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CO-OP DAY AT THE FAIR

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Electric cooperative representatives speak on your behalf

This past May, more than 2,500 electric cooperative representatives from across the nation attended the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Legislative Rally in Washington, D.C. During the rally, representatives met and discussed the issues that will have a major impact on cooperatives.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) is the national service organization that represents the nation's more than 900 private, nonprofit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provide service to 42 million people in 47 states. The united message from the 2,500 delegates who attended the rally represents the significance of the concerns of 42 million electric cooperative members.

The following were a few concerns brought to the members of Congress and the stand NRECA takes with the issues:

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Electric co-ops rely on reimbursements from FEMA's Public Assistance Program to repair electric utility systems in the event of a storm or other natural disaster. Without FEMA reimbursement assistance, many electric cooperative consumers living in disaster areas could face higher rates and struggle with recovery, causing slower recovery periods.

Some for-profit utilities have been pushing Congress to include them in the program. This is despite the fact that for-profit utilities can count losses incurred in disasters against their federal tax obligations. This option is not available to nonprofit electric cooperatives.

Another concern with FEMA is the inconsistent application of standards. Decisions by Region VII in 2013 threaten the reimbursement of electric co-ops for damage from disasters. FEMA imposed a new standard on Iowa electric cooperatives, requiring co-ops to prove their electric line

was damaged during the actual storm event by testing the overhead line prior to the storm. FEMA wanted the co-op to cut out 20 feet of line per mile of line, and send the segment to a lab for testing every year. This marked the first time FEMA had required electric co-ops anywhere in the nation to physically test their electric line before and after storm events to support applications for FEMA disaster recovery funds.

The electric cooperative position:

NRECA urges Congress to carefully weigh all pending and future proposals for retooling or overhauling FEMA. In its current form, the Public Assistance Program is an effective tool for enabling electric cooperatives to quickly restore electric service to consumers' homes and businesses. The Public Assistance Program's inclusion of nonprofit entities like electric cooperatives should be maintained. For-profit utilities, which can offset disaster costs by using provisions of the federal tax code, should not gain

access to FEMA funding.

NRECA's International Electrify Africa Act

For 50 years, NRECA International has provided people in developing countries with access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity. These electrification programs have resulted in increased agricultural productivity, millions of new jobs in micro and small enterprises, and higher incomes and quality of life for rural communities in more than 42 countries across the world.

Sixty-eight percent of the population or 589 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live without electric power. History has shown that prioritized foreign assistance funding has put many countries on a path toward a stronger future. Electric power is the foundation for dramatic increases in local standards of living, quality of life, and economic development. The cooperative model used by NRECA has proven to be one of the most effective implementing systems for delivering safe and reliable electricity to the developing world.

The electric cooperative position:

The goal of the Electrify Africa Act, H.R. 2548, is to ensure that our foreign aid investments in sub-Saharan Africa are sustainable and successful. According to a Congressional Budget Office study, the legislation would save the federal government \$86 million over the 2014-2019 period. It is a revenue generator that sets a comprehensive, multi-year strategy to achieve these goals.

NRECA supports the legislation and stands ready to partner with the U.S. government to achieve this goal. As the rural electrification access experts, NRECA works to establish an infrastructure that will withstand the test of time. The Electrify Africa Act prioritizes and coordinates U.S.

government resources to achieve three goals in sub-Saharan Africa by 2020:

- Encourage the installation of at least an additional 20,000 megawatts of electrical power.
- Promote first-time access to electricity for at least 50 million people, particularly the poor.
- Promote efficient institutional platforms that provide electrical service to rural and underserved areas.

Endangered Species Act

When the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) was first enacted in 1973, 109 species were listed for protection. Today, the number is 1,450. And currently, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is on a path to increase the number of listed species by more than 20 percent in the next five years.

Electric cooperatives support procedural changes to make the ESA more efficient, effective and less costly, with the goal of finding a balance that accommodates essential economic activities. To ensure fair and sensible application of the Act, scientific information must be thorough, balanced and based on scientific standards and impartial peer review. As true stewards of the land, electric cooperatives support solutions that balance economic growth with preserving native species.

The electric cooperative position:

In the U.S. House, electric cooperatives are seeking support for four modest bills to improve ESA. They are 1) H.R. 4315, requiring data used by federal agencies for ESA listing decisions be made publicly available on the Internet; 2) H.R. 4316, requiring annual reporting and comprehensive tracking of ESA litigation costs, including attorneys' fees; 3) H.R. 4317, requiring the federal government to disclose to affected

states all data used prior to any listing or proposed ESA listing decision. It also would ensure that "best available scientific and commercial data" used by the federal government includes data provided by impacted and local governments, and; 4) H.R. 4318, capping hourly fees paid to attorneys that prevail in cases filed under ESA, consistent with current law under the Equal Access to Justice Act.

NRECA thanks members of Congress who have supported electric cooperatives positions on these and all other legislation that affects YOU, the members of an electric cooperative.

You can see that your cooperative representatives do what they can on your behalf to ensure that you will receive reliable and affordable electricity!

However, you as an electric cooperative member and a U.S. citizen, need to do your part. At the June 4 annual meeting, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Association handed out www.Action.Coop cards. If you would like to be more active concerning matters that will affect your electric cooperative, all you need to do is act.

The card can be sent directly to NRECA or Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Association's headquarters. By being a part of www.Action.coop, you would be asked to contact the elected officials and tell them, as an electric cooperative member, your concerns about legislation being considered, both on a state and national level.

You will be given a briefing of the issues concerning the legislation, and the cooperatives' standpoint. The information and the contact with the elected officials will be done through emails. If you would be interested in taking part, contact Jami Propp at 406-488-1602 or jamip@lyrec.com. ■



Medora discount available

Are you planning a trip to Medora this summer? If you are, simply call 1-800-MEDORA-1 and give them the discount code (Touch 2014) for a 15 percent discount off the following during any night of the season:

Things to do:

- Medora Musical
- Pitchfork Steak Fondue
- Bully Pulpit Golf Course

Lodging at any of the following:

- Bunkhouse Motel
- Badlands Motel
- Rough Riders Hotel ■

HIDDEN NUMBERS

If you find your meter number hidden in this issue, it is worth a \$25 credit on your next statement. The meter number will appear within the four Lower Yellowstone Electric pages. Give us a call during the month your meter is listed, and claim your \$25 bill credit. ■



Edwin Gatzke joins co-op

Edwin Gatzke is Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Association's new electric line locator/meter reader. Edwin is a native of Sidney. He is married to Cherie' and has a daughter, Chelsea. Edwin has been employed with ONEOK as an operator for the past 2.5 years. Edwin enjoys spending time outdoors, especially during hunting season. (Meter 30253) ■



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Call before you dig!

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Numerous utility lines may be buried on your property, ranging from electric and telephone lines to water and sewer lines, but Montana One Call will help you locate these lines before your project begins.

Contact Montana One Call and utility line owners will locate and mark their lines. These locates do not include any lines you may have installed to your private facilities, such as detached garages, wells or yard lights.

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