



RuralHILIGHTS

Local News from Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative

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Become a Co-op Voter

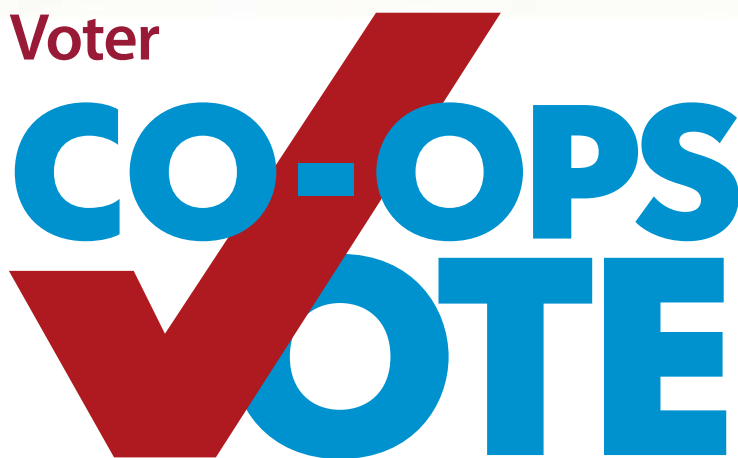
As member-owned electric cooperatives, voting is already in our DNA. It's how we maintain an electric utility which is responsive to the consumers it serves. But voting also plays a crucial part in our representative democracy. Federal, state and local elections offer an opportunity to exercise a civic responsibility – to select the best leaders for our communities.

Yet in places all over America, even those served by electric cooperatives, citizens aren't exercising that right. In the 2012 national elections, voter turnout dropped overall, but the decline in rural counties was 18 percent – twice that of the nation as a whole.

And when voters miss the chance to vote, they also lose the opportunity to communicate their concern to our leaders about the issues that matter to us, where we work, live, and raise families.

Reliable electricity, access to rural broadband and the quality of our healthcare system are just a few issues we all care about. Still, they only become priorities if enough people show elected officials that they are paying attention. Registering to vote and voting are the most effective ways to send this message.

When we go to the polls with the cooperative principle of "Concern for Community" in mind, we instantly improve our political system. It's a system designed to produce a government "of the people, by the people and for the people."



A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

WWW.VOTE.COOP

Co-ops Vote

RECC has joined America's electric cooperatives in launching a campaign to help get out the vote and insert issues important to co-ops into the public discussion. Called "Co-ops Vote," this effort will help boost voter turnout in areas served by cooperatives across the country to ensure that our voices are heard loud and clear every day, and especially on Election Day.

Here's what you can do to help. Visit the Co-ops Vote web site, WWW.VOTE.COOP, and take the pledge to BECOME A CO-OP VOTER to support your community and electric cooperative when casting your vote in 2016.

The web site will give you information on your elected officials and candidates, the voter registration process, election dates and locations, and background about

eight key co-op issues we want our elected leaders to understand: rural broadband access, hiring and honoring veterans, low-income energy assistance, cybersecurity, water regulation, rural health care access, affordable and reliable energy, and renewable energy.

Co-ops Vote is a non-partisan program developed by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the national service organization that represents the nation's more than 900 private, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives. With 42 million members across the nation, electric co-ops are a powerful voice on national issues that have a local impact.

If you have any questions, please visit WWW.VOTE.COOP or contact Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative. Please go to the polls in November and vote for rural America!

Make the most of your ceiling fans

By turning on the fan, you can turn up the savings!

If you are like most Americans, you have at least one ceiling fan in your home. Ceiling fans help our indoor life feel more comfortable. They are a decorative addition to our homes and, if used properly, can help lower energy costs.

Tips for making the most of your ceiling fans:

1. Flip the switch – Most ceiling fans have a switch near the blades. In warm months, flip the switch so that the blades operate in a counter clockwise direction, effectively producing a “wind chill” effect. Fans make the air near them feel cooler than it actually is. In winter, move the switch so the fan blades rotate clockwise, creating a gentle updraft. This pushes warm air down from the ceiling into occupied areas of the room. Regardless of the season, try operating the fan on its lowest setting.

2. Adjust the thermostat – In the summer, when using a fan in conjunction with an air conditioner, or instead of it, you can turn your thermostat up three to five degrees without any reduction in comfort. This saves money since a fan is less costly to run than an air conditioner. In the winter, lower your thermostat’s set point by the same amount. Ceiling fans push the warm air from the ceiling back down toward the living space, which means the furnace won’t turn on as frequently.

3. Choose the right size – Make sure your ceiling fan is the right size for the room. A fan that is 36-44 inches in diameter will cool rooms up to



225 square feet. A fan that is 52 inches or more should be used to cool a larger space.

