

# Residential Solar & Storage Candidates

## **Chair Candidates**

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**Thomas Plagemann, Personal Statement for Chair of the Residential Division  
(2026-2027)**

**CEO, ClearLight Solar LLC**

**September 24, 2025**

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**1. *Why do you want to serve on the SEIA Board of Directors?***

Background: Two years ago, I joined ClearGen LLC, a C&I finance platform in a senior strategic capacity. As we observed trends in the market and in an increasing interest rate environment as well in a post-IRA world, (ITC adders that benefit third party owned (TPO) providers but not solar loans), we saw a growing demand for TPO financing solutions for the residential solar industry. To respond to that need and with Blackstone Credit and Insurance's financial support (they were also the owner of ClearGen) we founded ClearLight Solar, a residential TPO finance and asset management platform. The premise in setting up ClearLight was two-fold: (i) the industry is better served by (a) originators/installers, (b) service providers (O&M and billing and collections) and (c) asset financiers and owners focusing on what they do best as opposed to in vertically integrated companies and (ii) the industry would benefit from greater access to and transparency in pricing of residential PPA and lease financing from a reliable and financially stable platform.

Rationale for serving on the SEIA Board: After over 30 years of financing generation projects, and almost 20 financing renewable energy projects, including wind, utility scale solar and over a decade in the residential sector, I remain committed as ever to our society realizing a cleaner energy future. Our collective mission of supporting the solar industry is particularly acute in the face of unprecedented growth in power demand, a hostile administration that continues to characterize climate change as a hoax and calls for revitalizing the coal industry. Under Abby's excellent leadership SEIA has grown tremendously in the 13 years since I have been participating on the board, with all sectors of the industry represented. I believe will continue to benefit from having voices from different disciplines on the board, including board members with finance and particularly with residential finance experience. I feel like I can provide that voice particularly at a time when the residential solar sector will be at a critical juncture given the sunset of section 25D tax credits.

**2. *What experiences and viewpoints which may be currently underrepresented will you bring to the SEIA Board of Directors?***

I am not sure that residential solar is under-represented on the board, but I do believe it is an exceedingly complicated business and that the solar loan product as well as TPO products have been both misunderstood by investors and industry participants equally, often at the expense of home owners. Given that financing is critical to the appeal of residential solar and the fact that the primary form of financing has become much less economic with the end of Section 25d credits, the residential sector is at critical juncture, therefore someone with deep understanding of residential solar financing will be important. I can provide that experience and those viewpoints.

**3. *What strengths and expertise will you bring to the SEIA Board of Directors?***

I am an energy finance professional and entrepreneur with 30 years of experience building businesses, originating and executing investments, financings and M&A related to energy and infrastructure assets and businesses, domestically and internationally. I started my career as a lender, project financing gas fired Co-Gen (QF) projects in the US for IPP developers as well as international power plant projects in Latin America. I also spent time as a principal investor both at GE Energy Financial Services and AIG where I began financing renewable energy projects largely through structured tax investments. I believe that I have the experience, background and temperament to contribute constructively to SEIA's Solar+ vision. My experience gives me broad knowledge of the US renewable energy and power markets with deal experience that spans the capital structure from common equity, structured equity and tax equity to debt financing in the bank and capital markets.

**4. *How will your service on the SEIA Board of Directors advance the solar and storage market?***

By (i) creating better understanding of the residential solar sector generally, which has an outsized impact on public perceptions of solar, (ii) having a positive impact on everything from consumer compliance to greater access to TPO financing with the long tail and (iii) creating more sustainable business models.

**5. *What has been your involvement in the solar and storage market***

I have worked on the finance side of solar and wind project development for close to 20 years. I got my start in solar at First Solar running their solar project finance group, where I closed some of the earliest and largest solar financing deals on record (several of them with DOE loan guarantees). From there I went to Vivint Solar where I devised and built the capital strategy that propelled Vivint to becoming the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest residential solar installer and one of the most successful and profitable distributed solar businesses in the US. For the last 2 years I served as the Chief Financial Officer for PosiGen Inc, a residential solar company focused on serving low- and moderate-income homeowners in underserved communities.

**6. *What has been your level of involvement in SEIA to date? This may include, but be limited to, SEIA working groups and standards committees.***

I served on the SEIA board from 2013 to 2020 as a Terawatt member for Vivint Solar during which time I also served as the State policy Chair for 4 years and most recently I completed two 2 year term as an elected Director at Large and alternate. I have also in the past acted as a consultant to SEIA on financial matters. I have also made the maximum allowable contribution to the SEIA Solar PAC for the last several years.

**7. *Have you been a board member of any other trade associations or relevant organizations?***

No I have not.

**8. *For Division Chair or Vice Chair candidates, please explain how you will represent the needs of division members.***

As alluded to several times above, the residential sector is at a critical juncture. Homeowners overwhelmingly require financing solutions when choosing solar solutions. Solar loan availability has shrunk dramatically given the shrinking economic benefits to the homeowner resulting from increasing interest rates and the lack of IRA ITC adders. There have been two notable bankruptcies of early innovators in the solar loan space. The TPO product has been dominated historically by large vertically integrated business' that have encompassed often competing sales, install and financing functions, been focused on growth at all costs, been notoriously difficult to understand by the investor community, and also suffered two major bankruptcies and one near bankruptcy.

