



National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

A Touchstone Energy* Cooperative

Greetings,

Each August, members of Congress return to their hometowns for a month-long district work period. Over the course of the month elected officials will participate in numerous events including: hosting town hall meetings, attending local chamber lunches, touring facilities, and holding meetings at their district offices.

Several factors have combined to make this August one of the best opportunities for the voice of America's Electric Cooperatives to be heard by our lawmakers. With mid-term elections just around the corner, every lawmaker will be eager to make the rounds and connect with their constituents. In addition, the week before the August recess, the EPA will hold public hearings on their greenhouse gas proposal targeting existing power plants. This August presents a tremendous opportunity to carry the momentum from these EPA hearings directly to the lawmakers who serve us.

Enclosed in this August Action Plan are step-by-step guides to help maximize the month of August and ensure that elected officials understand our priorities and listen to our concerns. The plan will help you host your own August town hall, invite your member of Congress to tour your facility, and more. Next week, NRECA will distribute updated August Action Plan with an updated look and feel. The updated version will also include talking points on a diverse range of issues to help you further hone your messaging when meeting with lawmakers.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact the NRECA's political affairs team:

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August 2014 Grassroots Action Plan

Contents

Tour Guide – A walk through of the steps that cooperatives can take to invite and host a member of Congress on a tour of the cooperative.

Town Hall 101 - A guide for attending or participating in town halls with your member of Congress.

Social media best practices

New creative materials – A quick overview of new creative materials now available on Cooperative.com

Sample Schedule - A sample August recess schedule to help you schedule various types of events over the month of August.

Tour Guide

Why invite your member of Congress to tour your cooperative?

The August recess presents the best opportunity to invite your member of Congress to tour your cooperative. Inviting your members of Congress to tour your cooperative is the ideal way to give lawmakers a hands-on understanding of the importance of electric cooperatives. Members of Congress are generally eager to accept invitations to meet with constituent groups, especially site visits with nice photo opportunities and local media in attendance.

A successful cooperative tour will stay with the lawmaker for years to come and can help lay the groundwork for a relationship that will grow for years. As lawmakers meet the linemen, climb up in a cherry picker, and visit a distribution station, they quickly grasp the factors that go into providing safe, affordable, and reliable electricity to 75% of our nation's landmass.

Scheduling the tour

Some members of Congress schedule their district work periods many months in advance while others schedule only a few weeks out. Prepare to submit the request early and offer many dates in order to accommodate the lawmaker's schedule.

Sometimes, the district director or in-district scheduler handle scheduling opportunities at home, so it is helpful to get to know these people. Because you are in the district, it is possible you already know these staffers. They can be quite helpful, and often add their own perspectives when the district schedule is being formulated.

If you don't have an established contact in the lawmaker's office, visit the member's website or call the member's Washington office and get the name and email address of the lawmaker's scheduler. The scheduler is the gatekeeper for the elected official. Getting your invitation to the right person is the first step to success.

Submitting the invitation

HINT

Offering many dates for the tour makes it more difficult for the member to decline the request due to a schedule conflict.

When submitting the invitation, make sure that you:

HINT

Memos with statistics often help the staff with the background information that makes for a better meeting, even if the member knows the co-op well.

Explain the reason for the invite

- Outline the issues that you plan to discuss
- Describe what the lawmaker will do on the tour
- Detail any awards or special recognition that the member will receive while on the tour

Highlight the benefits of visiting the cooperative

- Explain your co-op's impact on the district: jobs provided, members served, community involvement, etc.
- How many people can the member of Congress expect to be present? Will the member know any attendees personally?
- Detail whether the tour will be open to the media or not?

Provide specific details

- Include a primary point of contact at the cooperative
- Give a specific date and time that your co-op would like to host the member of Congress
- Provide exact location of the tour with directions on how to get there
- Include a sample tour schedule

HINT

Having a media component to the tour may increase the likelihood of the member accepting the invitation.

Town Hall 101

Nearly every elected official working in the district over the month of August will hold at least one or two town hall meetings. These meetings are typically announced through mailers from your lawmaker, radio ads, local newspaper announcements, social media, and the member's official website. Town hall meetings offer another great opportunity to educate the member of Congress on issues facing cooperatives and ask them questions.

HINT

If you don't see a town hall meeting advertised over the month of August, call the member's office and ask when their next town hall will be.

Tips for making the most out of town hall meetings:

Bring a friend

- The more advocates for electric cooperatives that attend the meeting, the better your message will be heard.

