

Solar Sanity is Restored

With so



lar power blossoming in the United States and the Biden Administration's Day One vow to supercharge renewables, it came as a shock to learn in late March that the Commerce Department was throwing sand in the gears. Based on what turned out to be [a largely inaccurate interpretation of data](#) offered by an American solar panel manufacturer, [Commerce began an investigation](#) that effectively blocked the importing of solar products from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. The impact was immediate and devastating according to the [Solar Energy Industries Association](#) (SEIA): forecasts for this year and next year being cut by 46%. The 700 responses from an SEIA survey of industry businesses showed that 318 projects accounting for 51 GW of solar capacity and 6 GWh of attached battery storage were being cancelled or delayed, putting \$52 billion of private investment and tens of thousands of jobs at risk. An independent analysis, from [Rystad Energy](#), found similar catastrophic disruptions as a result.

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo's [response to inquiries from Congress](#) was that the Department's hands were tied. That certainly did not assuage the SEIA, their president and CEO saying that she was "outraged by some of the things the secretary said." Given the nature of the work that is being done in the four countries under investigation, the petition for the investigation should have been immediately dismissed, according to Abby Ross Hopper, SEIA's president and CEO. Letters from [20 governors](#), [22 senators](#), and [85 members of the House of Representatives](#) underscored the high level of discontent at Commerce's investigation.

The [good news today](#) is that cooler heads in the Biden Administration have prevailed. The tariffs that were threatening to collapse progress on solar photovoltaic deployments in the US are being waived. In addition, according to [this White House release](#), the President has authorized use of the Defense Production Act to accelerate the manufacture of clean energy components, including PV, **and** designation of "super preference" status in federal government procurement for domestically produced solar PV components. Meanwhile, Commerce's investigation will continue.

SEIA's Hopper was [certainly pleased](#): "We applaud President Biden's thoughtful approach to addressing the current crisis of the paralyzed solar supply chain. The president is providing improved business certainty today while harnessing the power of the Defense Production Act for

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tomorrow. Today's actions protect existing solar jobs, will lead to increased employment in the solar industry and foster a robust solar manufacturing base here at home."

Canary Media has an [excellent soup-to-nuts series](#) of articles recounting this entire saga.