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# Southwest lines

A monthly publication for members of Southwest Iowa Rural Electric Cooperative

February 2020

## Iowa's Electric Cooperatives Discuss Important Issues at Legislative Reception



Left to right: Senator Tom Shipley, SWIAREC CEO Phil Kinser, SWIAREC Board President Marilyn Werner, Senator Mark Costello, SWIAREC Director of Finance/ Administration Sarah Newton, Representative Cecil Dolecheck (partially hidden), SWIAREC Director of Operations Duane Schafer, Representative Tom Moore, SWIAREC Director Dale Walkup.

In the coming months, the Iowa General Assembly will be addressing a multitude of issues, including energy-related items central to Iowa's rural economy. Beginning with the Welcome Back Legislative Reception, electric co-op directors, managers and staff will again be important advocates for a balanced approach in addressing energy issues. Iowa's locally owned rural electric cooperatives work hard to provide affordable, reliable, safe and environmentally responsible power to more than 650,000 Iowans every day.

### Scholarships Reminder

Southwest Iowa REC will once again be offering scholarships for the 2019-2020 school year to graduating high school seniors. We will be awarding twelve (12) \$500 scholarships. In addition, two (2) \$1,000 scholarships will be available for students planning to attend an Accredited Lineman School or electrical trade program.

Completed applications and a photo must be received at the REC Office by March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 to be eligible.

(See details on last page)

Nearly 200 directors, managers and employees from Iowa's electric cooperatives discussed priorities with more than 80 state legislators on January 14 during the annual Welcome Back Legislative Reception in downtown Des Moines. Other guests of honor included: Secretary of State Paul Pate, Iowa Utilities Board Member Nick Wagner and Iowa Department of Revenue Director Kraig Paulsen. The Iowa Association of Electric

Cooperatives, in conjunction with the Iowa Biotechnology Association, the Iowa Institute for Cooperatives, the Iowa Communications Alliance and FUEL Iowa, hosted the annual reception. The event provided an opportunity to meet with legislators at the beginning of the state legislative session to discuss issues regarding the commitment to reliability, commitment to community and commitment to safety shared by Iowa's electric cooperatives.

# Iowa Congressional Delegation United to Fix Electric Co-op Tax Problem

By Chuck Soderberg, executive vice president and general manager of the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives



Chuck Soderberg

It's no secret that Washington politics have become so polarized that it can be tough for Democrats and Republicans to come together to tackle challenges that their constituents face. But that's exactly what happened recently on Capitol Hill thanks to Iowa's Congressional delegation.

Our senators and representatives listened to thousands of electric cooperative stakeholders as they fought tirelessly to add important tax and retirement policies to the 2020 spending bill. The bill was signed into law before Christmas and included a provision known as the RURAL Act, which solved an existential issue for electric co-ops and America's rural communities.

Locally owned electric co-ops work to secure government grants to help pay for numerous activities that benefit the communities they serve. These include grants for storm recovery and mitigation, broadband deployment, renewable energy and economic development.

In order to maintain their tax-exempt status, electric co-ops must receive no more than 15 percent of their income from non-member sources. Historically,

government grants to co-ops were counted as contributions to capital. But due to a glitch in the 2017 tax law, government grants were reclassified as income, pushing some co-ops beyond the 15 percent threshold and jeopardizing their tax-exempt status.

The tax problem left co-ops with a broad dilemma: Do they take the money they need to turn the lights back on for their members as quickly as possible after a disaster? Do they accept the broadband grants to help close the digital divide between rural and urban America? Or do they turn down those grants so they wouldn't have to spend critical funds when the tax bill comes due?

Had the unintended consequences of the tax change been in place prior to 2018, some of Iowa's electric cooperatives may have experienced several instances where they would have lost their tax-exempt status for the year.

Thanks to Congress, electric co-ops across America won't have to make those impossible choices. This is good news for both co-ops and their member-owners because some co-ops may have had to raise their electric rates to pay new taxes.

