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CO-OPS LAUNCH NON-PARTISAN VOTER ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

America's electric cooperatives have launched a non-partisan, nationwide effort to promote civic engagement and voter participation in the communities they serve.

Jeffrey Connor, interim CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, unveiled the Co-ops Vote program at the association's 74th annual meeting in New Orleans.

"Through Co-ops Vote, we want to help our members know when elections are, what's at stake and how to make their voices heard," Connor said. "Who folks vote for isn't really as important as the fact that they do vote."

The Co-ops Vote initiative will focus on eight issues that are important to health and prosperity of communities served by electric cooperatives:

- Rural Broadband Access
- Hiring and Honoring Veterans

- Low-Income Energy Assistance
 - Cybersecurity
 - Water Regulation
 - Rural Health Care Access
 - Affordable and Reliable Energy
 - Renewable Energy
- "Electric cooperatives are perfectly designed to help address these important issues," Connor said. "We can make politics 'local' again because civic engagement is part of our DNA."

A new website, vote.coop, offers co-op members information on the voter registration process in their state, dates of elections, information on the candidates running in those elections, and explanations of the eight key issues the campaign aims to address.

In keeping with its non-partisan goals, the initiative will not be endorsing specific candidates for office.

Mel Coleman, president of NRECA and CEO of North Arkansas Electric Coopera-

tive said the program would help ensure the voices of rural Americans are heard.

"We want to make sure our government knows that rural America matters," Coleman said. "This campaign isn't about divisive, partisan issues. It's about real people in real places facing real challenges. It's about our co-ops living out the principles of our movement: Concern for community and democratic control."

Connor cited partisan gridlock in Washington, the explosive growth of money in politics and the effects of gerrymandering as important reasons for launching the program. In 2014, 318 of 435 House races had a margin of victory of 20 points or more, and 30 House candidates – 16 Democrats and 14 Republicans representing 11 states – didn't even face an opponent in the general election. "Elections aren't won and lost in November anymore," Connor

MANAGER'S ARTICLE By Mark Hayden



said. "They're really decided in primaries months sooner, when fewer voters recognize the opportunity to vote, fewer participate and only a handful of issues are up for debate."

This results in a Congress where more members represent the extremes of each political party and are less inclined to seek compromise and bipartisan solutions to problems.

"The electric cooperative movement has always been non-partisan, and our communities are facing too many challenges to have a government crippled by bickering," Coleman said. "When our parents and grandparents set out to electrify rural America, they didn't have time to ask the

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person next to them about their views on economic or social policy. Their economic policy was ‘we need to save this community’ and their social policy was ‘let’s do it together.’ I hope the Co-ops Vote program can help rekindle that spirit of cooperation.”

For more information about Co-ops Vote and the impact of these eight key issues on the people of Western Montana, contact MEC or visit vote.coop.

Source: NRECA

RETROFITTING YOUR MANUFACTURED HOME FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY

If you own a manufactured home, chances are you may have a disproportionately higher energy bill than a family living in a modular or traditional wood-frame home. The good news is there are many ways you can improve your home’s energy efficiency.

Manufactured home or mobile home?

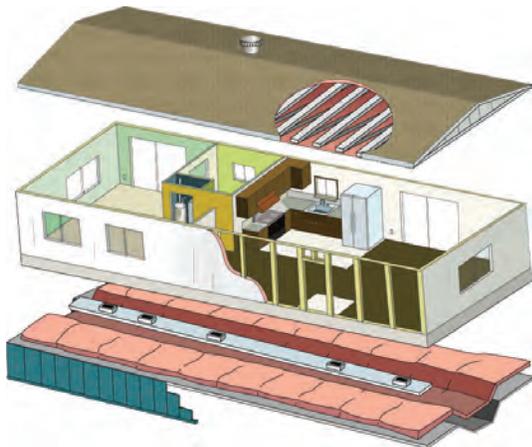
First, a clarification. Some use the term manufactured home and mobile home interchangeably. A mobile home is a factory built home constructed before 1976 when the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) set national standards that nearly every manufactured home must meet. Thereafter, factory-built homes were called manufactured homes and are engineered and constructed in accordance with the 1976 federal code administered by HUD.

Manufactured homes come in all shapes and sizes. They may be single- or multi-sectioned and are available in various sizes and floor plan configurations. There are many differences between manufactured homes built before the U.S. HUD Code took effect in 1976 and those built afterward. One of the major differences is energy efficiency. Those built before federal standards were put in place were generally not as energy efficient as later models, even though thermal standards were changed in 1994. And while your manufactured home may have been built to the energy standards of the time, significant progress has been made over the past decades with high-efficiency mechanical equipment, windows, insulation, siding and roofing materials.

In short, whether your home is less than five years old or more than 50, most homes can benefit from energy efficiency measures simply due to wear and tear. Sunlight, seasonal temperature changes and wind can increase air leakage. Doors and windows may not close tightly and duct work can spring leaks, wasting cooling and heating energy.

If your home was built before 1976, the Dept. of Energy recommends the following steps to retrofit your manufactured home and improve energy efficiency:

1. Install energy-efficient windows and doors
2. Replace insulation in the belly
3. Make general repairs (seal bottom board, caulk windows, doors, ducts, etc.)
4. Add insulation to your walls
5. Install or seal belly wrap
6. Add insulation to your roof or install a roof cap.



