

# You are one of my 900,000 bosses

*Some cynics say that members of Congress listen only to big corporations and lobbyists. Others argue that grass-roots campaigns like the annual Legislative Conference of the nation's electric cooperatives in May can have a huge effect in getting members of Congress to pay attention. As a member of Congress, what can you say to Montanans to assure them that their voices and concerns are being heard?*



## By Representative Denny Rehberg

**T**here's no doubt about the most important part of my job as Montana's congressman: Making sure the concerns of everyday Montanans are being heard loud and clear in the nation's capitol.

One of my favorite parts of being in the House of Representatives is my tour of all of the state's 56 counties that I conduct every congressional term. I can't think of a better way to listen, learn and seek advice from Montanans than to meet with them and hear their concerns face-to-face. My appearances at local cafes, veteran's halls and other meeting places serve a two-fold purpose: I get to hear what's on the minds of Montanans and they

get to have their voices heard when I take that input back to Washington.

Montanans also have a voice through organizations such as the electric co-ops. The co-ops come to Washington to meet with me regularly, helping me articulate the unique situation of Montana's rural communities, dispel the government subsidy myths and inform my urban colleagues on how investor-owned utilities get far more federal assistance than electric co-ops.

There are other ways for individual Montanans to have their voices heard. I will again be conducting listening sessions on a variety of topics throughout the state during the year. With a new Farm Bill ready to come before Congress in 2007, I've already conducted one listening session on agriculture in Plentywood this year and I've several more planned. In April, I conducted a listening session in Chester where I listened to concerns ranging from energy to healthcare to taxes. I also have several field representatives working for me throughout the state

who conduct traveling office hours. After meeting with you, the field reps report back to me and get right to work on helping with you. Already this year, we've helped hundreds of Montanans with casework ranging from problems with Medicare to the Internal Revenue Service.

I also encourage all of my constituents to visit my Web site at <http://www.house.gov/rehberg/> <<http://www.house.gov/rehberg/>> . There you can sign up for my e-newsletter, which is great way to get regular updates on what I'm doing. My Web site is also a great resource for Montanans to learn about the services my office provides. This is another, hassle-free way for you to make sure your voice is being heard. You can also call me toll free at 888-232-2626.

The way I see it, there are over 900,000 people in Montana, so I've got 900,000 bosses to represent. And each of them has the right to have their voice heard in Congress. I wouldn't have it any other way.



## By Senator Max Baucus

**I**t is an honor and a privilege to serve all of my 900,000 bosses in Montana. And the only way I can do a good job is if I know what all of you — my employers — are thinking. I want and need to hear what's important to you, so I know how best to serve all of you.

I think it's great that every year the rural electric cooperatives have their

Legislative Conference. It's a good opportunity for representatives from Montana's rural electric co-ops and those from all around the country to let Congress know exactly what rural electric co-ops need. The more members of Congress can hear what it's like to manage and operate a rural electric cooperative and the more they understand how important the work is, the more likely they'll be to support rural electric co-op issues. And that is the case with all Montanans' concerns.

Whether you're a teacher, a parent, a doctor, a student, whatever you do, it's important to let me and my staff know how we can help you. I have staff all across our state who are eager and willing to talk with you. And if you're

in Washington, please stop by my office there. I have a coffee every Wednesday morning that the Senate is in session and I invite all Montanans stop by.

The best way I can do my job well is to hear from Montanans so I encourage everyone to get in touch with me. Give me a call at 800-332-6106, send me an e-mail at [max@baucus.senate.gov](mailto:max@baucus.senate.gov) or write me a letter.

My number one, number two and number three priority is to do what's right for Montana. By speaking up and letting me know what you need, we can work together to make our state an even better place to live, work and raise a family. The sign on my desk says it all: *Montana Comes First*.



## By Senator Conrad Burns

Each year I enjoy seeing the many Montanans and thousands of co-op folks from across the country who descend on Washington, D.C., for their annual Legislative Conference in May. Their strength in numbers really has an impact on Capitol Hill.

