

The power of American independence

Celebrating July 4th and declaring our energy independence

By Anne Prince

Fireworks and flags. Cookouts and cold drinks. The Fourth of July is a festive day on which we celebrate our nation's independence with family and friends. Typically, this is not a day of quiet reflection. While we spend a lot of energy having fun, if we give any thought about our forebearers and their determined efforts to bring about our nation's independence, it's fleeting.

An independent spirit is a part of our DNA

However, it is worth reflecting that this uniquely American spirit of independence remains part of our collective DNA more than 230 years after the independent nation of the United States was formed and the Declaration of Independence was crafted. And this sense of independence has served us well.

For example, more than 75 years ago, an independent streak inspired groups of farmers across America's countryside to band together and improve their quality of life. Aside from President Franklin Roosevelt's promise of federal aid in the form of low-interest loans and engineering expertise, rural Americans had little help in bringing electricity to their homes. So, they did it themselves by pulling together and working cooperatively – a shining example of American determination and ingenuity.

For the past 40-plus years, nearly every president since Richard Nixon, during the time of the Arab oil embargo, has talked about the goal of U.S. energy independence – reducing our reliance on imported oil and other forms of foreign energy. Today, while we still have a ways to go, we are closer to that goal than ever before. We are exporting more gas and importing less foreign fuel than in recent memory.

The road to energy independence

Consumers have an important role to play in the road to energy independence. They can play a part

in moving us toward national energy independence by taking action in simple, practical ways – insulating and caulking around windows and doors; washing clothes in cold water instead of hot; replacing air filters; and using more energy efficient appliances and home heating and cooling systems. Efficiency efforts can cut costs for individual households, but the collective benefit to our country is even greater.

If we all work together to achieve increased energy efficiency and reduce our overall energy consumption, we can make even more progress on our road toward energy independence. At Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative, we want to be a resource for you in this effort. We can provide energy-saving tips tailored for your home, or conduct a comprehensive energy audit to help find energy leaks.

Electric co-ops provide renewable energy resources

In addition, RECC and other electric co-ops across the country have been actively engaged in promoting renewable energy resources like wind, solar, hydropower and biomass. Our GobNob wind turbine has produced over 10 million kWhs for our members' use since 2009. Today, nearly 95 percent of the nation's 900-plus electric co-ops provide electricity produced by renewable sources, all playing a key role in powering rural America while fostering our nation's energy independence.

Recent advances in technology are transforming how we make and move electricity, and over time, these changes will greatly improve not only the efficiency but the reliability of electric power. So this Fourth of July, as you gaze up at the fireworks lighting up the night sky, reflect on the enduring spirit of independence that is integral to our American character.

Anne Prince writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.



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