

heartlandLINK

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Clip and mail

See page 15 for the Member Challenge questions.

Answers: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Please note: NO ANSWERS will be taken over the phone.

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Message From the CEO

Iowa Legislative Session Recap

Energy bills take back seat; feed-in tariff defeated

THE 2012-2013 IOWA LEGISLATIVE session adjourned on May 23, sending bills addressing education reform, property tax relief, and mental health expansion to Governor Branstad's desk for signature or veto. Many have called the session historic in its accomplishments and have praised the bipartisan cooperation that led to the productivity.

From the perspective of electric cooperatives, several energy-related bills were also passed. After the 30-day veto period, when we know which bills have been signed into law, we will pass along more information on the pertinent legislation.

Our most important news from the legislative session concerns bills that were not passed. As previously reported, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives (IAEC) Government Relations Committee decided that our top legislative priority would be legislation addressing the growing problem with stray voltage litigation, and the safety issues that result from a lack of certainty on the issue. We made one final push at the very end of session to get stray voltage language passed as an amendment, but unfortunately were unsuccessful.

In addition to placing priority on stray voltage, Iowa cooperative leaders reaffirmed that we would support an incentives-based approach to renewable energy. This principle was put into action when a bill supporting a feed-in tariff, which would require utilities to buy electricity from qualifying small wind producers through fixed 10-year contracts, passed a Senate subcommittee with bipartisan support. The speed at which it passed was a surprise, and we had to move quickly to voice our concerns about this legislation. Ultimately, the bill was sent back to its committee for review.

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Our primary objection to the feed-in tariff concept stems from the belief that it is essentially a deeper subsidy for a limited group of member-consumers or customers—those who own their own renewable energy facilities—to the detriment of all other members or customers. “The concept of subsidizing somebody’s electricity at the expense of others is one our boards around the state have not been able to get behind,” Tim Coonan, an IAEC representative, told Midwest Energy News. Furthermore, the bill would give ratemaking authority to the Iowa Utilities Board and would be unrealistic for smaller utilities or cooperatives to implement.

Iowa cooperatives have and will continue to support the construction and interconnection of generation facilities such as wind turbines. Collectively, we have already connected more than 200 consumer-owned generation projects to our systems that produce over 14 megawatts of power. We recognize that Iowa’s ability to generate energy through these member-owned facilities has the potential to change our energy landscape, and we will continue to be proponents for efforts that support renewable energy in ways that are fair for all our member-consumers. We believe this to be incentive-based programs that encourage members to build renewable energy facilities, not programs with fixed rates determined by people outside of our local territories.

Another success this year was the activity displayed by our grassroots efforts. They were activated nine times: eight were stray voltage legislation activations; one was for the feed-in tariff legislation. Your cooperative leaders were also successful in working with a new group of lawmakers after Iowa’s redistricting sent many new faces to the capitol.

ECI REC Director Shonka at the Capitol



ECI REC Board of Director Assistant Secretary Treasurer Donald Shonka shakes hands with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in Washington, D.C., on May 1. Shonka attended the National Association of Electric Cooperative’s (NRECA) Legislative Conference, an annual event. NRECA provided a rundown of key issues as the 113th Congress got underway. In his keynote address, Sec. Vilsack urged co-op leaders to “revitalize rural America,” and he met privately with the Iowa delegation at the conference.



ATTENTION LIVESTOCK OWNERS

If you have questions or concerns regarding stray voltage in your livestock confinement buildings, or are planning the addition of a new facility, please call East-Central Iowa REC. We are committed to work with you and your electrician to eliminate any potential stray voltage concerns.

CALL 877-850-4343