

The focus turns to the Iowa Legislature

BY TIM COONAN

Now that the Iowa Caucuses are over and the presidential candidates have moved on to New Hampshire and South Carolina, Iowa's electric cooperatives are shifting their attention to the second session of the 84th General Assembly.

As is always the case, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives watches any legislation that could impact the reliability, affordability, safety and environmental responsibility of the power provided to Iowa's electric cooperative members. This year, we're focusing on the following issues.

■ **Copper Theft:** Incidents of copper theft continue to rise, causing a negative impact on power reliability and equipment safety. We'll be working with the law enforcement community and the utility indus-



try to strengthen Iowa's copper theft law and try to put a stop to this very dangerous activity.

- **Stray Voltage:** Establish a statewide stray voltage policy that enables consumers and utilities to work together – and avoid costly litigation.
- **Economic Development:** Ensure that policymakers are committed to rural economic development as they consider economic development policy for the state.
- **Renewable Energy Installers:** Provide accountability and consumer protection when dealing with renewable energy installers and vendors. We want to make sure people know there are good companies out there – and how to avoid companies that make claims they can't support. Also,

for safety reasons companies must give notice to utilities that renewable energy equipment is being installed.

We will rely heavily on our grassroots network of electric co-op directors, managers and other employees to deliver our message to policymakers on these issues and any other issues of importance that come up this session. It's important that policymakers never forget that everything we do is for our members.

When you attend legislative forums, town hall meetings and presidential candidate events in your part of the state this year, you can expect to see cooperative directors and employees engaging elected and hope-to-be-elected officials on the issues that are important to your co-op and to you. ⚡

Tim Coonan is director of government relations for the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives.