




LIVE LINES

Woodbury County Rural Electric Cooperative

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

February 2025

Protecting Electric Service Territory is our Top 2025 Legislative Priority

By Ethan Hobenadel, director of policy & advocacy for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives

At the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, the start of a new year also means the start of a new legislative session as we advocate for our member cooperatives and the member-consumers they serve.

Iowa’s 91st General Assembly began on January 13 and our policy & advocacy team is already hard at work. Protecting electric service territory is our top legislative priority this session.

In Iowa, your location determines which electric utility will serve your home, farm or business under the defined electric service territory law. For almost 50 years, these electric service areas have benefited electric co-op member-consumers as the law provides certainty to electric cooperatives so we can safeguard affordable rates, support a resilient electric grid and invest in economic development.

Service territory changes jeopardize economic development

Weakening Iowa’s electric service territory law jeopardizes electric cooperatives’ investments in rural economic development, which would negatively impact the communities we serve.

For the 5 years ending in 2022, Iowa electric co-ops had an impressive \$4.7 billion impact in economic development projects. These investments supported more than 7,300 Iowa jobs (retained, attracted or expanded) during that same time period.

In 2023 alone, Iowa electric co-ops secured more than \$41 million in federal economic development funds, resulting in more than \$111 million of new capital investment in the state.

Decades of robust economic development efforts from electric cooperatives have improved quality of life throughout rural Iowa through local job creation, providing needed services and adding valuable tax revenue. Without electric service territory protections, these rural economic development efforts will be severely diminished.

Reduced electric service territory protections will increase rates

The realities of eroding electric service territory protections are sobering. In other states where service territories have been eliminated, consumers have experienced higher electric rates and decreased reliability.

According to a 2023 New York Times investigation, electric rates have increased in deregulated states. The report concludes, “Deregulation has resulted in increased rates/fees in every state where it has been introduced.” And, “On average, residents living in a deregulated market pay \$40 more per month for electricity...” Referencing an American Public Power Association 2021 report, “The average electric rate is 28% higher in deregulated states, as compared to traditionally regulated states.”



The Recipe Corner

Corn Bread Dressing

- 1 (16oz.) pkg. dry corn bread mix
- 2 T. butter
- ½ C. chopped celery
- 1 small onion
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 2 C. chicken stock
- 2 T. dried sage
- Salt & pepper to taste

Prepare the dry corn bread mix according to package directions. Cool and crumble. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Grease one 9x13 inch baking dish. In a large skillet over medium heat, melt butter and sauté the celery and onion until soft. In a large bowl, combine the celery, onions, 3 cups crumbled corn bread, eggs, chicken stock, sage and salt and pepper to taste; mix well. Place into prepared dish and bake at 350 degrees F for 30 minutes.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

If you have a home office, look for opportunities to save energy in your workspace. Use ENERGY STAR®-rated equipment, which consumes up to 50% less energy than standard models. Set equipment like printers and scanners to automatically switch to sleep or energy-saver mode when not in use. In addition to saving energy, the equipment will stay cooler, which will help extend its life. Another way to save energy in your home office is to use efficient lamps for task lighting. Replace any older bulbs with energy-saving LEDs.

Source: energy.gov

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Reduced electric service territory protections will decrease reliability

Our analysis of publicly available industry data shows that electric reliability is lower in deregulated Midwestern states compared to Iowa. From 2018-2023, electric outages in Iowa are 65% shorter on average compared to deregulated Midwestern states. During that same time period, Iowans experienced 20% fewer outages than deregulated Midwestern states. This analysis comes from EIA-861 SAIDI (System Average Interruption Duration Index) and SAIFI (System Average Interruption Frequency Index) data from Illinois, Iowa, Michigan and Ohio and includes major weather events.

Protecting the interests of co-op member-consumers

Weakening service territory protections is unacceptable for Iowa's electric cooperatives and the members we serve. Your locally owned electric co-op supports Iowa's defined electric service territory law and opposes efforts to undermine it, which reduces consumer protections. Learn more about this important issue at www.ProtectRuralIowa.com.

Wrapped in Savings

Ensuring your home is properly insulated can improve energy efficiency and make your home more comfortable. Insulation acts like a cozy coat that reduces heat loss during winter months and a protective layer that reduces heat gain during summer months.



Many older homes have less insulation than newer homes, but even newer homes can benefit from additional insulation. While it's not the least expensive efficiency improvement, adding insulation and air sealing your home can provide the biggest bang for your buck in energy savings and overall comfort.

The most common areas to insulate are attics, ceilings, crawlspaces or unconditioned basements, exterior and interior walls, floors, and ductwork located in unconditioned spaces.

The amount and effectiveness rating of insulation required for each area varies by climate, but many websites like The Department of Energy or Home Depot provide easy-to-follow recommendations. Visit energy.gov/insulation to learn about recommended R-values for specific areas of the home based on climate zones.

It's important to understand how insulation effectiveness is measured. Insulation is rated in R-value, which measures the material's resistance to conductive heat flow. The higher the R-value, the greater the insulating effectiveness. The R-value you'll need depends on factors like climate, type of heating and cooling system and which area of the home you plan to insulate.

Insulation is offered in a wide range of materials from bulky fiberglass rolls to cellulose materials made from recycled paper products. If you're considering installing additional insulation, talk to an expert who can offer guidance on the right materials for your budget, climate and comfort needs.

Investing in proper insulation for your home not only enhances comfort but also reduces energy consumption.

7 Ways to Make the Most of Being a Woodbury County REC Member

By Kent Amundson

February is a month to celebrate love, connection and appreciation – not just for loved ones on Valentine’s Day but also for the communities we proudly serve. At Woodbury County REC, we’re passionate about providing safe, reliable and affordable electricity while offering programs, services and activities that make a real difference. As a not-for-profit cooperative, we are built on the principle of service to our members, and that’s something worth celebrating all year long. Here are seven ways to make the most of being an electric cooperative member.

1. Benefitting from the Cooperative Difference

At Woodbury County REC, you’re more than just a customer – you’re a member-consumer. This means every decision we make prioritizes your needs. Guided by the Seven Cooperative Principles, we focus on local decision making, equitable service and concern for our community. Electric cooperatives are unique due to our not-for-profit business model. Woodbury County REC exists solely to serve our members, not to generate profits.

2. Saving Money with Rebates and Energy Efficiency

Woodbury County REC is dedicated to helping members manage their energy use and save money. Through energy efficiency programs and load management initiatives, we empower members to make informed decisions about their electricity consumption. These efforts not only reduce costs for individual members but also benefit the cooperative as a whole. Woodbury County REC offers rebates on energy-efficient equipment such as heat pumps, water heaters and insulation upgrades. These incentives make it easier to reduce your energy usage and save money. We also offer energy assessments to help members identify potential energy-saving opportunities.

3. Managing Energy with the SmartHub App

Convenience is key, and the SmartHub app gives you tools to monitor your energy use and bills with ease. From tracking your daily usage to paying bills and reporting outages, this secure app ensures you stay informed and in control.

4. Participating in Youth Programs

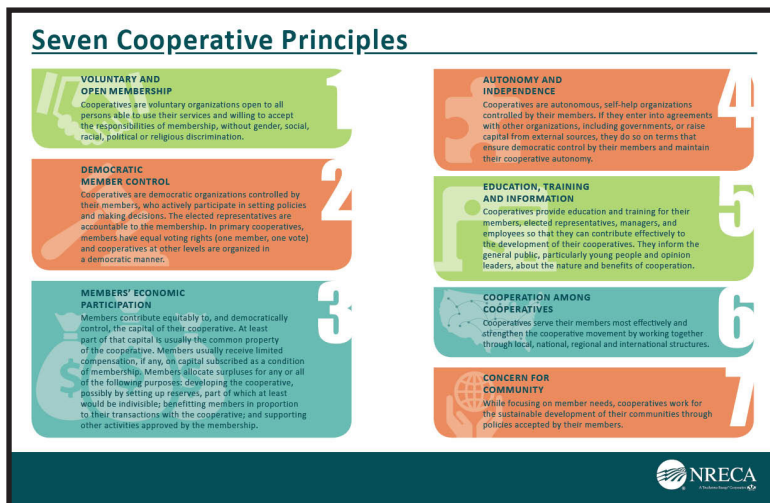
We’re proud to invest in the next generation of leaders. Students can participate in Iowa’s Youth Leadership Academy, which is a virtual opportunity for students to learn more about advocacy, electric co-op career opportunities and the cooperative business model with a three-part webinar series in October. Each year, we also offer a scholarship program. Supporting our youth is one of the many ways we give back to our community.

5. Sharing in the Cooperative Success

As a member of Woodbury County REC, you share in the co-op’s success. Each year, we allocate capital credits to members when our revenues exceed operating costs. This is one of the clearest demonstrations of the cooperative difference – giving back to those who make up our community. The 2025 allocations are printed on members’ January bills.

6. Supporting Our Community

At Woodbury County REC, everything we do is centered on you, our members. Together, our commitment goes beyond delivering electricity and extends to supporting the communities where you live and work. For example, through our Operation Round Up® program, your small contributions make a big impact, funding grants for local rural fire and rescue departments, local school activities along with community organizations that directly benefit you and your neighbors.



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7. Engaging in Member Events

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Woodbury County REC hosts an annual meeting where members can connect with co-op leadership, share feedback and learn more about new programs and initiatives. Be sure to mark your calendar for August 20th, 2025 and join us for this important event – it's your opportunity to have your voice heard and stay engaged with your cooperative.

Heartfelt Gratitude

This February, I want to express our gratitude to you for being a member of Woodbury County REC. It's an honor to serve you and our community. Together, we'll continue to build a brighter, stronger future – one powered by the cooperative spirit.

Kent Amundson is the general manager/CEO of Woodbury County REC.

Understanding Factors That Impact Your Energy Bills

February brings some of the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills. There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill, you're provided with a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. You can even see how electricity use may have changed from month to month and shows how usage may correlate to average temperature. To see daily or hourly usage, you need to set up an account on Smart Hub which can be done on our website at www.woodburyrec.com. But you might be surprised to learn that beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

Fuel Prices

Woodbury County REC purchases electricity from our power generation partner, NIPCO, at a wholesale cost, then we deliver that power to our local communities. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity from our generation partner accounts for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to local homes and businesses and the cost of fuels that are used to generate that electricity, such as natural gas and coal, fluctuate based on supply and demand.

Extreme Weather

While we can't control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. But when temperatures become extremely cold and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of electricity can also increase.

Infrastructure and Equipment

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business, Woodbury County REC members pay a monthly access charge. This flat monthly fee ensures the minimum cost of equipment, materials, labor and daily operations are covered for all members in our service territory. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local grid, including power lines, substations and other essential equipment.

Energy Policy and Regulations

Federal energy policies and regulations can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As the nation adds more renewable generation and increases regulations for traditional, always-available fuel sources, such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities.

You Have Control

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You can also reduce energy use by taking advantage of our Switch-Make-Cents program by allowing NIPCO to shave electric demand at peak times. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

Woodbury County REC is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost.