, and share their own solar power, history is also clearly on our side. An energy source whose fuel is free of cost—sunshine—and produces no pollution is certain to prevail over coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear power, all of which rely on dwindling fuel supplies and all of which create dangerous pollution or waste.

But the question for today's solar revolution is when solar will prevail. If it takes too long, America's economy could suffer irreparable damage as other countries take the lead on solar power. And if we cannot slow the rate of climate change, then America will suffer along with the rest of the world—perhaps we will suffer even more in an uncertain climate future, given the level of comfort that we've gotten used to.

Finally, even if solar does become America's leading energy source in time to save our economy and the world's climate, it makes a big difference who controls that solar. Will it be homeowners and small businesses, with millions of solar arrays on their rooftops, each a source of clean energy independence, greater national security, and resilience for the whole country? Or will monopoly electric utilities squeeze this new energy source into outdated centralized grid technology and a business model from the 1890s where they produce all the power themselves, leaving the rest of us vulnerable to grid failure and utility profit-seeking?

Patriots of the 1770s knew that the world was watching the battle in America between ordinary citizens and the mighty British Empire. And solar patriots today know that if America takes leadership on spreading rooftop solar now that the rest of the world will soon follow.

Consider this book a call to (peaceful) arms. An exciting and historic journey awaits you if you decide to enlist as a solar patriot. And just as we rightly celebrate the accomplishments of the American Revolutionaries in beating long odds to give the world a new birth of freedom in 1776, so I believe that generations yet unborn will celebrate today's solar patriots for giving our country and the rest of the world a new birth of prosperity.