

Clean Energy

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sophisticated Practice Mission-Driven to Advance Clean Energy Projects, Technologies, and Innovative Models**
Wilson Sonsini has a sophisticated clean energy practice purpose-built by experienced, creative attorneys to lead the energy transition through work for our clean energy clients.
- Representing a Broad Range of Clients in the Energy Industry**
The firm represents emerging clean energy companies, mature enterprises developing large-scale infrastructure projects, and public companies involved in substantial energy transactions and initiatives.
- Representing Entities Involved in Financing Energy Projects and Ventures**
Wilson Sonsini represents leading strategic investors, private equity and venture firms, energy project investors, and lenders involved in commercializing energy innovations and project finance.
- A Leading Provider to Innovative Solar Companies**
From the inception of the U.S. solar industry, we have represented leading solar industry companies in their development of groundbreaking deals, business models, and projects. We also represent the lenders and investors that finance them.

OVERVIEW

As the world's largest, most capital-intensive industry, energy is a vital resource to manufacturing, transportation, and domestic life. Energy also powers the devices and services driving technology, communication, and innovation. Affordable and reliable energy is critical for maintaining well-being, prosperity, security, and social progress. At the same time, the energy industry is undergoing a metamorphosis driven by climate change, technological innovation, and economics: from carbon-intensive to sustainable, from centralized to distributed, from commodity to service, and from vertically integrated to competitive.

Consumers don't need to be sold on the benefits of moving to smarter, cheaper, and more sustainable ways to use power; they are already there. The majority of Americans see the impacts of climate change in their communities and prioritize the development of alternative energy like solar, wind, and hydrogen over increased fossil fuel production. Clean energy projects and companies need to be developed, built, and financed to meet this demand and the climate imperative.

We are undergoing an energy transition that presents incredible opportunities for innovators and new business models. Wilson Sonsini has built a sophisticated, mission-driven energy practice anchored by experienced, creative attorneys who represent more than 400 industry clients, including innovative, emerging renewable energy companies, mature enterprises developing and financing large-scale infrastructure projects, and public companies involved in significant energy initiatives. The firm also represents leading strategic investors, private equity firms, energy project investors, and other lenders actively involved in commercializing energy innovations and project finance. Our attorneys are the bridge from opportunity to successful action in this unprecedented era of energy transition.

Areas of Focus

The firm's clean energy practice encompasses the interrelated areas of:

- Clean energy project development and finance
- State and federal energy regulation
- Large commercial and industrial customers' energy transactions
- Project finance, tax equity, and joint ventures
- Sustainability and decarbonization
- Emerging Companies
- Patents and Innovations
- Private Equity
- Tax and Tax Equity
- Finance and Structured Finance
- Intellectual Property
- Mergers & Acquisitions
- Real Estate
- Regulatory and Compliance
- Technology Transactions

The close, collaborative relationships we have with our clients give us a direct connection to the vanguard of the clean energy revolution, including those involved with emerging technologies, business models, financing techniques, and regulatory compliance solutions. Our interdisciplinary energy practice encompasses traditional electric power generators, renewable energy producers, advanced fuels and chemicals companies, and other innovators operating in developing areas such as:

- Energy efficiency
- Electric vehicles
- EV charging infrastructure and other transportation technologies
- Transmission
- Distribution
- Hydrogen
- Industrial decarbonization
- Customer service innovations such as SaaS models changing how consumers buy reliable clean energy electric service

Electric Power

Many of our power clients develop and finance modern, major clean electric power projects, including:

- Utility-scale renewable energy generation plants (e.g., solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, and waste-to-energy)
- Hydroelectric
- Nuclear
- Fuel cell
- Energy storage facilities

Another set of our energy clients builds and finances behind-the-meter distributed generation assets, community solar projects, energy storage and management systems, energy efficiency equipment and services, and microgrids. These new business models—a response to the rising costs of retail electric power, carbon cost risk, and corporate sustainability initiatives—have led many commercial, industrial, and public entities to focus aggressively on managing load and energy supply on their side of the utility electric meter.

Solar

Wilson Sonsini attorneys pioneered the creation of the U.S. solar industry. Since the mid-2000s—long before solar became the fastest-growing electricity source in America—we worked on groundbreaking solar projects such as:

- Developed and financed the first utility-scale photovoltaic project in the U.S. (14.2 MW Nellis AFB project, 2007)
- Developed and financed the first portfolio of commercial and industrial rooftop projects (e.g., MMA Renewable Ventures, Powerlight/SunPower, Recurrent, 2005-08)
- Negotiated GWs of concentrated solar project power purchase agreements (e.g., Brightsource Energy, 2005-06)

The firm's energy attorneys co-created the residential solar industry as well, through our work helping Sunrun, SolarCity, and Vivint Solar develop their groundbreaking business models, secure their first tax equity financings, and complete their IPOs and mergers and acquisitions.

We have also helped industry pioneers create virtual net-metering and community solar subscription model businesses, integrate energy storage into all sizes of solar projects, and secure capital through all manner of tax equity financings, debt, and securitizations.

In addition, we have helped clients buy and sell hundreds of solar projects and project portfolios as the projects progress from early-stage development to financial close, notice to proceed, placed in service, operation, and post-flip refinancings.

Finally, for solar developers and the solar industry trade group SEIA, we have been the leading energy regulatory advocates at FERC and before state commissions, creating market opportunities for solar companies, dealing with difficult utilities, and preserving rights for independent power under PURPA and the Federal Power Act.

As solar goes from representing a small to a larger share of the electricity supply—and market rules change to reflect this new reality—our attorneys will continue to lay the legal groundwork for clients hastening the energy transition.

Fuels and Chemicals

Just as the electric power industry has undergone radical transformation, the fuels and chemicals industries are in the process of reinventing themselves. From corn-based ethanol to true drop-in fuels and petroleum-based industrial chemicals to bio-based chemicals, advanced fuels and chemicals are a growing force in the marketplace and financial sector.

Wilson Sonsini attorneys have been leaders in these industries for more than a decade, representing companies, investors, lenders, and strategic partners in some of the most significant U.S. transactions. We also represent companies and their financiers in connection with financing, grant, and off-take opportunities with the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Defense, and Energy, as well as state-level opportunities.