

Everyone likes a good story – especially legislators

BY TIM COONAN

One of the best parts of my job is talking with legislators about how electric co-ops are helping Iowans – without asking for financial assistance from the state. At the top of my list of success stories to share with legislators this year is the investment in energy-efficiency programs Iowa's electric co-ops have projected for the next five years.

Collectively, the measures add up to more than \$71.5 million being devoted to energy-efficiency programs for electric co-op members through 2014. In addition, the energy-efficiency offerings will save enough electricity to power 350,000 homes for one year. These numbers are based on the expected lifetime energy savings of the energy-efficiency measures co-ops anticipate their members will implement during the next five years.

One of the reasons this is a good story at the Capitol is that the identified energy savings were published in a report developed in response to a law passed in 2008. That law, Senate File 2386, called for electric cooperatives and municipal utilities to assess the potential of their existing energy-efficiency programs – as well as the possibilities for new programs – and to set goals based on those findings.

The resulting Electric Cooperatives' Joint Energy-Efficiency Report was filed Dec. 31, 2009, with the Iowa Utilities Board. The report says the projected annual investment in energy efficiency from 2010 through 2014 will be 30 percent higher than the co-ops' 2007 investment. To me, that shows

commitment – and results.

John Norris, former chairman of the Iowa Utilities Board and now a commissioner on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, said at Gov. Culver's 2007 Energy Policy Advisory Forum that Iowa utilities are getting good results by helping customers implement energy-efficiency programs that are improving homes, farms and businesses. Today, I think Norris could say the



same thing or something even more complimentary about electric co-ops, given our unprecedented investment in energy efficiency.

Iowa's legislators, who are faced with significant budget challenges, also like to hear a good story about the judicious use of resources. That's



the very foundation of the Electric Cooperatives' Joint Energy-Efficiency Report, because all the energy-efficiency programs and incentives offered by the state's electric cooperatives have been deemed

to be cost effective. That's important, because it helps cash-strapped Iowans save some money on their energy costs while reducing their carbon footprint.

Thank you for helping me be able to share good news with Iowa's legislators at a time when a lot of the other news they're getting isn't as good. ⚡

Tim Coonan is director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives, the Des Moines-based service organization representing 36 distribution cooperatives and six generation and transmission cooperatives that provide electricity to approximately 650,000 Iowans in each of the state's 99 counties.