



# BENTON RURAL ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

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A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

## 2023 Benton REA State Legislative Priorities

### I. Wildfire Policy/Legislation

Benton REA has been proactive in its wildfire mitigation planning and preparedness. It has an approved Wildfire Mitigation Plan in place and reviews the plan annually. Benton REA supports Wildfire policy or legislation that provides recommendations and can help minimize liability for utilities who are implementing prudent fire mitigation plans. We also support policy that allows utilities to implement measures that are reasonable for their individual service areas and don't apply unreasonable or unnecessary mandates. For example, a blanket Public Safety Power Shutoff directive can be counter productive to the health and safety of our communities and members. Many of our members rely on pumps for fire protective measures, which require Benton REA's electric service and emergency responders fighting fires have historically asked Benton REA to maintain power if possible due to their primary communications being reliant on Benton REA's electric service.

### II. Energy Resource Adequacy & Carbon Related Legislation

Benton REA supports the development of safe and affordable generation, transmission, and distribution resources to provide adequate capacity for our consumers' needs. Energy related policy must have no negative impacts on reliability of the electric generation, transmission or distribution system. 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. Our energy policy must recognize and protect the value of both hydro and nuclear.

### III. Local Control

Benton REA is proudly governed by the members it serves. The members elect a board of trustees to make policies in which the cooperative operates. Any regulative oversight should only be handled by each electric cooperative's board of trustees. Legislation that implements mandates on electric cooperatives diminishes the local control that our board needs in order to meet the unique characteristics and challenges of our specific service areas.

### IV. Red Mountain Transportation Improvements

The City of West Richland and the Washington State Department of Transportation have identified improvements to the SR 224 corridor as a high priority. A recent evaluation increased the total estimated project cost to \$31.5 million. While there is a balance of \$5 million of funding yet to be secured, we support the City of West Richland's request to retain the \$24.5 million of Connecting Washington funds so that construction remains on schedule for 2024.