

Our Energy, Our Future



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It seems like every time America discovers it has a crisis on its hands, our government wakes up and proposes a crash program to fix it. Henry Ford was one of the first to observe it and even coined a name for it: “the crisis-crash syndrome.”

As Congress considers various approaches to dealing with climate change, lawmakers must balance keeping

electricity affordable and reliable.

- Each of us has a role to play in influencing this debate that will likely result in new laws on climate change soon after the new administration and new Congress begin their work in 2009.
- Each of us has a role to play in making sure elected representatives remember their obligations to protecting the public’s interest in maintaining affordable, reliable electricity.

Over the next 20 years, electric utilities must increase generating capacity by 30 percent just to keep up with projected demand. The excess capacity we enjoyed for decades has been used up. Power plants are aged and will need to be replaced. At the same time that lawmakers address climate change, they need to address an impending electricity shortage, which in some parts of the country could be here within two to three years.

Some people say we can meet future demand through efficiency and renewable energy; and I am proud to say that electric co-ops have had great success in those areas. We are quickly integrating new renewable energy resources, deploying demand side management tools, increasing system efficiency and promoting conservation and efficiency at the consumer level. And while that is a good thing, it is a drop in the bucket.

We need to remind Congress that energy efficiency alone won’t solve the climate change challenge. Nor will renewable sources of energy suffice. Today, slightly more than 11 percent of co-op power comes from renewable sources. That percentage is growing daily, but renewables are a long way from becoming a major reliable source.

Simply put, significant reductions in carbon emissions over the long term will not happen without the same kind of massive – and expensive – investment in research and development that got Americans to the moon in 1969. Without leadership at the federal level, this investment will not be made.

We must remind our congressional leaders that the climate change debate is a debate with real consequences for real people and their interests must be heard and taken into account in reaching a balanced solution to this complex problem.

The electric cooperatives have launched a national grassroots campaign titled, “Our Energy, Our Future: A Dialogue with America.” It has one purpose: to encourage open discussion between electric co-op consumers and their elected officials about the challenge of keeping the lights on.

Inside this May issue you will find a variety of materials to review. Please take time to study this important information. Here’s what you can do. Begin the dialogue. Please either complete the enclosed postcards and mail them today or go to www.ourenergy.coop, enter your address and send Congress your questions.

We must remind our congressional leaders that the climate change debate is a debate with real consequences for real people and their interests must be heard and taken into account in reaching a balanced solution to this complex problem.

To be successful, the plan must be developed with the input of all parties, especially electric co-op member-consumers and it must offer a balanced solution to climate change issues.

Anything less will be a betrayal of the trust our member-consumers have placed in their elected leaders. Anything less will be a radical departure from the goals established for cooperatives by Congress more than 70 years ago and supported by the actions of each succeeding Congress over the decades.

I urge you to begin the dialogue.

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News Briefs

A POWER LINE ON THE GROUND IS A DANGEROUS THING.

South Dakota storms can cause power lines to fall. If you come upon a downed line, don't touch it. It may look harmless, there may not even be sparks, but it is still dangerous.

BE SMART. STAY AWAY.
Report downed lines to your local utility company.



Energy Safety Association
of South Dakota



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.