I value the guidance I get from all of you in Montana who are responsible for operating our electric cooperatives.

Three examples of successful efforts between the grassroots and my office:

Last year, the Bush Administration sought legislation that would raise the cost-based rates charged by BPA, WAPA and the other power marketing administrations to market-based rates, which would have increased rates for all consumers of PMA power by \$12 billion over 10 years. With grassroots

support of Montana electric co-ops, we were able to beat back this proposal.

A more recent budget proposal would require the BPA to pay back debt through secondary revenue sources, which would result in BPA customer rate increases. We'll need your help to defeat this provision.

There may be no more unfair business practice in this country than the captive shipper. I was not sent to Washington to oversee a rail monopoly and I will not stand by and see our economy held back by the lack of rail competition. I introduced S. 919, the Railroad Competition Act.

In Montana, working with county commissioners, farmers and rural co-ops, we have convinced BNSF to lower some rail rates, address fuel surcharges, invest in track and add capacity. We still have much to do – the railroads must ensure reliable coal delivery at a reasonable price, and shippers need a place to air their disputes. The efforts of so many Montanans are making a difference.

Recently, grassroots advocates from

all over the nation came to Washington to support S. 919, and the upcoming Legislative Conference in Washington will keep that momentum alive. With more than 3,000 members coming to town, the presence of electric co-ops will be felt. Your personal stories speak loudly.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 was endorsed by electric cooperatives because it supports consumer-ownership and control.

I am pleased to have played an important role from my seat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. It is fun to talk about stringing those first lines across rural Montana, but in the end, this is about providing essential energy infrastructure in a sparsely populated state.

These are all good examples of effective efforts at the grassroots level, with local Montanans working closely with this office to address the problems in our communities. My door is always open to Montanans and together we can make a difference. We have, we are, and we will.

### TAKE THE CHALLENGE!

## The toughest \$1,000 you'll ever compete for

How long would you be willing to live in your home without electric service? Would it be worth a thousand bucks to give it a try?

The Montana Youth Tour winners of a trip to Washington, DC only had to write an essay about the three electrical items they would choose in the case of a theoretical power cutback. You can win the \$1,000 in the MECA Energy Challenge, but there's no theoretical to it — you gotta do without the electricity.

The official details will be announced next month in Rural Montana magazine and across the Northern Broadcasting Network. But

for now, here's the gist of the contest:

You submit a bid to your electric co-op, saying how many days you could do without electricity.

You win if you're the highest bidder in the state. You sign a contract agreeing to do without electricity, including home-generated power, while living in the residence for the agreed-upon time.

You agree to radio and magazine interviews exclusive to the Montana Electric Cooperatives' Association.

If you fulfill your part of the bid — no cheating — you win the \$1,000 and enjoy your 15 minutes (or days) of fame as well. And,

## Cooperative help wanted

**POSITION:** Assistant General Manager.

**COMPANY:** Tongue River Electric Cooperative, Inc based in Ashland, MT is seeking an Assistant General Manager. Qualified applicant must have knowledge of power line staking, mapping and construction. Previous management experience and familiarity of RUS standards and accounting practices would be preferred. Automated

mapping system knowledge would be helpful. To apply for this position, please send a resume, cover letter and salary requirements to: Alan See, General Manager, PO Box 138, Ashland, MT 59003 or you may email your information to [trecor@rangeweb.net](mailto:trecor@rangeweb.net). Journeyman Lineman Needed Immediately Northern Electric Cooperative, Inc. Opheim, Montana

just to show you what great guys we are, we'll even start the no-power clock (well, actually, it's a battery-powered clock) in August so you won't freeze to death, unless you're reckless enough to bid 150 days.

MECA President Bob Evans proposed the contest, comparing the cost of a days worth of electricity to a latte

from Starbucks. "We need to help our people appreciate what a great value we get for our electricity dollar in Montana," he said.

Some lucky person is going to come out of this contest really appreciating electricity. How about it? Do you have the courage to ask your cooperative to shut off the lights?