4. Turn it off – When the room is unoccupied, turn the fan off. Fans are intended to cool people - not rooms.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Use small electric pans, toaster ovens or convection ovens for small meals rather than your stove or oven. A toaster or convection oven uses one-third to one-half as much energy as a full-sized oven.

Source: energy.gov

You are a member, not a customer

That's the co-op difference!

By Adam Schwartz

Many businesses use the word “member” to describe their customers. Places like Sam’s Club or Costco and even American Express like to refer to their customers as members. You pay a fee to buy their goods and services, but that is really all you get for the “membership.” No right to vote for the Board of Directors or to participate in any meaningful way in the organization.

In cooperatives like Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative, membership really does mean something more than just the right to buy electricity. Co-ops of all types are founded on seven cooperative principles that give us guidance and strategic direction. Membership also gives you rights as an owner of this co-op.

Brett Fairbairn is the director of the Center for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of

Saskatchewan in Canada. He makes the case that member relations is not just part of what co-ops should be doing, but in fact is the fundamental core business of the cooperative.

He further lays out the three strategic concepts that any co-op must get right in order to survive and thrive:

Economic linkage

RECC is connected to you. There is a business relationship that serves you (the member) and the co-op. Since co-ops are solely owned by people in the community, they have a mutual interest to ensure that both the co-op and the member do well and prosper.

Transparency

As an owner of the co-op, you have a right to know how it operates and how decisions are made that directly impact you. If the co-op is transparent and combines this trait with integrity and fairness, it will build trust with the members.

Cognition

In this case, cognition is best defined as how your co-op thinks. It includes the current and historical identity, the mission and the sense of shared values with co-op members. Research, education and training are critical functions that RECC must conduct on an ongoing basis to ensure that we always have the best information to make decisions.

The cooperative business model is the best one on earth, but like any enterprise, it is up to the human beings who work at the co-op, who serve on the board and the members like you to ensure that the principles and values do not fade over time.

First and foremost, RECC strives to be thought of as a member-owned cooperative that gives you the best value of any utility. If we succeed, our community thrives and you will always value being a member – not a customer.

Co-ops of all types are founded on seven cooperative principles that give us guidance and strategic direction. Membership also gives you rights as an owner of this co-op.

Adam Schwartz is the founder of The Cooperative Way a consulting firm that helps co-ops succeed. He is an author, speaker and member-owner of the CDS Consulting Co-op. You can follow him on Twitter @adamcooperative or email him at aschwartz@thecooperativeway.coop.

RECC ANNUAL MEETING REPORT IS ONLINE

This newsletter went to print before RECC’s Annual Meeting on June 9, so we’ll have the full meeting report in this Rural Highlights section of the August Illinois Country Living magazine. For news about the 2016 Annual Meeting, visit our website at www.recc.coop.





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See our web page for monthly
Board meeting reports.

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner

Geothermal tax credit set to expire Federal credit ends Dec. 31, 2016

Dozens of RECC members have taken advantage of the federal income tax credit of 30 percent for high-efficiency geothermal (ground-source heat pump) systems in their homes over the past several years. That opportunity is coming to a close, as the tax credit is set to expire at the end of 2016.

The credit applies to the installed cost of a residential ground-source heat pump system, and helps pay for the extra expense of the closed loop needed to move heat from underground in the winter, or out of the house into the ground in the summer. That's why the geo credit is included with other renewable energy systems, since it's moving heat that originates from the sun.

While the end of the year feels far away, the next six months will go quickly. Systems must be in service by the end of December, and a lot of other people may be planning to beat the deadline also.

"Every year, home owners wait until the last minute," warns Mark Underhill, territory manager for WaterFurnace International, a ground-source heat

pump manufacturer/distributor located in Fort Wayne, Indiana. "In November and December, dealers are swamped and there's always somebody whose project doesn't get done. With the tax credit going away, what's going to happen is everybody's going to want to do it at the end of the year, when contractors are already backed up."

That's why you need to be talking to qualified dealers now, and making plans for an installation if you choose a geo system.

Besides heating efficiencies of up to 500 percent, geothermal systems are also super-efficient for air conditioning,

and they can also provide hot water savings! Combined with RECC's Dual Meter rate of 7.5 cents/kWh for all heating, cooling and water heating energy, there's no system that can save you more.

For more information on geo systems, local installers, rates and rebates, call Dana Smith at Rural Electric at 438-6512. Time is running out for the extra tax incentive, so don't delay!



RECC office will be
closed July 4



In observance of the Independence Day holiday, RECC's office will be closed on Monday, July 4. Remember to celebrate safely!