



BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

2018 Benton REA Congressional Priority Issues

I. Bonneville Power Administration Competitiveness

The Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) recent upward rate trajectory (30+percent rate increases since 2009) raises serious concerns about its long-term competitiveness as its rates continues to be well above the current market. With utilities evaluating their future power supply options, BPA must become more competitive for it to survive. Benton REA is working with other utilities and BPA to address BPA's competitiveness. Here are a few areas of focus:

- **Budgeting:** BPA must continue to tighten its budget, including critical reviews of program retention, scope, expenditures, and look for possible new sources of revenue.
- **Energy Efficiency:** Given its financial state, BPA does not need to administer the energy efficiency program. Utilities should manage their own efficiency programs.
- **Fish & Wildlife Programs:** Costs for these efforts should be shared by all taxpayers, not just BPA utility customers. Also, restore balance between the legislative, executive and judicial branches on this issue.
- **Cost Control:** We need to help BPA manage costs that are outside of its control, such as the costs that the Army Corp of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation charge for operating the dams.

II. Pole Attachments

Local control is essential for both safety and reliability. Benton REA opposes the efforts to bring locally controlled electric cooperatives under FCC jurisdiction for pole attachments. The attachments being installed for 5G can cause serious safety and reliability issues and utilities need the ability to evaluate them on a case-by-case basis.

- Management of pole attachment rates needs to be at a local level. 100% of Benton REA pole attachment charges are cost-based and are absolutely not an obstacle for expanding telecommunication services to our service areas.

III. Rural Broadband

Benton REA is a strong advocate for expanding and improving internet connectivity (broadband) in rural, unserved areas. Benton REA is currently conducting a detailed feasibility study on providing rural broadband in its electric service area. We are working with the Washington State Governor's Office on legislation to address rural broadband in Washington. Electric Cooperatives, like Benton REA, can and should be considered as a partner in this effort and can be part of the solution.