

Seek Out the Fine Print

“Our Energy, Our Future: A Dialogue With America” is the lead slogan for a new and important grassroots campaign recently launched by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). The goal of the campaign is to ensure that costs to consumers are included in the energy policy debates currently underway at local, state and federal levels across our country. At its heart, the campaign encourages 40 million electric co-op consumers in 47 states to discuss with elected officials the challenges associated with providing safe, reliable, affordable power in an environmentally responsible fashion in the coming years.

For me, as I prepare for Cherryland Electric Cooperative’s 70th annual meeting, I see it as a call to action for each of us to seek out the fine print of every plan, proposal or campaign promise. Everybody wants to pass on this world to the next generation and I am no different. Listening to the ongoing political campaigns, you will quickly discover that our environmental problems are about to be solved regardless of who we vote for.

While it all sounds good as are the intentions, I am left to wonder how it will all be accomplished scientifically, effectively and affordably. The TV sound bites and whistle stop speeches don’t take the time to cover this detail. NRECA’s campaign offers us three questions to ask our elected officials that get at the details of the fine print of all the good intentions. These questions are:

- 1) Experts say that our nation’s growing electricity needs will soon go beyond what renewables, conservation and efficiency can provide; What is your plan to make sure we have the electricity we will need in the future?
- 2) What are you doing to fully fund the research required to make emissions free electric plants an affordable reality?
- 3) Balancing electrical needs and environmental goals will be difficult. How much is all this going to increase my electric bill and what will you do to make it affordable?

It is important that our elected officials and our soon-to-be elected officials are able to answer these questions. If I tell my wife I am buying her the new hardwood floor she wants, I had better have a plan as to how I am actually going to get it installed with my limited skills not to mention how I am paying for it. Dealing with our economy and environment warrants far more detailed study, preparation and planning. I believe these 3 questions will help determine whether or not the politician they are addressed to truly has a plan or is simply providing lip service.

NRECA has set up a website that will send a letter or email for you at www.ourenergy.coop. It is a convenient and low cost way for everyone to ask these questions to those currently in office. Don’t let your neighbor do it for you. Numbers speak volumes and I encourage each CEC member to send at least one letter or email.

Too many times, questions don’t get asked by policy makers until there are problems. Doesn’t it make sense to know the answers before the laws are passed? We can all help each other AND our elected officials by asking these questions. Get the details. Seek out the fine print. The electric bill you save may be your own.