



MREA Legislative Bulletin

Minnesota Rural Electric Association

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Providing service and leadership for electric cooperatives.

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Grassroots Day in St. Paul

Forty-four employees, directors and members from 16 different cooperatives around the state attended last Wednesday's Grassroots Day at the Capitol to help push our key legislative priorities with local legislators. The feedback from participants and legislators was extremely positive.

Attendees talked with legislators about the need to ease the restrictions on new coal-based electricity, the struggles cooperatives are having with the state's conservation improvement program, a technical fix for the counting of federal hydro-power in the Renewable Energy Standard, potential stray voltage legislation and a measure to raise the percentage of Lake Country Power's members needed to trigger a vote on whether the cooperative should be rate-regulated by the Public Utilities Commission from 1% to 5%, the level needed at other cooperatives.

Grassroots participants who reported back to us said that legislators were for the most part supportive of our measures and that the handful that weren't were at least open to finding common ground.

As Renville Sibley Co-op CEO Dale Christenson put it, "There's a marked change in the attitude this year. There's much more support for our issues. Even with legislators who have disagreed with us in the past, you get the sense this year that they're at least listening to our concerns."

Thanks again to everyone who attended the event, as well as everyone else who has contacted their local legislators this year to talk about issues. The increased contact is having an impact and one of the main reasons we're seeing so much progress on a number of fronts.

Please keep it up. We have an opportunity to effect real change this year and feedback from home will be extremely important over the next few weeks.

Senate votes to lift restrictions on new coal-based energy

One of the biggest changes we're witnessing at the Capitol is the growing support for our efforts to lift restrictions on new coal-based energy. That was reflected in the overwhelming 42-18 vote on the Senate floor for SF 86, authored by Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont), which will lift the restrictions on the importation of new coal-based energy into the state or the construction of a new coal plant in Minnesota.

Five DFLers voted in favor of the bill, along with all 37 Republicans. For a complete breakdown of the Senate vote, [click here](#). Please let the Senators who voted for the bill know how much we appreciate their support.

Action on a companion bill in the House is expected during either the last week of April or the early part of May. The bill is also expected to pass in the House, but we would like to urge all of you to call or write your local House members and tell them how important this measure is to the affordability and reliability of electricity in Minnesota.

Negotiations with Dayton Administration are also continuing. According to a report in the Associated Press, Gov. Mark Dayton did not commit to signing or vetoing the measure. "There's no reason why we can't in Minnesota continue to have the electricity and the energy we need at affordable prices, but in a cleaner, more responsible way," Dayton said.

CIP Bill heard in the House Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Committee

The House Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on Wednesday on the HF 1193, a bill that will enact a number of reforms to the state's Conservation Improvement Program for electric cooperatives and municipals.

On Wednesday morning, Tri-County Electric's Vice President of Member Services Ted Kjos talked to committee members about the challenges facing smaller cooperatives when implementing CIPs. After the committee returned from a long recess, Great River Energy's Director of Member Services Gary Connett and Connexus Energy's Vice President of Power Supply John Gasol went through a presentation on the dramatically different load profiles of electric cooperatives compared to other utilities and the challenges those differences present in meeting the CIP goals.

Kjos, Connett and Gasol all did an excellent job of framing the debate over CIP and shifting the focus to the impact the program is having on our members' pocketbooks.

On the Senate side, Sen. Michelle Benson said that she is in the process of putting together a CIP and hopes to have it ready for introduction within the next two weeks. We're also continuing talks with Assistant Commissioner Bill Grant of the Division of Energy Resources (formerly the Office of Energy Security) on a possible consensus bill.

WAPA Bill heard in the House

Legislation to clarify the way the Western Area Power Administration's federal hydropower allocations are counted in the Renewable Energy Standard (RES) cleared another hurdle on Tuesday when the House Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Committee heard HF 220, authored by Rep. Dave Hancock (R-Bemidji). The committee laid over the bill for possible inclusion in an Omnibus Energy Policy Bill.

Companion legislation, SF 113, has already passed out of committee on the Senate side.

MREA Legislative Teleconferences

With the legislature leaving town for its annual Easter/Passover Break, we're also going to take a break from our weekly Legislative Teleconferences. That means the next teleconference will take place on Friday, April 29 at 11 a.m. To participate, call 877-810-9415. The access code is 6422870.

In the meantime, please let us know if you have any questions or concerns:

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