

Membership MATTERS

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Members Only NEWS For Members of Blue Ridge

Can You Afford a 40% Increase?

This year, Congress is expected to vote on legislation that could increase electric bills by as much as 40 percent for families and businesses.

Proposals being considered would require the nation's electric utilities to increase renewable energy resources and pay a tax on carbon emissions. If these measures pass as currently written, **your electric rates could increase by 40 percent or more.** Blue Ridge Electric is working with members of Congress to help ensure they get this right, but it's important for you — the consumer — to tell your Congressional representatives to remember the folks back home as they vote on energy-related legislation.

*It's time for you to join us in telling Congress...
Cost does matter!*

Find A
Balanced Solution 

We've made it easy for you to contact Congress. Simply log onto **FindABalanced-Solution.com**. The website gives you simple ways to contact your Representative. Or, if you prefer to use your phone, dial toll-free: **1-877-40BALANCE (1-877-402-2526)**. A recorded voice will tell you how to be connected to your Representative's office.

Audited Financials Complete

Blue Ridge Electric's financial records for fiscal year 2008 have been audited by the firm of Adams, Jenkins & Cheatham, pc. The audit indicates the cooperative and its subsidiary are in sound financial condition and reflects an unqualified (highest level given) opinion.

The cooperative's 2008 Consolidated Audit Report is now available in each district office for your review. The 2008 Blue Ridge Electric Members Foundation financial report is also available.

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(PowerLine® is an automated account information and outage reporting system.)

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(for members outside the service area)

To report an outage at any time,
call one of the numbers listed above.

OFFICE HOURS
8:30 am - 5:00 pm, Monday - Friday
Night deposit available.

Visit us on the web:
www.BlueRidgeEMC.com



Child Safety and Planting Tips Around Transformers

Electric padmount transformers, better known as "big green boxes," scattered through your neighborhood, deserve more attention than you might expect. Transformers can serve up to six houses, so in a large neighborhood, transformers can be abundant. The purpose of a transformer is to change high voltage electricity to a lower voltage needed for supplying power to the lights and appliances in your home.

Children, however, can view padmount transformers as playground equipment and not understand their dangers. Parents need to explain that transformers are not meant for playing, climbing or touching.

Padmount transformers are inspected regularly to ensure their safe operation but heavy rains can erode soil from around the base. Warn your children not to put their fingers, sticks or other objects through cracks in a transformer, and teach your child about the yellow or orange electrical hazard stickers located on the boxes. Children should never play in areas where they see these hazard stickers, and you should always report broken locks on transformer boxes to Blue Ridge Electric.

Follow these tips to enhance padmount transformer safety in your neighborhood:

- Make sure transformers have at least 10 feet of unobstructed access area around them and call us to locate underground equipment before you dig around transformers.
- Make sure transformers aren't obstructed by fences, shrubs, trees, plants and storage sheds.
- Develop landscaping plans and take them to your local nursery for advice on plant selection and planting procedures. You don't want to plant vegetation that will become a transformer obstruction when full grown.
- Make sure plant roots don't interfere with wires and buried cables.
- Keeping the area around the transformer in your yard or your neighbor's yard unobstructed can speed up power restoration during outages and routine maintenance checks. Help your local cooperative keep the lights on and burning bright!



Keeping Electricity Affordable

The United States Congress and the Obama Administration are discussing new laws concerning climate change and our nation's energy policy. Given the long list of environmental mandates and expensive solutions, any action taken to address the issue will certainly increase the cost of electricity we use in our homes and businesses.

The American Clean Energy and Security Act (ACESA) is a broad, comprehensive piece of proposed legislative language that has the potential of increasing electricity rates up to 40 percent over the next five to ten years.

Crafted by Chairman Henry A. Waxman (D-California), of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Chairman Edward J. Markey (D-Massachusetts), of the Energy and Environment Subcommittee, the Act has four major components calling for:

- A Renewable Electricity Standard
- Energy efficiency increases
- Global warming gases reduction which includes a cap and trade program
- Promotion of green jobs

I've discussed cap and trade in previous articles, so I'll focus now on the renewable energy area of the Act. Keep in mind that ACESA is very complex piece of legislation and cannot be fully covered in a small space. For more information on legislative initiatives and related issues, please visit FindABalancedSolution.com.

The Renewable Electricity Standard (RES) has a very aggressive standard requiring six percent of electricity come from renewable fuels by 2012 and 25 percent by 2025. If a utility cannot meet this mandate, it can make up for the shortfall by either buying credits on the open market or paying a fee to the government.

