



# Ambassador Update

The Washington State Legislature will convene on January 12, 2009 for one of the most challenging sessions in recent memory. With a projected budget shortfall of \$5.7 billion due to the lean economy, lawmakers will be faced with tough choices about which programs to fund and what infrastructure to build to improve our economy and position our state for a brighter and stronger future.



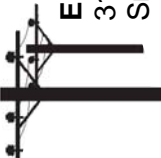
After the economic crisis the biggest political issue facing our state, the nation and the globe is how to address climate change. Governor Christine Gregoire has outlined her office's budget priorities for 2009 – education and public safety are at the top of the list.

As changes to the electric industry are increasing the cost of doing business for electric cooperatives, our members are being stretched financially too.

This is the eleventh year of the Electric Ambassador grassroots program. We need your help to have an impact with our legislators in Olympia. Legislators say it over and over again, "We listen when we hear from a voter."

Thank you for your continued support of our effort to keep power reliable and affordable in Washington.

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# AMBASSADOR UPDATE



# Live From Olympia

# SPECIAL EDITION

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# What's happening at the state capitol?

The 2009 session of the Washington State Legislature will convene for at least 90 days on January 12 in Olympia, Washington. The Washington Rural Electric Cooperative Association—the statewide association for your electric cooperative—anticipates the following issues to be discussed and proposed as new laws in the 2009 session.

## Climate Change

In 2007 seven western states, including Washington, and three Canadian provinces formed the Western Climate Initiative (WCI). The WCI's purpose was to propose recommendations to address climate change in the form of a cap-n-trade program adoptable by member states and provinces — a regional approach to a global problem.

A cap-n-trade program sets limits on greenhouse gas emissions for businesses, government and industry and has a financial 'penalty' attached to exceeding stated limits. This fall the WCI released their recommendations.

Governor Gregoire presented her office's proposal for a cap-n-trade program in Washington State early in December after considering the WCI recommendations. The actual costs are still not known—that portion of the proposal will be finalized before session. In response to the economic downturn, it looks like the climate change bill will be presented as a job creation bill to boost "green collar" jobs in the state.

WRECA is opposed to a cap-n-trade policy that would adversely impact our state's economy and its ability to be competitive or hurt our members, the ratepayers.

## Vegetation Management



Powerful storms and unpredictable weather can pose a very costly clean-up for any utility as damage is waged along its power lines and system. Trees and shrubs that are not properly maintained contribute to outages during storms and can provide a wildfire risk, as well.

WRECA will be partnering with other associations to support legislation that would improve the accessibility to properties that the utility does not own but has equipment on for the purpose of managing vegetation. And WRECA would like to limit the damages that utilities can be assessed for fire suppression and damage to property.

## Renewable Portfolio Standard

In 2006, voter initiative 937 passed instituting a Renewable Portfolio Standard for the state. The RPS requires utilities with 25,000 members or more to purchase at least 3 percent of its power from defined renewable resources by 2012. In 2016, it increases to 9 percent and expands to 15 percent at the beginning of 2020.

These renewable resources are far more costly than the low-cost "preference power" electric

cooperatives currently buy from the Bonneville Power Administration. Preference power is approximately 96 percent emissions-free: 86 percent hydropower and 10 percent nuclear power. Hydropower from the federal BPA system is not currently classified as renewable resource under the RPS.

WRECA supports any changes to the RPS that would define the hydropower sold by BPA as a renewable resource. WRECA opposes any amendments that would accelerate the timeline for implementing the RPS or increase the levels of required defined renewable resources.

## Crane Operators Certification

In 2007 Washington was the fifteenth state in the nation to pass a law requiring construction



crane operators to be certified. Service trucks used specifically in the power line industry were excluded when using the equipment to dig holes to set power and utility poles, or handling associated materials to be installed or removed from utility poles.

WRECA will work this session to amend this law to further exclude all work done by utility personnel using utility equipment while conducting operations related to the utility.