



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on May 15, 2014

## White House Solar Project Doesn't Stand Up to Light of Day

Topping off a week of energy and “climate change” initiatives, the Obama administration announced on May 9 that solar panels have been installed on the roof of the White House. It’s part of “a project that President Barack Obama hopes will send a signal that renewable energy is feasible and environmentally shrewd,” reported the Associated Press.



“Solar panels at the White House, I think, are a really important message that solar is here, we are doing it, we can do a lot more,” Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz said in a [White House video](#). “I am very bullish on the future of solar energy as a key part of our clean energy future.”

The administration claims that the solar panels will generate 6.3 kilowatts of power — but only when the sun is shining, and then only when it is shining at the correct angle. According to the [Daily Caller](#), this “only happens between 6 and 7 hours of the day.” That means the panels will produce about 44 kilowatt hours of electricity per day.

That may sound like a significant amount of energy, but consider this: According to the [Energy Information Administration](#), the average American home consumes almost 30 kilowatt hours of electricity per day. “The White House declined to offer specifics on the building’s total energy consumption,” noted the AP, but the Daily Caller found that

One estimate from 2009, put White House electricity use at 15.5 kilowatt hours per square foot annually. The White House is 55,000 square feet, so it’s [sic] annual electricity use on a square-footage basis would be 852,500 kilowatt hours per year, or a little under one gigawatt hour.

National Climatic Data Center data shows that the Washington, D.C.[,] area gets about 2528 hours of sunshine per year. If the White House solar array produces 6.3 kilowatts, then it would generate 16,272 kilowatt hours of power a year — nearly 2 percent of its yearly energy needs.

[Climate Change Dispatch](#), a website devoted to combating global-warming alarmism, pointed out that based on the fact that “one 100-watt light bulb running for 20 hours will use two kilowatt-hours of electricity,” “the White House installed enough solar panels to power twenty-two 100-watt light bulbs for 20 hours each day. And if you’ve ever been inside the White House, or seen it from a distance, you’ll notice it’s lit up like a klieg light.”

In other words, the solar panels are almost entirely for show. They’re props to demonstrate that the Obama administration is doing something to combat alleged global warming, much as the first White House solar panels were installed by the Carter administration to show its commitment to alternative



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energy sources. (That array was later removed by the Reagan administration during a roof renovation; the George W. Bush administration then installed some panels on a maintenance building.)

The Obama administration, therefore, is getting little but good public relations out of the solar panels. But what are taxpayers getting out of them?

White House spokesman Matt Leirich claimed that the project, which includes other energy-efficiency upgrades, “is estimated to pay for itself in energy savings over the next eight years.” However, the administration is refusing to provide any details on the project, making it next to impossible to determine if Leirich’s assertion is accurate.

“Citing security and other concerns, the White House won’t say how many panels now encase the top of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. or how much they cost,” wrote the AP.

“Being at the White House, we do have some security concerns,” White House usher James Doherty said in the video. “We can’t cover the entire roof with panels, though that would be good from an energy savings standpoint.”

Still, one suspects that “other concerns” outweigh security worries. As Climate Change Dispatch put it, “If the average American knew how much this cost the taxpayer, they’d realize this is not cost-effective at all. Which is specifically why the White House refuses to release the numbers.”

The administration also claims that “the solar components, converters and the labor to install the panels were all domestic,” according to the AP. But, once again, the White House “declined to name any of the companies involved in the project.”

In short, the Obama administration has carried out a project, and the people who are paying for it are expected to take it on faith that the project will (1) accomplish what the White House says it will accomplish, (2) not cost an exorbitant amount of money (always unlikely with government initiatives), and (3) return the tax dollars spent on it to Americans. This is, of course, in keeping with the administration’s standard approach — “it is the most secretive White House that I’ve ever been involved in covering,” said the recently ousted *New York Times* executive editor [Jill Abramson](#) — but it is an insult to the people whose hard-earned money is being frittered away on such flights of fancy.

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