

Rural Montana is an official publication of Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association and is published monthly by Montana's rural electric and telephone cooperatives in the interest of better rural and urban understanding of the benefits and the problems of rural utilities.

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**Design/Layout:** Sherri Carl, MECA.

**Printer:** Northwinds Publishing,  
Great Falls, MT

**Change of Address:** Mail change of address to your local rural electric cooperative, or the Rural Montana office, P.O. Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403. Please include a mailing label from a recent issue of Rural Montana you received.

**Subscriptions:** \$6.75 per year.

**Postmaster:** Published monthly by Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association, 501 Bay Drive, Great Falls, Montana. Periodicals postage paid at Great Falls, Montana. Postmaster send address corrections to P.O. Box 3469, Great Falls, MT 59403.

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# VIEWPOINT

By Dave Wheelihan, CEO, Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association



## Co-op leaders working toward 'awesome' days

I was in the kitchen area of our office the other morning making coffee. It's a common area in the downstairs of our building that we share with Central Montana Electric Power Cooperative and our renter, Cascade County Aging Services. I was pouring water into the coffee maker when a strong, yet cheerful voice from behind me said, "Good morning! How is your day going this morning"? It was a lady from Cascade County Aging Services, also getting coffee for the day. After recovering from being startled right into the next week, I replied, "It's going fine, but it's still early." Curiosity getting the better of me, and, of course, the fact my mother tried to teach me to be polite, I asked her how her day was going. "Awesome!" was the reply. I thought about that for a bit and said "Awesome? That's quite an endorsement of the day." She looked at me and said gently, "Well, after all, it's your choice what kind of day you want to have." Hmm, true enough – having a good day really is entirely a matter of one's attitude.

That's why I'm confident that the 35 electric cooperative leaders from across the state traveling to Washington, D.C. in early May for the annual legislative conference of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association will have a positive influence on members of Congress on issues of importance to electric cooperatives. These leaders go to Washington D.C. with a great attitude, (I won't use awesome quite this early in the day) confident in the knowledge that their message is based on what is in the best interest of the consumer-owners they represent. They deliver the electric cooperative message in a factual non-partisan manner, always stressing what impact legislation that Congress considers has on the people they represent.

And they should have reason to be optimistic. Over the years, Congress has consistently recognized the difference between a consumer-owned electric cooperative and a stockholder-owned utility. Last year for example, the timely arrival of 3,000 electric cooperative leaders from around the country enabled us to fashion changes in the then pending federal energy bill that retained our self governing ability and evened the playing field on tax incentives. And though the energy bill itself still has not passed, those provisions remain in pending legislation, a testament to the power of grassroots lobbying.

We know these leaders will again do their best to make sure electric cooperatives will have "awesome" days on behalf of the members they serve.

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