

IT'S TIME TO COME TOGETHER AND CHANGE OUR FUTURE.

We have an energy challenge, America.

When it comes to finding solutions, we must meet climate change goals while keeping costs down and electricity available. America needs a plan. Immediately. Because we all know that our energy needs keep on growing—every day.

Now is the time to have a candid conversation with your elected officials. Together, we can find answers and take action.

Start the conversation today at www.ourenergy.coop.



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Our Energy, Our Future
A Dialogue With America

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Grassroots Active on Energy

By Audry Ricketts

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Grassroots is one of the most powerful words in the electric cooperative dictionary. We define grassroots as the electric cooperative activists – directors, managers, employees and member-owners – who take an active role in the political process. These activists work to protect cooperatives from harmful legislation and regulation. And they promote the value of cooperative ownership. As cooperatives, we have cultivated a status as a grassroots organization. Legislators and elected officials and their staff know that cooperative member-owners are actively involved in their cooperative. They know that we speak with a unified voice and that has an unbelievable impact.

For more than 70 years, electric cooperatives' greatest asset has been our grassroots. South Dakota's grassroots team of electric cooperative directors and employees traveled to Washington, D.C., May 5-7 to participate in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's annual legislative conference. We joined more than 3,000 grassroots representatives from across the country. We used the opportunity to raise Congress' awareness of the coming electricity capacity crisis. We must broaden lawmakers' current focus on energy issues to include not just climate change, but also a full discussion of electricity policy.

During this conference, participants were briefed on issues such as railroad policy, RUS funding, climate change legislation and the future of the nation's energy. Participants then traveled to Capitol Hill to meet with Sens. Tim Johnson and John Thune and Rep. Stephanie Herseth Sandlin and their respective staff. We took this opportunity to thank them for their continued support on our issues. South Dakota's cooperatives are fortunate to have a great working relationship with our delegation and to have leadership that supports our mission. We then briefed them on the numerous issues

currently impacting electric cooperatives and asked for their support.

We utilized this gathering as an opportunity to deliver "Our Energy, Our Future" petitions and postcards that have been signed by cooperative member-owners. The grassroots team engaged in a dialogue with our congressional delegation on our energy future. We discussed capacity, technology and affordability.

Congress is moving toward imposing additional costs on utilities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the stakes couldn't be higher. If climate change legislation is enacted in a way that outpaces available technology and if it does not take into consideration the need for more baseload generation, cooperatives could soon find it increasingly difficult to fulfill our responsibility of "keeping the lights on" and "keeping it affordable."

To all the leaders that joined us in Washington, D.C., to deliver our message, I say "Thank You."

To all of you, the member-owners, that took the time to begin your dialogue with South Dakota's congressional delegation by signing petitions and postcards or by sending e-mails, "Thank You." Your efforts are greatly appreciated. Having the support of the member-owners drives home the concerns we have. Congress recognizes our tradition of putting people over profits.

As the climate change legislation progresses, we will continue to ask you to stay engaged in this dialogue. Make sure your voice gets heard. Climate change legislation, when adopted, will impact you, the member-owners, for decades. The legislation must be realistic, it must be efficient and it must be fair.

Unity is the hallmark of our cooperative efforts. Cooperatives across the state and nation have risen to many challenges over the years and we will continue to meet the needs of you, the members. No matter how difficult the challenge or sophisticated the solution, our goal is no different than it was in the 1930s – keeping the lights on for you the member-owners.