Additional energy saving tips

In addition to the measures listed above, consider caulking and weather-stripping windows and doors, particularly if you are not able to replace them with more energy-efficient ones. Properly seal any openings around ducts and plumbing fixtures. Replace any incandescent light bulbs with LEDs – both indoors and outside. Reduce “phantom” loads by unplugging electronic devices such as computers, printers and gaming systems when not in use. Energy efficiency rebates are available through MEC for weatherization, duct sealing and upgrading to high efficiency heat pumps. Call the office for more information about rebates.

Source: NRECA

WHEN YOU SUPPORT ENERGY PARTNERS, YOU SUPPORT MEC

As you know, Energy Partners is jointly owned by Missoula Electric and Cenex Harvest States. That's why we say for all your propane needs, support Energy Partners. Now that summer is upon us, the last thing on our minds is the cold of winter and heating season, but it will be upon us before you know it. In fact, summer is a great time to pre-purchase your propane for the winter months. Pre-purchasing propane is a great way to save big this winter.

When you pre-purchase propane, you are contracting the gallons at a capped price, which means the price cannot go higher. However, if the market price drops below the cap rate- your price follows. Contracted gallons will be delivered from the date of your paid-in-full contract to March 31st. Any gallons undelivered will be credited back to your account as a dollar credit. This credit can be used toward future purchases at market price or refunded to you at your request.

The dates signing up for this program vary a little as EP carefully times buying to try and obtain the lowest price per gallon. Call the EP office at 1-866-541-6800 for more information.



COLUMBIA RIVER BIOLOGICAL OPINION



As a member of Missoula Electric Cooperative (MEC), you are likely aware that your electric rates are among the most favorable in the country. You likely also know this is largely due to MEC's access to the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). The FCRPS is a vast and powerful resource that starts at the headwaters of the Columbia River system in British Columbia and terminates at the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, the kinetic energy of the billions of gallons of water are converted to electrical energy which has powered the region's needs and fueled its growth for over 70 years. This energy would not be a reality without the various dams that dot the rivers' paths.

Operating the various dams is a delicate balance, made more so by the fact that the

waterways are also the home of 13 species of salmon and steelhead under the protection of the Endangered Species Act. This means the operation of the dams for the benefit of the region must be balanced with the requirement that these operations cannot jeopardize the 13 listed species or negatively effect their habitat. The agencies tasked with the dams' operations are the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and Bonneville Power Administration. The agencies must coordinate to maximize the benefit of the dams to the region simultaneously with the stewardship of the resource and the habitat it provides.

The Biological Opinion (BiOp) is the plan which guides the operations of the dams such that they act in concert with the requirements of the Endangered Species Act. This plan has been hotly contested in recent years triggering a reexamination of the plan as well as a requirement for more specific habitat action plans for the 2014-2018 period. Make no mistake, this BiOp represents the most extensive and expensive, not to mention the most scientifically valid effort to restore an endangered species in the nation. To put the size of the challenge in perspective, in 2014, BPA reported \$782.3 million in total costs associated with fish and wildlife.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY REBATES

APPLIANCES (NEW)

ENERGY STAR Clothes Washers	\$20.00 - \$60.00
ENERGY STAR Clothes Dryers	\$25.00
ENERGY STAR Freezers	\$15.00
ENERGY STAR Refrigerators	\$5.00 - \$30.00
Pipe Insulation	\$5.00 - \$25.00

WATER HEATING

Heat Pump Water Heaters ¹	\$300.00
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HVAC MEASURES²

Ductless Heat Pumps ²	\$800.00 - \$1,200.00
Air-Source Heat Pump Upgrade ²	\$500.00 - \$1,000.00
Air-Source Heat Pump Conversions ²	\$1,400.00 - \$1,900.00
Geothermal Heat Pump Systems (new) ²	\$3,000.00
Duct Sealing ²	\$200.00 - \$250.00

NEW CONSTRUCTION

New ENERGY STAR Manufactured Homes	\$1,450.00
Montana House (v 2.0) ³	\$200.00 - \$1,500.00

WEATHERIZATION

Insulation ⁴	VARIABLE
Prime Window Replacement ⁴	\$3.00-\$8.00/Sq. Ft.

Restrictions apply, make sure to contact an EnergySense representative to find out how to obtain your rebate.

- 1 - Must replace an existing electric water heater.
- 2 - Requires use of certified installer, call for details.
- 3 - Requires pre-approval, call for details.
- 4 - Requires electricity as primary heat source.

Call 541-4433 with questions.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

Looking to replace that old outdated oven? Consider upgrading to a convection model. Convection ovens use moving air to heat more evenly and cook faster which saves you energy.

Source: energy.gov

Energy Sense 
Together we can... Together we will



PAYMENT SCHEDULING

Members using SmartHub can now schedule payments in advance. If you have ever wanted to set up a payment to come out of your bank account at some future date, but didn't want to set up reoccurring automatic payments, now you can. Payments can be scheduled to come out on the due date, or another date of your choice. Scheduling a payment is easy with SmartHub. Once logged in, click on the maroon "Make Payment" button, enter the amount you want to pay and click Pay Now button. On the next screen you can choose to make the payment today or schedule it for a future date. and search for "SmartHub".