Train your supporters

- Explain the objective of attending the meeting.
- Provide questions for them to ask during Q & A.

Tell a personal story

- Choose a spokesperson who can speak on behalf of the co-op members attending the town hall.
- Explain how new laws/rules will affect your member-owners

Use numbers

- How many jobs does your co-op support/provide?
- How many member-owners do you serve?

Be respectful

- The objective should not be to publicly shame the lawmaker.
- Follow the guidelines for speaking and asking questions.

Maximize Attendance

- Arrive as a group.
- Wear co-op logos.

Take a picture

- Take a picture with the member.
- Post it on social media.

Don't forgot the legislator's staff

- Identify staff in the room and introduce yourself before or after the meeting.
- Reemphasize your objectives with the staff.

Bring "leave behinds"

- Provide a one-pager about your co-op.
- Provide talking points on your issues.

Target multiple meetings

- Find out how many town hall meetings are planned in your service territory.
- Attend all meetings that are relevant to your co-op's issues.

Provide feedback

- If necessary give a brief update to the statewide on what transpired.

- Update your staff at the next all staff meeting.

Follow-up

- Send a thank you note to the legislator for hosting the meeting. Make sure to thank any of the legislator's staffers who assisted as well. Doing this will ensure that the note gets seen by the Member.
- Follow up with district staff on your issues.

Hosting your own town hall meeting

In addition to attending a town hall meeting hosted by your local elected officials, consider hosting your own town hall meeting to educate consumers-members on current issues and answer questions that they have. Invite local elected officials to attend the town hall as guest speakers. To facilitate a well-attended town hall, consider the following steps.

Choose the right venue

- The venue could be a local school gym, a library, conference center, or county government building. Anticipate the size of the crowd and pick the location to fit.
- Make sure that the venue is located near at least one media outlet to enhance the chance that they cover it.

Pick the right time

- A town hall meeting at 10am on a Tuesday likely won't be as well attended as a meeting held after business hours at 6:30 or 7pm.
- The town hall should be advertised to run no longer than 1.5 hours.

Invite any VIP's or co-hosts

- Are you going to invite any local elected officials or experts? Make sure that the town hall fits their schedule.

Make sure the public knows

- Pitch this town hall meeting as a way for consumers to learn more about energy issues that impact them.
- Advertise the town hall in your local media, through social media, in bill stuffers, with a personalized mailer, etc.
- Send out a press release
- Pen a letter to the editor

Social Media Best Practices

If used properly, social media can be one of the most effective ways to influence your member of Congress and ensure that he or she remembers you and your message. Whenever you mention the lawmaker, make sure that you use the lawmaker's specific social media handle. This will increase the likelihood of the lawmaker sharing or retweeting your message to their followers.

Some examples of good social media opportunities include:

- Publicizing an upcoming event with your member of Congress (meeting, tour, town hall, etc.)
- Posting live updates on the event
- Posting multiple photos from the event (hint – candid photos are often preferred over staged photos)
- Issuing a call to action to your followers
- Updating your followers on how they can get involved and make their voice heard

New Creative Materials

Consider using the month of August to incorporate fresh graphics into the creative materials that are distributed to your members. NRECA has created a brand new suite of creative materials to help educate and inform members about the impact of the EPA's proposed existing plants regulations. A sample of new materials available on Cooperative.com follows below.



Bill Stuffer

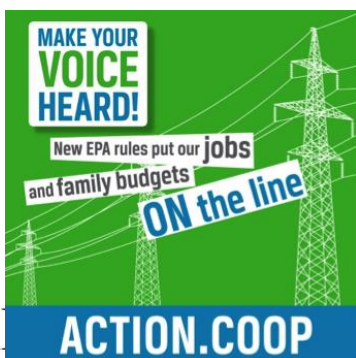


Print Ad ● ● ●



NRECA

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Social Media Post ● ● ●



Social Media Cover ● ● ●

Sample August Recess Schedule

| Sun | Mon | Tues | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|-----|--|-------------------------------|---|---|-----|---|
| | | | | | 1 | 2 Host an action.coop booth at local county fair |
| 3 | 4 | 5 MOC tours cooperative | 6 | 7 Place action.coop ads in your local paper | 8 | 9 |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 Update media on how your cooperative gives back to the community | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 Host a town hall meeting | 19 | 20 | 21 Participate in a MOC's town hall | 22 | 23 |
| 24 | 25 Update the media on action.coop numbers | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 31 | | | | | | |