On behalf of Iowa's electric cooperatives, we are extremely grateful to Senator Joni Ernst, Congresswomen Cindy Axne and Abby Finkenauer, and Congressmen Dave Loebsack and Steve King for their support of the stand-alone RURAL Act. And without Senator Chuck Grassley ensuring the provision was included in the final negotiations on the congressional budget bill, those painful scenarios would have begun to play out in co-op board rooms across the country. In standing up for Iowa's rural communities, they proved that Congress can still work for the people.

Notably, the legislation drew the bipartisan support of more than 350 of the 535 Federal lawmakers. That's a rarity in Washington these days. In today's fast-paced society, pausing to give thanks is done with increasing rarity. That's unfortunate.

Thank you to all our Federal legislators. Thank you for looking out for rural communities across Iowa and thank you for working with us to solve this problem.

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**2020 Washington D.C. Youth Tour  
June 18-25, 2020**

Contact your local Southwest Iowa REC office for an application or visit [www.swiarec.coop](http://www.swiarec.coop)

**Applications due March 2nd**

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## Your Privacy is Important

At Southwest Iowa REC, we recognize that a key element of the member-cooperative relationship is the trust that you place with us to respect the privacy and confidentiality of your personal information. We are committed to providing you with the highest quality of electric service. While personal information about you is fundamental to our ability to do this, your privacy is also very important to us.

Therefore, Southwest Iowa REC will not disclose to non-affiliated third parties any information, including personal financial or consumption histories, without the expressed consent of the member/consumer. The Cooperative does reserve the right to use information for purposes relevant to prudent engineering and design practices and power procurement practices, which are consistent with the industry requirements, and for the betterment of the Cooperative and its membership, as a whole.

We restrict access to non-public personal information for all member-consumers to only those employees or affiliates who need to know specific information to provide products and services to the member/consumer. We maintain physical, electronic and procedural safeguards that, to the best of our abilities, provide prudent and sufficient protection for all non-public personal information.

Information shall not be released to any third party until such time as the member/consumer approves, in writing, such authorization. Forms for the release of information may be obtained from the Cooperative office.

Southwest Iowa REC may collect non-public personal information from the following:

- a. Information we receive from you on applications or forms.
- b. Information regarding payment histories, consumption history, demand history or capacity requirements.

## WHY DO CO-OPS ADVERTISE?

Proactive communication is essential in any industry or business, and it's especially important for Southwest Iowa REC to communicate often with our members who own the co-op. In fact, the core principles of our cooperative business model include concern for community and keeping our members informed and educated. We use a variety of communication methods such as our monthly newsletter, radio announcements, social media posts, and our website. All serve as effective ways for us to quickly communicate important information with you regarding safety, energy efficiency, cooperative business and regulatory notices.

**Here are a few other reasons we advertise:**

### 1. Safety Awareness

As your electric cooperative, we have a duty to keep you safe from the dangers of electricity. Preventative safety messages are a top priority in our public communications efforts. For example, we remind farmers to watch out for electric lines and poles during planting and harvest seasons. We encourage members to call 8-1-1 before digging so underground utilities can be properly located. Throughout the year, we tell members to “look up and live” as they use ladders and tall equipment around the house, garage or farm.

### 2. Energy Efficiency

At Southwest Iowa REC, we're committed to helping our members use energy wisely. We provide multiple resources to help you find ways to reduce that electricity bill and become more energy efficient, but we need to promote those resources so you know about them. We communicate through various methods to let you know about rebates and incentives for energy efficient products.

*continued on page 4*

## Southwest Iowa REC Recognized for Dedication to Safety



*Pictured left to right:  
IAEC Board President  
Steve Seidl,  
SWIAREC Board President  
Marilyn Werner and  
IAEC Executive Vice President  
and General Manager  
Chuck Soderberg*

In recognition of its commitment to providing a safe workplace for employees, Southwest Iowa REC has once again earned Safety Achievement from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. The Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives administers the safety audit program in the state.

