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VIEWPOINT

Dave Wheelihan

Co-op loan funding, climate change debate are association concerns

The 110th U.S. Congress has convened and certainly is entertaining an ambitious schedule. When the 109th Congress left town, they left unfinished nine appropriations bills to fund various parts of the government.

Congress now must deal with those bills in the form of continuing resolutions so the money will continue to flow to federal agencies.

Included in the continuing resolutions is funding for the Rural Utilities Services, which provides loan monies to electric cooperatives for infrastructure. While we were hoping for an increase in funding, because the needs for new generation and transmission have grown, it now appears that funding levels will stay the same for Fiscal Year 2007.

Also in play again at the federal level is energy

policy. At this time, work on energy policy appears to be shaping up in two arenas.

One is the farm bill, where we expect much discussion on renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. We also expect discussion on incentives for wind generation and other alternative forms of electricity production.

The other debate will take place in committees having jurisdiction over energy policy. This debate will center on the issue of climate change and what policies need to be implemented to address the issue.

Through our national association, we expect to be involved in providing information on what technologies are available, what they cost, and who pays in the ongoing talks about policies to address climate change.

An analysis of the climate change debate



Dave Wheelihan

appears on page 11. The Montana Congressional delegation also addresses the issue on pages 12-13.

At the state level, we are continuing to work on the numerous energy bills being considered by the Montana Legislature. We are pleased that the legislature is interested in how the various proposals affect our consumer-owners.

At press time, one bill of particular interest to us, revisions to Montana's Territorial Integrity Act, which we referenced in last month's *Rural Montana*, has cleared the House of Representatives and awaits a Senate hearing.

As always, we will continue to put forward the interests of you, the consumer-owner of your local electric cooperative.

Dave Wheelihan is CEO of the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association

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