



With family schedules feeling out of control, the things we can control become more important. That's why we're members of our electric co-op. The whole reason the co-op exists is to bring us the electricity we need. So they look out for us. They invest in the best technology you can get, just to keep the power on. Not because they have to. they actually do it because it's the right thing to do. And that's what matters.

In a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, the people have the power.



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Staying Vigilant



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Electric cooperative representatives from all across the United States converged on Washington, D.C., for our annual legislative conference recently. Many of those who took the cooperative message to Congress during those first days in May had walked those halls many times before. For others, this was their first trip to the epicenter of our democratic system of government. All who attended were given the opportunity to participate in a time honored tradition of coming together in great numbers, but with one voice, to articulate our position on issues that impact our industry.

While we cannot overlook the value of this experience for everyone who attended, it was those who were there for the first time who gained the most from this pilgrimage to our nation's Capitol. It was those who were there for the first time who were most impressed by sheer numbers of people who took time to deliver our message to Congress. Whether they had been in the co-op family for 20 days or 20 years it was the first-timers who appreciated the real value of this massive grassroots effort to make our presence known in the halls of Congress.

For those of us who have made this pilgrimage so many times before, the conference seems to serve as a revival of sorts, renewing our cooperative spirit and sense of commitment to those we serve. But it was the first-timers who returned home with a true understanding of just how committed electric cooperatives are to protecting and advancing the interests of not only their local cooperative, but the interests of all electric cooperatives and the cooperative business model in general.

Rising energy costs and legislation that affects the rates electric cooperatives charge was part of the focus of our message with our congressional delegation. Captive rail issues and the costs cooperatives pay for shipment of coal to power plants was another issue. Many cooperatives depend on coal and coal shipments for their fuel. Additional costs imposed by railroads cause rates to consumers to go up.

Some of the other issues that we addressed with our congressional representatives were not new. As a matter of fact, issues surrounding the Rural Utilities Service and the power marketing administrations always seem to be on the table when we travel to D.C. They are always on the table because they are issues that are critical to the strength and stability of every electric cooperative and attractive as targets to those who hope to undermine the electric cooperative industry.

Like the wily coyote ever searching for the trap or trigger that will finally bring down the roadrunner, we must assume that for those who hope to engineer our demise, the search goes on. And like the roadrunner, we must remain ever vigilant and always prepared to stay one step ahead of the coyote.