**2022 Legislative Session**

The 2022 Legislative session will begin on January 11, 2022. The Florida Electric Cooperatives Association’s primary focus is to monitor and analyze bills and work with legislators on any legislation impacting you, our consumer-members, while ensuring our not-for-profit electric co-ops are able to continue providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.

There are a couple of issues that will dominate the 60-day session. First, due to the decennial U.S. Census, the Florida Legislature must complete the process of redrawing state legislative and congressional boundaries; apportioning each seat with an equal number of constituents to ensure citizens receive equal representation. This process is called redistricting. Due to Florida’s growth over the last ten years, our state gained one new Congressional seat; increasing our total representation in the U.S. Congress from 27 to 28. The number of seats in the Florida Legislature will remain the same but every seat will change its boundaries which could mean Florida’s electric cooperatives will welcome new legislators into our communities. The goal is to complete the redistricting process prior to the November 2022 mid-term election.

The second issue will be the budget. Florida appears to have successfully recovered from the economic downturn and continues to regain on the impacts and losses surrounding closures of businesses, schools, and travel due to COVID-19 precautions. Florida has a constitutional requirement to balance the budget each year. Although during the economic downturn it was difficult to navigate cuts to programs, the practice of balancing our budget every year helped our state weather the recent uncertain times with greater ease and without major budget concerns. This year, the legislature will monitor the continued long-lasting impacts of the virus on Florida’s economy while strategically injecting billions of federal dollars directed to Florida for pandemic recovery efforts.

Although these issues will dominate the session, there are some underlying issues of interest to the co-ops and our communities. The pandemic was devastating to Florida’s citizens and businesses, but it also highlighted a major disparity among communities regarding the availability of internet/broadband service, especially in rural areas. This year, there will be continued conversations to entice and promote for-profit broadband companies to provide internet services to sparsely populated areas in our state. The recent stimulus package approved by the federal government earmarked millions of dollars to the State of Florida to help with these efforts. Florida Electric Cooperatives Association looks forward to working with all the stakeholders to help foster a solution to provide such a valuable internet service to all communities in which we work and play.

As the New Year rings in, we will hit the ground running and be ready for the 2022 regular session. Session is scheduled to end on March 11, 2022, setting the way for an exciting campaign trail leading up to the November 22 mid-term elections. It is an honor to represent Florida’s not-for-profit electric cooperatives and ensure they continue providing safe, reliable, and affordable electricity for their consumer-members.

[*NAME OF COOPERATIVE*] is a not-for-profit electric utility and is very sensitive to government mandates that can result in increases to your electric rates or diminish the safety and reliability of [*NAME OF COOPERATIVE*]‘s utility infrastructure. As legislation moves through the legislative process, we will continue to fight against proposals which could erode our mission to provide safe, reliable, and affordable electricity.