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White House Spurns Solar Panel

By *JOHN M. BRODER*

Bill McKibben, an environmental campaigner from Vermont with a flair for showmanship, was rebuffed Friday morning in his [effort](#) to get the White House to reinstall one of the solar panels that President Jimmy Carter had placed on the White House roof.

They were removed by the Reagan administration, and some have been stored for years at environmentally active Unity College in Maine. Mr. McKibben and a group of students drove one of the panels down the East Coast in the hope of getting the Obama White House to accept it and return it to the roof to heat water for presidential showers and dishwashing.

Associated Press The environmental activist Bill McKibben and others signed a solar panel on Tuesday in Unity, Me., before heading to Washington to offer it to the White House.

Mr. McKibben met with three midlevel White House officials Friday morning who told him, politely, no dice.

They explained that there were various reasons that the White House roof was not available for a gesture with very little energy-saving potential and that the Obama administration was doing more to promote renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions than any previous government. The word “stunt” may have come up.

After the meeting, Mr. McKibben, speaking by cellphone from the sidewalk outside the Eisenhower Executive Office Building next to the White House, said: “They refused to take the Carter-era panel that we brought with us and said they would continue their deliberative process to figure out what is appropriate for the White House someday. I told them it would be nice to deliberate as fast as possible, since that is the rate at which the planet’s climate is deteriorating.”

He said the van with the solar panel was parked in a garage two blocks from the White House. It will be rolled out again on Oct. 10 as part of a series of global warming and renewable energy events around the country and the world.

The White House issued its own statement after the meeting:

“Representatives from the White House met with the group to discuss President Obama’s unprecedented commitment to renewable energy including more than \$80 billion in the

generation of renewable energy sources, expanding manufacturing capacity for clean energy technology, advancing vehicle and fuel technologies, and building a bigger, better, smarter electric grid, all while creating new, sustainable jobs.

“They also discussed the Obama administration’s work to: establish more stringent energy efficiency standards, make the federal government more sustainable (and the recent announcement on the 56 agency sustainability plans which include utilizing renewable energy across the federal government), set the first ever joint fuel economy/greenhouse gas emissions standards for cars and trucks, and eliminate key barriers in the home retrofit industry. They concluded by reiterating our continued commitment to promoting renewable energy development.”

Mr. McKibben is the founder of 350.org, a group that campaigns to slow climate change with the stated goal of limiting heat-trapping carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million. Andy Revkin at the DotEarth blog, who has known him for a long time, [wrote](#) on Thursday about some of the reasons Mr. McKibben’s quest was unlikely to succeed for now.