

RM

Rural Montana

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VIEWPOINT

Dave Wheelihan

Nearly 160 proposed bills in 60th Legislature could affect your co-op

The Montana legisla-
ture is in full swing
dealing with the
more than 2,300 bill draft
requests that have been
submitted.

Our association is
tracking nearly 160 of
those bills, ones that have
the potential to impact
electric cooperatives.

Some of the bills are
electric cooperative spe-
cific, such as bill drafts to
remove our exemption
from the state's net
metering mandate.

Net metering is
designed to encourage the
use of small renewable
generation. We have
resisted efforts to remove
this exemption because
all of the electric cooper-
atives in Montana have
adopted net metering
policies that allow the
installation of renewable
generation. Such policies
are worded in a manner
that is appropriate for the

individual electric coop-
erative.

Other bills are more
sweeping in nature. Many
dealing with climate
change, greenhouse gases
and renewable energy
promotion.

We are sifting through
these proposals to deter-
mine the impact and
implementation ramifica-
tions on you, the individ-
ual cooperative member
and consumer.

We also continue our
ongoing education
process of what electric
cooperatives are and how
we provide power to our
consumer owners. One
such effort was our
"Electric Cooperative
Day at the Rotunda." We
set up displays and
served sandwiches to leg-
islators and government
officials. Our co-op staff
members from around the
state shook hands and
greeted hometown legis-



Dave Wheelihan

lators on your behalf.

Meanwhile, efforts are
also underway at the fed-
eral level to address ener-
gy issues. A number may
come from a newly creat-
ed House subcommittee
of the Agriculture
Committee, which has
been named the
Renewable Energy
Subcommittee.

Most of the Senate
energy proposals on cli-
mate change are expected
to come out of the
Environment and Public
Works committee.

It will be an interesting
process as the pros and
cons of all the issues are
debated.

We will be involved at
every opportunity, and I
assure you we will keep
you posted of the various
outcomes.

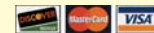
Dave Wheelihan is CEO of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association

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