



Mark Mengershauser
Charles Mix Electric

I don't think anybody is against open and clean government.

It's a target at which the South Dakota

Legislature, the governor's office, each city, each county and each school district should always be aiming.

However, a new proposed law -- Initiated Measure 10 -- misses that target. By a lot.

Called the "Open and Clean Government Act," the measure would place severe -- and possibly unconstitutional -- limits on lobbying, campaign contributions and political

activity by South Dakota citizens.

For instance, it would apparently be illegal for an office holder, candidate or campaign worker to ask for or accept political support from anybody involved in a business that had a contract with state or local government. And, they couldn't accept political support from the business owner's employees, spouses, brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, stepbrothers, half brothers, in-laws, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews and domestic partners. It wouldn't take long for half the state to be sidelined from politics.

Rural electric cooperatives routinely sell power to the state of South Dakota. Would these political restrictions then

apply to us, our employees, and our members? That's just one of the many questions that are unanswered in this murky, 2,000-word measure.

Initiative 10 also would prohibit anyone from using government revenues or resources for campaigning or lobbying. In other words, groups such as the South Dakota Municipal League and the South Dakota Association of County Commissioners would likely cease to exist. Individual cities and towns could send someone to the Legislature to lobby for or against a bill, but they couldn't join groups that represent their interests in Pierre. Not if their dues are paid with tax dollars. Unions representing public employees would be hobbled as well.

It's unclear whether Initiative 10 would also bar South Dakota's rural electric cooperatives from effectively lobbying legislators on bills that seriously affect our members. Most electric cooperatives are small, and we need a voice such as the South Dakota Rural Electric Association, in Pierre. Individual cooperatives don't have the time or the money to send someone to each legislative committee meeting, summer study session or state agency hearing.

For a proposed law with a stated goal of bringing "common-sense public disclosure and ethics reform to our state and local governments," Initiative 10 doesn't make a lot of sense.

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KEEP ENERGY ISSUES IN MIND THIS NOVEMBER:

VOTE!

AND HELP KEEP OUR ELECTRICITY AFFORDABLE

In addition to casting your vote on November 4, you can help educate and inform lawmakers about meeting our energy needs affordably. Electric cooperatives are currently engaged in a grassroots campaign called "Our Energy, Our Future: A Dialogue With America."

Nearly 400,000 letters and e-mails have already been sent to Congress by your fellow consumers from all across the United States, each asking critical energy questions.

To join the effort, visit www.ourenergy.coop.



Our Energy, Our Future
A Dialogue With America

Wally Johnson, Vice-President of the East River Electric Board of Directors, presents an "Eminent Service Award" to Wayne Wright, who retired from the East River Board after 24 years of service. The Eminent Service Award is East River's highest commendation, and



recognizes those who have made significant and lasting contributions to the advancement of rural electrification. Mr. Wright served as President of the East River Board for the past 15 years.

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