Southwest Iowa REC is proud to have earned this designation. It shows the cooperative has an organized plan to

keep our workers and the public safe.

The program also helps make sure we are in compliance with the many rules and regulations required by OSHA and other regulatory bodies.

There are additional benefits to gaining achievement as well. Along with joining an elite group of electric cooperatives from around the country, the cooperative also receives a premium reduction from its insurance carrier, which helps hold down operating costs.

## Why do Co-Ops Advertise? (continued)

### 3. Cooperative Business

As an owner of the electric cooperative, you need to know important information about the financial condition of the business and when to elect directors of the board. We publish an annual report which includes important information about the cooperative.

### 4. Regulatory Notices

We are required to communicate with our cooperative members regarding specific state and federal regulations. Communicating frequently with our members is an important business function that helps Southwest Iowa REC achieve our mission of powering lives and empowering communities.



## Scholarships Available for High School Seniors

Southwest Iowa REC will once again be offering scholarships for the 2019-2020 school year to graduating high school seniors. Students applying for the \$500 scholarship must be enrolled full-time at an accredited college, university or vocational/technical school. The parent or guardian of the student must be a Southwest Iowa REC member and the student MUST RESIDE in the REC-served residence. The \$1,000 scholarship is open to ALL high school and non-traditional students within Southwest Iowa REC's territory attending an Accredited Lineman School or other electrical trade program.

Applications are available at your high school guidance counselor's office or you may fill out the form below. Students may also go to our website [www.swiarec.coop](http://www.swiarec.coop) to print the application. Recipients of the scholarships will be chosen by a selection committee appointed by Southwest Iowa REC whose decisions are final.

We will be awarding twelve (12) \$500 scholarships. In addition, two (2) \$1,000 scholarships will be available for students planning to attend an Accredited Lineman School or electrical trade program.

**Completed applications and a photo must be received at the REC Office by March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 to be eligible.**

2019 Energy Efficiency & Beneficial Electrification Program Delivery Costs = \$.0029/kwh



**Corning**  
1801 Grove Ave., Corning, IA 50841  
**Mount Ayr**  
1502 W. South St., Mount Ayr, IA 50854  
**Stanton**  
415 Broad Ave., Stanton, IA 51573  
**Phone Number: (888) 220-4869**

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Dale Walkup  
**Phil Kinser, CEO**

## Easy Chicken Enchiladas

- 1-2 cooked & shredded chicken breast
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 cup sour cream
- ½ cup chopped parsley
- 1 large can enchilada sauce
- 3 cups shredded cheese
- 10-16 flour tortillas



1. Preheat oven to 350 F
2. In a large pan over medium, heat a teaspoon of olive oil. Add the onions and cook until translucent, stirring often.
3. Combine chicken and onions in the frying pan. Stir until combined.
4. Pour ½ cup of enchilada sauce over the chicken and onion mixture- just enough to coat the chicken.
5. Add sour cream and parsley. Stir until combined.
6. Once the sour cream and parsley are fully combined, turn off the heat. Now add the 2 to 2.5 cups shredded cheese, depending how cheesy you want it.
7. Spray pan with non-stick cooking spray and

- pour just enough sauce in a baking dish to cover the bottom of dish.
8. Fill the tortillas, spoon sauce onto a tortilla, and then some chicken mixture.
9. Roll the tortilla and place in the baking dish, repeat until enough tortilla fill your baking dish- or until chicken mixture is used up.
10. Pour enchilada sauce over the completed enchiladas and spread evenly over the top.
11. Top with shredded cheese and garnish with chopped parsley. Cover with foil and bake for 20-30 mins. Remove foil for the last 10 minutes of cooling. Cook until sauce is bubbling, tortilla edged are slightly crisp and the cheese is melted.



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## Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Are you using your fireplace efficiently? Remember to turn down the thermostat when burning a fire, and close the damper when a fire is not burning.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)