

Kentuckians for the Commonwealth's Rural Electric Co-op Reform Platform

In the first half of the twentieth century, Kentucky's rural electric cooperatives formed to provide an important service to Kentucky residents that other for-profit utilities failed to provide: affordable and reliable power to rural residents. These co-ops were founded on the following seven important cooperative principles: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; members' economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training, and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for community.

Whereas Kentucky's rural electric co-ops have strayed from the democratic and participatory ideals of their early days, and no longer fully live up to their cooperative principles, we the co-op members set forth the following platform of reforms that the co-ops must enact and to which they must adhere in order to truly serve their members.

From each rural electric co-op in Kentucky, we want affordable energy; clean, renewable energy choices; good local jobs; sound financial decisions; respect for landowners; open and fair elections; open meetings; and open records. The details of the reforms we seek in each co-op are as follows:

Affordable Energy

- The co-op shall aggressively invest in and promote a vigorous energy efficiency and weatherization program, aimed at reducing the co-op's demand for expensive new power generation and to offset the skyrocketing costs to all members from fossil fuel-based power.
- The co-op shall provide its members with substantial financing and incentive programs to help and encourage members to participate in efficiency and weatherization programs including residential solar hot water, high efficiency appliance replacements and retrofits, and geothermal heating and cooling.
- Upon approval by the Kentucky Public Service Commission, the co-op shall establish or participate in an on-bill financing program, which shall be designed to help households overcome the upfront costs of efficiency and weatherization measures through low-interest loans to members to be paid back in full to the co-op with members' energy savings. This financing shall remain with the real property upon the sale of property.
- The co-op shall prioritize low-income member households when providing residential energy efficiency and weatherization programs.

Clean, Renewable Energy Choices

- The co-op shall provide incentives and financing for members to generate power at home by solar photovoltaic, wind, micro-hydroelectric and other forms of low-impact renewable sources.
- The co-op shall advocate for a feed-in tariff that will allow members to be paid for the clean energy they generate at home.
- The co-ops shall provide their members more energy sources on the utility level. In addition to the option of landfill gas generation, members shall have the choice to buy their power from wind and/or low-impact hydroelectric generation.
- The co-ops shall prioritize their investments in these clean energy sources rather than contracting to purchase and re-sell energy that is generated in a manner that poses a danger to current and future generations.

Good, Local Jobs

- With the energy efficiency and clean energy programs listed above, the co-op's priority shall be placed on those strategies that best support local employment.
- The co-op and any contractors hired by the co-op shall provide a living wage for their employees.

Sound Financial Decisions

- The co-op shall not spend co-op member equity lobbying, on the national or state level, against climate change legislation, or any other legislation that does not protect future generations.
- The co-op shall not spend co-op member equity to lobby against state energy efficiency and renewable energy standards, as these standards will lead all utilities to a more diverse energy portfolio and create local, clean energy jobs.
- Each year, the co-op shall return member equity to co-op members in the form of capital credits, and shall not hoard member equity.
- The co-op shall not pay inflated salaries to co-op staff, including high-level co-op staff, nor provide co-op property to staff for personal use.

Respect for Landowners

- The co-op shall respect the landowners through whose property the co-op's distribution lines run.
- The co-op shall communicate with landowners before any routine maintenance such as mowing, tree-trimming, or spraying is begun.
- The co-op shall respect the wishes of landowners as pertains to herbicide spraying.
- The co-op shall take responsibility for communicating with contractors and relaying the landowner's wishes as pertains to installation and upkeep of distribution lines and other co-op equipment.

Open and Fair Elections

- Nomination to the board of directors ballot, including the nomination of incumbents, shall be by petition only.
- The co-op shall require no more than 100 signatures for a candidate to be placed on the ballot.
- Candidates shall be allowed a reasonable amount of time to gather petitions.
- Voting for any candidate position shall be by postage-paid, mail-in ballot. All proxy voting shall be prohibited.

Open Meetings

- Members shall have access to all board meetings, whether they are regular or special meetings, with the exception of executive sessions.
- All special meetings of the board or members shall be called with two weeks notice to the membership.
- Members shall have the ability to place issues on board and member meeting agendas, until two weeks prior to the date of the meeting.
- The co-op shall hold periodic member forums, much like a town hall, in which key staff and board directors listen and respond to the concerns of members.

Open Records

- The co-op shall publish on its website the agenda for any upcoming meeting of the board or members no later than one week in advance of the meeting.
- Minutes of all meetings, and any supporting materials related to the minutes, shall be posted promptly on the co-op's website and made available at the co-op's district offices.
- Other co-op records and analyses shall be made easily accessible to all members.
- The co-op's website shall contain, in an easy-to-find location, the following: district maps, contact information for each district director; the date, time and location of monthly board meetings; the most recent annual report of the co-op; publicly available personnel and board compensation (e.g. 990 forms); and a complete copy of the co-op's bylaws and articles of incorporation.



KENTUCKIANS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

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