

CLOSING THOUGHTS



JIM MATHESON, CEO

Fighting for Reliable Energy

Reliability remains top of mind for co-op leaders across the country. A convergence of market, technology and energy policy factors are directly affecting the future of reliable electricity. And the Environmental Protection Agency's newly proposed power plant rule is poised to further compound the problem.

The EPA recently unveiled a new proposal that once again targets the nation's power plants. It will further strain America's electric grid and undermine decades of work to reliably keep the lights on for people across the nation.

This proposal is the wrong plan at a critical time for our nation's energy future. It is unrealistic and unachievable and will reduce key always-available generating resources (both coal and natural gas) at a time when the country's demand for electricity is skyrocketing.

NRECA filed comments against the proposal in August. These comments reflect extensive collaboration and consultation with our members, including critical input from statewide associations, G&Ts and distribution cooperatives.

We urged the agency to withdraw the proposal in its entirety for a number of reasons. EPA's proposal violates the agency's authority. It assumes carbon capture and hydrogen energy capture should be required industry standards when they aren't even commercially viable today. EPA also wrongly believes these new technologies will be affordable.

The consequences of this proposal are severe: less electricity, less often, at far higher costs, creating difficult choices not just for electric cooperatives but for everyone they serve.

This EPA proposal is just one of many that affect the way we do our jobs. Essentially, it's a "death by a thousand cuts" strategy to force energy suppliers into a corner. EPA needs to recognize the impact this proposal will have on the future of reliable energy before it's too late.

Last year we saw rolling blackouts across nine states as demand for power exceeded the available supply across the Tennessee Valley and the mid-Atlantic. Unfortunately, this is a window into the new normal across this country—especially if policymakers don't take a hard look at how their proposals will affect reliability.

Policymakers like to simplify issues, but electric reliability is one that just can't be simplified. Federal energy policies should incentivize smart decisions with a focus on reliability, responsibility and affordability at the core.

Navigating these times requires us to come together and speak with one voice. And that's something we've done with great success as a co-op network, a feat that I've seen on display throughout the year as new burdensome regulations have threatened our ability to keep America's lights on.

When we come together and speak with one voice, policymakers in Washington pay attention. Telling the co-op story makes a real difference. When we talk about our goal of keeping the lights on, people actually listen. Because of our leadership on this issue, political leaders are paying attention.

That's cause for celebration and is a great reflection of our collective strength as we continue fighting to ensure co-ops have the ability to provide affordable, reliable power to their members without the threat of unrealistic and burdensome regulations. **RE**

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