Clearly mistakes have been made, and the residential sector has taken some serious blows to its reputation which unfortunately reflect more broadly on the solar industry. The residential industry relies on small sales and installation organizations for continued delivery of the solar product and many of them are unclear on how to navigate the changing landscape particularly as it affects availability of financing. Navigating this new world and providing guidance and education will be critical and challenging given the fragmented nature of the market. The long tail has stubbornly controlled almost 60% of the install market through the rise and fall of both vertical TPO providers and loan providers and there are thousands of solar installers across the country. With this level of fragmentation, there many often conflicting voices in the space so sifting through the noise and providing the best possible guidance to the largest number of installers ought to be mission critical for the residential division. I believe I can assist in that effort.

**9. *Is there any other information that you believe would be helpful to the Nominating Committee or SEIA members?***

Not at this time

# Thomas G. Plagemann

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*Energy finance professional and entrepreneur with over 30 years of experience building businesses, originating and executing investments, financings and M&A related to energy and infrastructure assets and businesses. Deep knowledge of the US renewable energy and power markets with deal experience that spans the capital structure from common equity, structured equity and tax equity to debt financing in the bank and capital markets. Proven ability to visualize, develop and execute on complex capital raising strategies and build and manage teams.*

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## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**CLEARLIGHT SOLAR LLC/ CLEARGEN LLC**  
*CEO/Executive Chairman*

**AUGUST 2023 – PRESENT**

- Provided ClearGen input on evolving business strategy for C&I solar platform. In 08/24 transitioned into CEO role at newly formed ClearLight Solar, a low cost aggregator of residential solar leases and PPAs focussed on delivering a transparent financial product to our partners, and long term asset performance in the service of residential customers and our investors
- ClearGen LLC was and ClearLight Solar is, a Blackstone portfolio company

**POSIGEN INC, NEW ORLEANS, LA**  
*Chief Financial Officer*

**NOVEMBER 2021 – JULY 2023**

- Responsible for accounting, finance, treasury as well as all internal controls, financial report preparation, market and product analytics and developing capital strategy for company growth

**VIVINT SOLAR, INC, NEW YORK, NY**  
*Chief Commercial Officer, EVP and Head of Capital Markets*

**OCTOBER 2013 – OCTOBER 2020**

- Key executive recruited by Blackstone on team that built Vivint Solar into the second largest vertically integrated developer and installer of residential solar in the U.S. and took the company public in 2014
- Grew installed MWs at CAGR of 45%, expanded markets from 5 to 22 states, and financed 1.5GWs of residential solar for approximately 200,000 American homeowners
- Developed asset and corporate capital strategy and built team that executed on the closing of \$7.4 bn of tax equity and debt capital to fund the rapid growth of business
- Responsible for products, markets and managing government affairs for the company
- Sold business to Sunrun resulting in peak market capitalization for business of \$5.4bn

**SANTANDER BANK, NEW YORK, NY**

**MAY 2012- OCTOBER 2013**

*Managing Director, Head of US Energy Corporate and Investment Banking*

- Managed team responsible for all the bank's activities with US Energy clients across the Energy Sector from well-head to wall socket, including Oil & Gas, Utilities, and IPPs

**FIRST SOLAR INC, NEW YORK, NY**

**MARCH 2011 - MAY 2012**

*Vice President and Global Head of Project Finance and Transaction Execution*

- Global responsibility for project finance and management of commercialization efforts for development pipeline, including leading the financing and sale of the company's self-developed pipeline of utility scale photo-voltaic solar projects
- Led the execution of financing and sale of four projects in the DOE loan guarantee program comprising 1.6 GWs of capacity and \$8 billion of capital cost
- Desert Sunlight transaction named "Deal of the Year" by Project Finance Magazine

**INFIGEN ENERGY LIMITED, NEW YORK, NY**  
Head of US Mergers and Acquisitions

**SEPTEMBER 2009 - JULY 2010**

- Led effort to sell Infigen Energy's (prev. Babcock & Brown Wind Partners) US wind business of 18 operational wind farms with a total installed capacity of 1.6 GW

**AIG FINANCIAL PRODUCTS, WILTON, CT**

**SEPTEMBER 2004 - SEPTEMBER 2009**

Managing Director, Energy Structured Investment Group

- Recruited to build direct energy investment business – products covered broad range of asset classes including equity investments
- Developed the renewable tax equity business for AIG
- Secured tax equity mandates for wind and geothermal projects totaling over \$1 billion and developed a \$2 billion pipeline of opportunities

**GE STRUCTURED FINANCE, STAMFORD, CT**

**APRIL 2002 - SEPTEMBER 2004**

Managing Director, Global Energy Origination

- Senior origination professional responsible for sourcing and closing investments in domestic energy sector - closed financings and investments totaling \$1 billion

**DEUTSCHE BANK SECURITIES, NEW YORK, NY**

**JULY 1991 - APRIL 2002**

Director, Power Project Finance/Investment Banking

- Instrumental in building Deutsche Bank's power project finance business into leading US franchise. Responsible for managing project finance client relationships and originating and executing power project business in North and South America

