FERC Needs a "DistGen Help Desk"

The Problem:

Thirty-two years after the passage of PURPA Section 210, small renewable energy projects still face a myriad of anti-competitive trade barriers in the form of interconnection requirements, buy-back rates and metering policies. Most utilities do not have anti-competitive policies, but the ones that do are having a significant chilling effect on market development.
Examples include:

- Excessive insurance requirements
- Artificially lowered "Avoided Costs"
- High fees and long approvals
- Abusive application of demand charges, undermining potential energy savings
- Unneeded service upgrade requirements
- Fees clearly violating PURPA
- Forced capture of green tags

The essential problem is that consumers and the industry have no place to turn to seek relief, short of the court system. State PUCs typically have a laissez-faire attitude and/or lack jurisdiction (eg., co-ops). The result is projects that are delayed or cancelled and place unnecessary cost burdens on consumers and the industry. **The policy intent of PURPA is being thwarted.**

Recommended Remedy:

DWEA believes that FERC should consider the establishment of a distributed generation project assistance office or desk that can help consumers overcome anti-competitive utility practices. The "DistGen Help Desk" would need the technical and legal expertise to identify artificial barriers and apply available regulatory tools to resolve issues. Just opening such an office would send a valuable message to the bad actors in the utility industry.

Expected Results:

A new FERC "DistGen" project assistance office would increase the use of small scale wind and solar systems across the U.S. In 2009 over 90% of the small wind systems installed in the U.S. were built in the U.S. Therefore, facilitating small wind projects will effectively leverage American manufacturing and construction jobs.

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