Solar power has forever been swimming upstream toward the mainstream—which is exactly where it needs to be situated in order to take off in a big way. This is important because swimming in the “mainstream” are Republicans, Democrats and, yes, shareholders of utility stock. All three are needed to move this energy forward in any significant way.

In the past, solar power has been viewed as a left-leaning venture, and Republicans have avoided any association with it. You might say it has been politically toxic.

But times are changing, and conservatives like me are recognizing that with solar power are skilled jobs in manufacturing and construction, economic development opportunities, savings on power bills, along with helping people or businesses to not even need the utility anymore. This last reason is especially appealing to tea party types who cherish independence and freedom.

I have solar thermal on my Athens home and use it to heat my hot water, which Georgia Power estimates at 17 percent of the average ratepayer’s bill. Power Partners Solar of Athens, the company that manufactured and installed my system, is working through Walton EMC and Georgia Power to install more solar thermal for residential customers.

Suniva, in Norcross, does both research and manufacturing of sophisticated photovoltaic solar cell technology. Mage Solar, in Middle Georgia, has created a solar-powered electric car charging station consisting of 18 panels. All this means jobs for Georgians—both in the manufacturing and service sector.