



BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

2019 Benton REA Legislative Positions

I. Clean Energy & Carbon Policy

When considering any energy policy regarding clean energy or carbon reduction, **reliability must be the cornerstone of the policy** to preserve a service that is a critical part of our society. Benton REA encourages legislators and stakeholders to focus on methods to achieve the most carbon reduction at the lowest cost. Policies and regulations should be complementary, across all sectors, toward achieving the primary goal of promoting clean energy and produce carbon reduction, which in turn will promote new renewable resources, energy efficiency, and new energy technologies. To this end, legislation should recognize and capitalize on the existing non-emitting generation resources producing electricity now.

SB 5116 Clean Energy Standard Position = Generally ok, with concerns

- We are encouraged at the recent version when compared to the original bill and recent initiatives as several of our concerns have been addressed. We will continue to work to improve the bill as it works through the legislature.

II. Rural Broadband

Benton REA is a strong advocate for expanding and improving internet connectivity (broadband) in rural, unserved areas. Benton REA worked with the governor's staff as it put together its Rural Broadband legislative proposal and will work with the legislature and various stakeholders to find practical solutions.

SB 5511 Expanding Broadband Service Position – Support

III. City of West Richland ASR Water Project

We are in support of the City of West Richland's Aquifer Storage and Recovery Project that it is working on in partnership with the Department of Ecology. The project has a number of positive factors including that it makes use of an existing well that is currently inoperable and is also fish friendly by pulling water out of the Columbia during high flow winter months and keeps water in the river during low flow summer months.

2019 Benton REA

Standing Legislative Positions

I. Local Control Essential for Rural Co-ops

Given the rural areas that rural electric cooperatives like Benton REA serve, cooperatives have unique challenges, including very low density and difficult terrain. These challenging circumstances are not shared by other forms of utilities. As a result, it is critical that Benton REA and electric cooperatives are not included in legislation that uses the one size fits all mandates. It is essential that the locally elected boards, which understand the unique challenges that each cooperative face, be allowed to make important utility decisions.

II. Pole Attachments

Benton REA and all electric cooperatives provide an essential service to its members and it is vitally important that we preserve local control to determine the appropriate permitting, safe placement, rates for pole attachments. Benton REA opposes any legislation or regulation that would impair our ability to safely manage pole attachments.

III. Small Utility Exemptions

The smaller electric utilities' ability to provide cost-effective, reliable and safe utility services to their customers should not be jeopardized by unnecessary, one size fits all, mandates or regulations. Electric cooperatives by their nature serve the less densely populated areas of the state and generally areas that are under very difficult financial environments.

IV. Retain net metering statute.

Benton REA finds no need to amend the current net metering statute. Any amendments would need to consider the cost shift that currently exists with net metering.

V. Coordination of Danger Tree Removal Permissions and Liability with the Department of Natural Resources

Utilities must have the right to proactively manage trees that are outside of standard Rights-of-Way or a waiver from liability if access permissions are not granted

VI. Feed in Tariffs

Feed in tariffs could force local utilities to purchase resource output from local electricity generation that is not cost-effective or that does not comply with their integrated resource planning efforts. Therefore, Benton REA opposes any legislation which includes feed in tariff provisions.

VII. Resist any legislative efforts to implement or increase utility taxes

Benton REA will continue to provide reliable and affordable electricity to its membership, and, as part of these efforts, will resist any effort to give local or county government new legislative authority to tax utility services or the state to increase the state utility tax.

VIII. Ensure there are Options to Meet Future Electricity Generation Needs Reliably and Cost-Effectively

Benton REA supports legislation to ensure electric energy demands will be met through development of new base load generation (all types) within the state. Benton REA receives about 95% of its power from non-carbon emitting resources and therefore any significant investment in intermittent renewable resources would only increase costs, reduce reliability, and displace non-carbon emitting resources.