**DEWEY BALLANTINE, NEW YORK, NY**

**JULY 1987 - JULY 1990**

Corporate Legal Assistant

## EDUCATION

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, NEW YORK, NY**

**MAY 1991**

Master of International Affairs, School of International and Public Affairs

- Specializations: International Banking and Finance / Environmental Policy
- Recipient of School of International Affairs Fellowship for academic achievement

**UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, MINNEAPOLIS, MN**

**MAY 1987**

Bachelor of Arts, School of Liberal Arts

- Major Degree in International Relations with minors in History and German Studies
- Dean's List and German Department Academic Achievement Award

**LUDWIG MAXIMILIANS UNIVERSITÄT, MUNICH, GERMANY**

**1986 - 1987**

**INSITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA**

**1981-1983**

## LANGUAGES/OTHER

- Non-executive Board Member of US Solar Fund [www.ussolarfund.co.uk](http://www.ussolarfund.co.uk)
- Board Member of the Solar Energy Industry Association (SEIA) from 2013 to 2020; and from January 01, 2022 - Present
- Chair of the SEIA State Policy Committee from 2016 to 2020
- Bilingual in German and English

# Personal Statement – SEIA Residential Division Vice Chair

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I am seeking re-election as Vice Chair of the SEIA Residential Division because I believe the next two years are critical for the stability, credibility, and advancement of residential solar. Having served in this role since 2023, I have worked to connect SEIA's policy leadership with the lived realities of installers, operators, financiers, and technology providers. My experience as both CEO of TriSMART Solar and President of the Residential Solar Association (RSA) uniquely positions me to serve as a bridge between grassroots leadership and national policy direction.

## Strengths and Expertise

- Leadership: Founder & CEO of TriSMART Solar, leading Texas's largest residential installer.
- Standards Development: Active technical committee member (SEIA 201, 202, 401), shaping ANSI standards.
- Financial Acumen: Guided TriSMART through 3 years of audited financials, zero debt, and sustained profitability.
- Workforce Development: 30+ managers trained in leadership and performance with Mark Kamin & Associates.
- Community Engagement: GivePower partner since 2019 with international and local sustainability initiatives.

## Representation and Viewpoints

I bring the perspective of a hands-on operator, directly engaged in residential solar challenges daily. As the first elected President of RSA, I understand how grassroots leaders perceive SEIA's work, and I am uniquely positioned to translate SEIA standards and policies into practical adoption strategies across the industry.

## Commitment to Members

As Vice Chair, I remain committed to transparent communication and active engagement with division members. I will continue ensuring that member concerns shape SEIA's policy priorities and that all voices are included in the standards adoption process. My leadership philosophy is collaborative, inclusive, and action-oriented.

## **Conclusion**

My candidacy reflects a decade of solar leadership, a proven track record of collaboration, and a commitment to the future of residential solar. I respectfully request the opportunity to continue serving SEIA members as Vice Chair.

# Mark Bench

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Houston, Texas, United States | Phone: (801) 380-3002 | Email: markbench@email.com | LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/markbench

## Summary

CEO, founder, and industry leader with over a decade of experience in residential solar. Currently serving as Vice Chair of the SEIA Residential Division and President of the Residential Solar Association (RSA). Proven track record in company growth, policy engagement, workforce development, and ANSI standards participation.

## Education

Associate's Degree in Business Administration and Management, Utah Valley University, 2001 - 2005 (Captain of Rugby Team).

## Experience

Chief Executive Officer & Co-Founder | TriSMART Solar | Houston, TX | Jan 2013 – Present

- Founded and scaled TriSMART Solar to become Texas's #1 residential solar installer by MW and footprint.
- Expanded operations to 7+ warehouses across Texas with 250+ employees.
- Directed strategic growth achieving 30% CAGR from 2017–2022, EBITDA growth of 5%, and 17,000+ customers installed
- Positioned TriSMART as a leader in customer service, workforce development, and GivePower philanthropy.
- SEIA technical committee member (201, 202, 401) contributing to ANSI standards.
- Serving as current Vice Chair of SEIA Residential Division.

President | Residential Solar Association (RSA) | Feb 2023 – Present

- First elected president of RSA, a 501(c)(6) trade association.
- Grew membership from 20 to 100+ companies nationwide in under 18 months.
- Built RSA into a complementary platform to SEIA for grassroots collaboration and communication.

Owner | TriSMART | Spring, TX | 2010 – Present

- Launched home services provider delivering solar, automation, and security to 13,000+ homes.

Manager | AMP | Salt Lake City & Texas | 2010

- Managed multi-location sales and operations teams, overseeing business development and customer service.

Manager | APX/Vivint | Multiple U.S. Locations | 2004 – 2009

- Led high-performing sales teams across 5 markets.
- Set 4 national sales records and helped design Vivint's sales training program.

## **Skills**

- Leadership Development
- Policy & Standards Advocacy
- Sales Leadership & Recruiting
- Financial Management
- Workforce Development
- Business Strategy
- Customer Experience