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Henry Lorenzen, Attorney

OR-48

Manager's Message



Dear Member,

After the debacle of this summer's deficit battle raging in the halls of our nation's Capitol, I reflected on the successes that Oregon's co-ops had during this year's legislative assembly.

In the midst of many political challenges and heated debates, our co-op leaders, working through the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association, sat down with our state's leaders and lobbied on behalf of our members for affordable and reliable electricity. And we got the job done.

The issue of rate affordability was at the forefront as ORECA worked to defeat a growing trend in the Legislature: adding surcharges to your electric bill to finance a variety of new projects.

In addition, ORECA blocked several proposals that added a variety of new fees and mandates for your electric cooperative. These proposals would have increased electric bills for consumers and overridden the local control of your cooperative and member-elected board of directors. While many of these projects are worthwhile, ORECA is concerned your electric bill could become a new source of revenue for anyone with a new idea.

On the energy front, the Legislature shied away from sweeping proposals that characterized the last two sessions, such as renewable portfolio standards, and cap and trade. Instead, the Legislature focused on more targeted legislation, such as debating the future of the Oregon Department of Energy and reforming the Business Energy Tax Credit for renewable energy projects.

Ultimately, the Legislature deferred action on the future of the Department of Energy, but significantly scaled back tax credits for renewable energy.

Because Oregon's electric cooperatives take energy efficiency and conservation seriously, they were involved in one of Gov. John Kitzhaber's signature initiatives: weatherizing Oregon schools to create jobs and provide a better educational environment for our kids.

The Legislature will return in February for a 45-day session. The proposals will be different, but the mission of your local electric utility will not change: ensuring legislation allows local control of decision-making, and keeping electricity affordable and reliable.

As you saw this summer at the federal level, politicians are digging in their heels on major debates and aren't giving an inch. More than ever, the electric co-ops have to unite at both the state and federal levels and fight for a common-sense approach to mapping out our energy future.

With regards,

Werner Buehler