



BOARD BULLETIN

Message From President of the Board of Directors Steve Rau

As the president of the Board of Directors of ECI REC, I want to encourage all our members to attend our Annual Meeting of the members. It's an important part of your role as an owner of our Cooperative.

Both CEO Harry Ruth and I will be speaking at the meeting. Below is a brief summary of what we plan to cover.

- **Electricity Sales** - Sales for 2011 were down slightly from 2010 and down 2,891,000 kWh from 2008. To help combat lower sales, operating expenses have been held in check.
- **Rate Increase** - Because no further expense cuts were possible, a 2.5% rate increase takes effect in May. The Board believes that it is better to implement this small increase now rather than a bigger increase later if sales continue to decline.
- **Energy Wise** - The best way to keep your monthly bill low is to use energy wisely. Your Cooperative has more than forty rebates to encourage our members to use energy more efficiently.
- **Energy Supply** - Last year we reported that electric utilities were facing a number of new regulations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. We

are happy to report that they should not have a major impact on our energy supplier, Central Iowa Power Cooperative (CIPCO). CIPCO anticipated these more stringent regulations and has already installed the equipment necessary to be in compliance.

- **Rebuilt Lines** - Last December, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) approved a grant to rebuild 246 miles of distribution line. We were awarded this grant because we were able to demonstrate that it is cheaper to rebuild these lines now rather than rebuild them after another natural disaster.
- **Communications Upgrades** - New towers are up at our Urbana, Independence, and Vinton facilities. Equipment is also being installed at every substation and at each of our automated switches so that we can

monitor the flow of power throughout our system and reroute power as soon as there is a power interruption.

- **Substation Modernization** - This is necessary because the owner/operator of the transmission system in our area is converting its 34,500 kilovolt system to a 69,000 kilovolt system. We will take this opportunity to increase the capacity of the substations and install more modern controls and circuit breakers.
- **Legislation Impacts Your Bill** - We are distributing the *Iowa Policy Post* to those who are interested about what is happening in the state and national capitals. We may begin to use social media such as Facebook and/or Twitter to help keep you informed.
- **Bill Payment App** - By the end of this year, we hope

to launch an app for smart phones and computer tablets that you can use to pay your bill as well as view your billing and payment history and make changes to your account information.

- **New Online Tools** - We plan to launch an add-on to our Web site that can bring up your usage and payment history with the purpose of making recommendations customized for your home.
- **Platinum Anniversary** - Benton County Electric Cooperative Association was incorporated in March of 1937. From those beginnings, the cooperative grew into a \$22 million business with 8,500 meters, 24 substations, and over 2,200 miles of energized lines. In 2013, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Buchanan County Rural Electric Cooperative.