We see several challenges for maintaining affordable electricity under the legislation as currently proposed.

First of all, supply constraints will put additional costs on utilities and consumers. In some parts of the country renewable resources aren't readily available, including the Southeast which doesn't have adequate wind or solar and not enough biomass to make up for the difference. Additionally, not all renewable resources are eligible; the RES doesn't fully recognize hydropower's renewable nature. The lack of supply could mean we'll have to purchase renewable electricity from out-of-state sources to meet the RES. This will result in transferring massive amounts of money from local rate payers to out-of-state producers. And even more costs will be incurred for transmission fees to use the grid to import power from other states.

Additionally, more consumers than ever are moving into cooperative territory, resulting in demand for power from cooperatives that's growing at a rate twice the national average. The need for more electricity — with a growing percentage from renewable sources to meet the RES — contributes to rising costs.

Even where renewable resources are

plentiful, electricity produced from renewable sources often are considerably more expensive. For example, electricity generated from solar sources can be two to three times more expensive than electricity generated from traditional new coal and natural gas-fired plants.

These challenges mean it will be more difficult for certain parts of the country to meet the RES in any type of affordable manner.

Cooperatives support the environment and addressing the nation's energy and climate change objectives. However, ensuring affordable electricity for our members is the principle upon which we measure any proposed energy and climate change legislation.

We're talking with members of Congress to advocate for affordable electricity. Many of you have told us you want to do your part. You can help by contacting your elected officials today. Visit FindABalancedSolution.com to find a letter template, e-mail links, and more information to help you speak up for affordable electricity. Don't delay — your words can have a huge impact on the cost of electricity for your household, our communities and future generations!

An Editorial by Chief Executive Officer Doug Johnson



More News

Save on Dental, Vision and Hearing Products and Services Cooperative Healthy Savings Available Through TSE and Co-op Connections®

Touchstone Energy has launched a new Co-op Connections® offer which allows Blue Ridge Electric members to obtain savings on the cost of dental, vision and hearing needs. The offer is available for a nominal monthly fee of \$4.25 per month for the entire family to all Co-op Connections cardholders. The Co-op Connections card has been provided to all Blue Ridge Electric members as a member benefit at no cost to members of the cooperative.

Through this offer, members will save 15 to 50 percent on dental services at thousands of participating Aetna dental offices nationwide; 10 to 60 percent savings on eye exams, eyeglasses, contact lenses, even LASIK surgery; and 15 to 50 percent discounts on hearing aids and hearing care products. Cooperative Healthy Savings is just one more way our members benefit from being part of Blue Ridge Electric.

Cooperative members can sign up at <http://co-opconnections.com> by clicking on the "Dental, Vision & Hearing" logo and completing four simple steps. After joining the program, members will receive a membership guide booklet and discount card from Cooperative Healthy Savings to present at participating dentists as well as vision and hearing care professionals.

Members who sign up for this valuable benefit agree to pay the monthly fee directly to Cooperative Healthy Savings, the program administrator.

Aetna Dental Access®, a respected leader in the health care industry for decades, provides the dental network. The discount vision network includes top national optical chains such as LensCrafters, Pearle Vision and JC Penney Optical. Plus, the hearing aid program offers discounts at Beltone locations as well as convenient mail order products.



Cooperative Healthy Savings is available through Touchstone Energy® and the Co-op Connections® program. For more information, visit <http://co-opconnections.com>

In Memory of John Woodruff

November 4, 1931 — April 25, 2009

Former Blue Ridge Electric President John Woodruff passed away April 25, 2009. John retired from Blue Ridge Electric's board in 2007 after serving 39 years, with the last five as president.

In his board role, John provided leadership, policy development, and strategic direction to the cooperative. He was elected president in 2002 and had previously served as vice president and assistant secretary-treasurer. John also represented Blue Ridge Electric and other statewide electric cooperatives as a board member of the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation and was a nationally credentialed cooperative director.

A highly respected community leader, he contributed to Alleghany County in many ways but was perhaps best known for his role in education. John retired as superintendent of Alleghany County Schools where he also worked as a teacher and principal early in his career. His devotion to education led him to create the Alleghany Education Foundation to support scholarship funds and provide school grants. A graduate of Appalachian State University (ASU) with a Master of Arts degree in administration and social studies, John was honored by ASU in 2002 with induction into the Reich College of Education's Rhododendron Society. The designation honors ASU graduates whose service to education has been exemplary.

Blue Ridge Electric was truly honored to have John serve on their board of directors, and he will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

