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Bill would extend solar tax credits to solar farms

By SAMANTHA ABERNETHY Associated Press Writer

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DENVER—U.S. Sen. Mark Udall announced Wednesday he is introducing a bill in Congress to extend residential solar energy tax credits to community-based solar farm collectives.

Current tax law allows homeowners to receive a 30 percent tax credit for installing solar panels on their property.

Udall said in a conference call Wednesday that his proposal—the Solar Uniting Neighborhoods Act—would allow homeowners to receive tax credits for panels installed somewhere else. That would extend the credit to community-owned solar farms, where neighbors designate sunny, treeless areas for installation of community solar panels.

"By grouping these solar panels, you can reduce the cost by 30 percent compared to installing a panel or a set of panels on every roof in the neighborhood," Udall told the Senate.

Udall said this change would make the tax credit more accessible financially and logistically. The tax credit would run until 2016.

"By eliminating the requirement that the solar panel be on one individual's property, it frees Americans to work together on community projects where each individual can claim a tax credit on part of a shared project," Udall said.

The so-called SUN Act would be a logical amendment to the clean energy bill introduced in December by Sens. John Kerry, Lindsay Graham and Joe Lieberman, Udall said. The cost would be offset if the bill passes as part of a larger package.

The Colorado-based Clean Energy Collective estimates a five-year cost of \$117 million, but the Joint Committee on Taxation has not yet released an official estimate.

Udall said this is one of a number of clean energy jobs initiatives he plans to roll out in the coming months.

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