



MAY ■ 2009



REAL PEOPLE. REAL POWER. Tideland Topics

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE MEMBER-OWNERS OF TIDELAND ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION

PEOPLE POWER: Thank you for heeding our call to action

Last month, Tideland issued a legislative call to action asking members to return a postage paid business reply card in response to energy legislation that failed to address consumer costs. We're pleased to report that in the first week following delivery of the magazine the cooperative had received more than 400 member replies. Our corporate goal is 4,000 member responses so if you haven't done so yet, please find last month's magazine and return the postcard as soon as possible. We will hand deliver each and every postcard to legislators this month during the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's rally in Washington, D.C.

Member responses reflected growing concerns over economic conditions and managing household budgets.

If you have returned your postcard but would like to do more please call 1-877-40-BALANCE (1-877-40-225-2623) to be connected with your senator or congressman. Or visit www.ourenergy.coop to send a personalized email to legislators.



REAL COMMENTS:



Clothesline bans and homeless children

Last month's legislative call to action resulted in the return of hundreds of postcards the first week of April. The cards provided an interesting glimpse into the lives of ordinary families and how they are making ends meet during the economic downturn. We thought we'd share some of the remarks with you.

Quite a few members reported living in subdivisions that forbid backyard clotheslines

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so many use indoor lines or folding racks to dry clothes.

Several members said they were returning to wood as a primary heat source while many more said they are heating fewer and fewer square feet to cut costs. Numerous members said they were planting a garden for the first time in years.

One couple said in addition to installing CFLs and sealing air leaks they were trying to get their 18 and 20 year old children to leave home. Good luck with that!

Message to our Member-Owners: Right versus right now

By Cecil O. Smith, Jr.
General Manager & CEO

Editor's Note: Due to the critical importance of pending energy legislation, we will resume our board member series of articles in the June issue of Tideland Topics.

Congress wisely delayed the conversion to digital television when it was apparent that America wasn't ready. The same wisdom should prevail when it comes to energy legislation: Make sure America's ready.

Unfortunately, the readiness of the American people does not appear to be a top priority for key elected officials. On March 31, the U.S. House Energy and Commerce Committee released a draft of the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 (ACES). Turning to page 568 of the 648 page draft the **only** reference to Consumer Assistance consists of three words: To Be Supplied. Tideland EMC has always advocated a "people first" approach to energy legislation and we are disappointed that the Senate's draft bill treats the plight of consumers as an afterthought. That's

why it is so important for each and every Tideland member to take a moment to participate in our legislative call to action. (See page 17 for details).

Encourage your family and neighbors to participate as well. Grassroots political action is our most effective tool in this effort. It's how we defeated the 1995 proposal to auction off the nation's hydroelectric power plants which continue to provide low cost, renewable energy to Tideland members.

Our message is not falling on deaf ears

It is important to note that consumer action is making inroads. During a March 24 press conference President Obama stopped short of insisting on a carbon cap and trade, a marked change from earlier comments.

Representative G.K. Butterfield (D-NC), who

serves on the House Energy and Commerce Committee, entered into the Congressional record a pro-consumer letter written by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, an advocacy group representing 42 million electric cooperative members.

A recent Senate vote garnered broad support from both sides of the aisle and will now require a 60 vote majority to pass carbon legislation which greatly improves our negotiating position.

On April 6, Speaker Nancy Pelosi conceded it was more important to get the legislation right than to get it done in 2009. The speaker said, "I don't think we can take any chances. This is going to take some very thorough scrutiny as to how we go forward."

We concur.

Brinson achieves service milestone

Tideland EMC board member J. Douglas Brinson was recognized by the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC) for his 20 years of service as an electric co-op director. The award was presented to Brinson during NCEMC's annual meeting in Raleigh. Brinson, who resides in Arapahoe, currently serves as vice president of the Tideland board.



Energy efficiency has high returns



In today's troubled economic climate, people are searching for places to sock away money that offer the promise of a healthy return. While no one can predict when, or if, the stock market will fully recover, crunching a few numbers does show one safe investment alternative: energy efficiency.

Even in good financial times the annual Wall Street return on stocks averages 14 percent, followed by 4.2 percent for 30-year bonds and 3.5 percent for money market accounts. In comparison, incorporating 10 home-efficiency measures carries a 16 percent rate of return, according to the U.S. Department of Energy Home Energy Saver program.

Looking at it another way, the energy bill for a typical American home averages \$1,283 per year, while a home that has purchased and installed Energy Star[®] products spends just \$774. That's a savings of more than \$500 annually, a nice profit for smart and efficiency-savvy investors to take to the bank. Even better, you get to keep the money you save on your electricity bill; normal investment incomes are subject to income tax. Many energy efficiency improvements can result in federal tax credits.

The first two energy efficiency areas to invest in—those with the highest rates of return—are lighting and sealing ducts.

Upgrading to compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) and fixtures in a typical home costs about \$200, but with an annual savings of \$80 the initial investment pays for itself in 2.5 years with a 41 percent rate of return.

Proper duct sealing, which can cost up to \$250, pays for itself in 2.6 years and matches lighting's high rate of return.

Your next purchase should be an Energy Star[®] front-loading clothes washer. Even though one costs an average of \$194 more than a non-efficient model, you reap a 37 percent rate of return—allowing you to recoup the extra expense in less than three years.

A programmable thermostat can also provide another boost to your bottom line. With a 30 percent return it pays for itself through energy savings in 3.7 years. Keep in mind that programmable thermostats must be properly set and building occupants must resist the temptation to override the preprogrammed settings or all of

your energy savings will be lost.

A water heater tank wrap with an R-12 insulation rating should be your next step; the initial cost of \$14.99 if you buy a kit from Tideland EMC saves you \$23 every year, offering a 28 percent return on your investment.

An Energy Star[®] refrigerator, heat pump, and dishwasher follow with rates of return ranging from 18 percent to 27 percent.

Finally, adequate air sealing and increasing wall and attic insulation offer between an 8 percent and 9 percent return.

To find out how you can start investing in your home's efficiency, visit Home Energy Saver at hes.lbl.gov.



1.

Energy Star[®] Lighting

41% return on investment

2.

Duct Sealing

41% return on investment

3.

Energy Star[®] Front Loading Washer

37% return on investment

4.

Programmable Thermostat

30% return on investment

5.

Water Heater Jacket

28% return on investment

6.

Energy Star[®] Refrigerators, Heat Pumps and Dishwashers

18-27% return on investment

7.

Air Sealing & Increased Insulation

8-9% return on investment

