



# BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## 2021 Benton REA State Legislative Priorities

### I. Red Mountain Transportation Improvements

Recent analysis of current and forecasted needs for the Red Mountain area have identified improvements to the SR 224 corridor would be a more effective investment at this time to address the growing needs in the Red Mountain area. The Red Mountain Transportation Improvements would add capacity and improve traffic flow. No new funding is needed, but current funding allocated to this project must be maintained while local investments are made and design work is completed. A one-page handout describes the project and the local transportation investments.

### II. Energy Resource Adequacy – Avoiding Blackouts

As the state moves toward its goal of becoming 100% carbon-free, Benton REA strongly encourages legislators and policy makers to consider all options when advocating for and deciding on clean energy resources. Regional utilities are expressing serious concerns about the emerging reliability issues associated with the retirement of thermal baseload generating resources and the focus on wind and solar as a primary source of power as it is only an intermittent energy producer. Washington state must learn from California's mistakes when it comes to its reliance on intermittent energy producing if we are going to avoid rolling blackouts. Both hydro and nuclear power are 100% carbon-free and each resource does not rely on intermittent natural elements (wind or solar) to produce power for the region and our energy policy must recognize and protect the value of both hydro and nuclear. Benton REA supports carbon mitigation policies that do not adversely impact jobs in Washington state or place our businesses at a competitive disadvantage.

### III. 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 universally 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.