



MREA Legislative Bulletin

Minnesota Rural Electric Association

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Providing service and leadership for electric cooperatives.

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Welcome to the first 2011 edition of the MREA Legislative Bulletin. While the political landscape has changed significantly since last spring, it's going to be as important as ever for electric cooperatives to be involved in the debate over energy policy in St. Paul. MREA will provide regular updates over the course of the 2011 Legislative Session to help keep you up-to-date on the issues and let you know how you can get involved with lawmakers from your area.

With so many new legislators, local cooperatives will play a vital role in guiding the debate at the Capitol and educating legislators about electric cooperatives and the energy industry.

Although the tenor of the energy debate has shifted away from Cap & Trade and carbon legislation, there are still plenty of challenging issues out there, including the collapse of the energy market and the impact it's having on energy costs, the growing struggle cooperatives are having with the mandated Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) goals, the need for a practical, long-term energy policy in the state that is grounded in market realities, and realistic assumptions about meeting energy demand in the coming decades.

We hope all of you will get involved and begin reaching out to the elected officials in your area.

New Governor, New Legislature, New Political Landscape

Minnesota's political landscape was officially turned upside down this week after DFLer Mark Dayton was sworn in as governor on Monday and Republicans took over the majorities in both the Minnesota House and Senate.

Dayton is the first DFL governor since Rudy Perpich, who left office in 1990. Right now, there's a bit of uncertainty about how the Dayton Administration will approach energy issues. We are still awaiting word on who Governor Dayton would appoint as head of the Office of Energy Security. Even then, it's going to take some time to determine the approach Governor Dayton will take on energy and regulation.

New Republican Majorities in the House and Senate

On Tuesday, the Minnesota Senate and House each elected new leaders for their respective bodies, reflecting the new Republican majorities. Republicans have held the majority in the Minnesota House as recently as 2006, but this is the first time that Republicans have held the majority in the Senate in almost 40 years.

Both of the new leaders are strong supporters of electric cooperatives and our issues.

Sen. Amy Koch (R-Buffalo), the new Majority Leader in the Senate, has worked with Wright-Hennepin Electric Cooperative for years through her family business and has served on the Senate Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee since she was first elected in 2005. She will continue to serve on the Senate Energy Committee as Majority Leader, a move that reflects her passion for energy issues.

New Speaker of the House Kurt Zellers also is good friend of electric cooperatives. He grew up on cooperative lines in North Dakota and has been a great help on a number of issues over the past few years.

New Chairs, New Energy Committee Make-up

With the switch of majorities, there have also been major changes to the energy committees in both bodies.

Rep. Denny McNamara (R-Hastings) has taken over the reins of the House Environment, Natural Resources and Energy Committee. McNamara is a member of Dakota Electric Association and also has a cabin on Crow Wing Power's lines. The committee will meet Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8-10:30 am.

Sen. Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont) is now the chair of the Senate Energy, Utilities and Telecommunication Committee. Sen. Rosen is a long-time friend of electric cooperatives and has been one of our most effective supporters through the years. Her committee will meet from 3-4:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Here are the committee members:

Senate Energy, Utilities & Telecommunications Committee

Julie Rosen (R-Fairmont) - Chair	Amy Koch (R-Buffalo)
Michael Jungbauer (R-East Bethel) - Vice Chair	Gary Kubly (DFL-Granite Falls)
Ellen Anderson (DFL-St. Paul) – DFL lead	Doug Magnus (R-Slayton)
Michelle Benson (R-Ham Lake)	James Metzen (DFL-South St. Paul)
David Brown (R-Becker)	Dan Sparks (DFL-Austin)
Scott Dibble (DFL-Minneapolis)	LeRoy Stumpf (DFL-Thief River Falls)
John Howe (R-Red Wing)	Ray Vanderveer (R-Forest Lake)

House Environment, Energy & Natural Resources Committee

Denny McNamara (R-Hastings) – Chair	Andrew Falk (DFL-Murdock)
Paul Torkelson (R-Nelson Township) – Vice Chair	Tom Hackbarth (R-Cedar)
Bill Hilty (DFL-Finlayson) – DFL lead	David Hancock (R-Bemidji)
Paul Anderson (R-Starbuck)	Rick Hansen (DFL-South St. Paul)
Michael Beard (R-Shakopee)	Kate Knuth (DFL-New Brighton)
David Dill (DFL-Crane Lake)	John Persell (DFL-Bemidji)
Steve Draskowski (R-Wabasha)	Duane Quam (R-Byron)
Dan Fabian (R-Roseau)	Peggy Scott (R-Andover)

House Moving to Lift Nuclear Ban and End Coal Moratorium

Two keys issues for electric cooperatives – the lifting of the ban on nuclear energy and the importation of new coal-based energy – are on the fast track for the session. A bill to lift the ban on the construction of new nuclear power plants in Minnesota is scheduled to be heard next Tuesday in the House

Environment, Energy and Natural Resources Committee. The committee is then expected to take up a bill to lift the moratorium on the importation of new coal-based energy the following Tuesday.

Neither bill has been introduced yet, but we'll keep you up-to-date on the details as they emerge.

As always, if you have any specific questions on legislation or policy, please feel free to contact the MREA Government Affairs staff:

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