

Not a Leave Behind – Internal use only

LEGISLATIVE COOKOUT TPs

MARCH 18, 2025

For those planning to have office meetings at the Capitol before our Legislative Cookout, **please do not leave this, or any, position papers with the legislator's office.** We encourage you to give your legislator(s) materials relating to your co-op, the Economic Impact booklet, and invitations to the cookout.

CO-OP 101

With the rapid turnover in the legislature, it is always good to ask legislators and staff if they know about electric co-ops. This will often lead to an opportunity to explain the electric co-op model, emphasizing our **not-for-profit** status, **democratically elected Boards**, and **strong ties to the community**.

RELIABILITY

- Floridians need power to stay ON, at a price they can AFFORD.
- Decisions/policies affecting electric co-ops must account for safe, reliable, and affordable electricity. Now and tomorrow.

LEGISLATION

At this time, we do not believe it is in the interest of Florida's electric co-ops to take strong positions opposing specific bills. This is partly because it is early in the session and partly because we do not want to attract attention to bills that otherwise might not be discussed. However, we are providing some talking points on a few bills just in case questions arise.

If you have a question about a bill not listed here or if Statewide needs to follow up with any legislators, please contact Drew Love at 863-698-9936 or Mike Bjorklund at 850-305-5367.

Assault and Battery on a Utility Worker

SB 1386 / HB 857 – Sen. Yarborough / Rep. Kincart Jonsson

- We currently **SUPPORT** the bill
- Increases penalties for criminal offenses against utility workers during their duty.
- Definition includes electricity, gas, water, wastewater, telephone, and communications service workers.
- This is a proactive bill for Florida. It has not been a significant problem in our state, but other states have seen criminal activities particularly during power restoration.

FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES

Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

SB 700 / HB 651 – Sen. Truenow / Rep. Tuck

- We are currently **NEUTRAL** on the bill. We've met with the bill sponsors, Commissioner Simpson and his Chief of Staff Kathy Mears, about this large agency package. The talking points below cover only the portions of interest to the electric co-ops.
- SB 700 was amended and addresses many of our concerns. The goal of the language targeting electric utility land is to allow the state to have a first right of refusal on ag lands, particularly those with solar arrays, before the land is offered for sale or is transferred.
- The current language is better but may still need "comfort language" to clarify the intent to preserve ag land.
- Co-ops are part of rural and ag communities, and as a result often need ag land to support energy production, growth, and economic development. We want to make sure this bill does not unintentionally make it harder for our communities to grow and recover from natural disasters.
- Please be sure to **thank the bill sponsors and Commissioner Simpson** for working with us and ask that they continue the open dialogue.

Solar Facilities

SB 1304 / HB 1595 – Sen. Bradley / Rep. Koster

- We have **STRONG CONCERNS** about the financial requirements for decommissioning solar facilities. We will continue working with the sponsors to address our concerns.
- Allows counties to adopt ordinances for decommissioning a solar facility at the end of its useful life if the facility produces over 2 megawatts.
- **Permits Counties to require financial assurances** from the facility owner to cover the estimated cost of decommissioning the solar facility and returning it to its original agricultural land status.
- Co-ops are part of the communities they serve, and not a threat to abandon infrastructure. Additional costs are not necessary for co-op facilities.
- This bill would NOT apply to any site with an application to construct a solar facility before July 1, 2025.

Department of Transportation

SB 462 / HB 567 – Sen. DiCeglie / Rep. McFarland

- We currently **OPPOSE** this bill. We will continue to work with the sponsors on the language.
- This is a large bill. The talking points below cover only the portion of interest to the electric co-ops. **The utility would be responsible for paying damages** involving utility relocation for a wide range of possible circumstances, including circumstances beyond the utility's control.
- The bill creates a cumbersome new administrative process to litigate disputes rather than the current voluntary negotiation and agreement currently in place.
- Co-ops work well with FDOT and local agencies. New punitive statutory language is not merited.
- Cost reimbursements for relocation on state highways in this bill **currently excludes electric co-ops**.