



SHAWN TAYLOR

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Cooperative Leaders Travel to Washington, D.C.

Last month more than 20 cooperative directors and employees from Wyoming (and more than 2,600 nationally) traveled to our nation's capital for the annual National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Legislative Rally. As always, the rally came at a very important time in our country – and for cooperatives – as major decisions that will have long-lasting impacts on us were discussed with our elected officials.

Even though it would have been easy to talk with our delegation about spending and deficit issues – or even the death of Osama Bin Laden – we were encouraged by NRECA CEO Glenn English to “stick to the task at hand” and keep focused on those issues that matter most to the cooperatives.

Among the issues covered were continued support for the Rural Utility Service (RUS), opposition to the EPA's proposed rule to classify coal ash as a hazardous waste, support for legislation dealing with anticompetitive practices by the railroads and support for alternative financing for cooperatives that choose to include renewables in their energy mix.

Each year since fiscal year (FY) 2008, Congress has approved a \$6.5 billion loan level for the RUS electric loan program. It is important to note that this loan level has not cost the federal government anything during that time and, in fact, has contributed more than \$100 million to the U.S. Treasury for deficit reduction in FY 2012.

I single out this issue specifically for two reasons. The first is to give you an idea of how

silly things can get back in Washington when a program such as the RUS loan program – a program that actually makes the federal government money – is targeted for reduction and, in some instances, termination. The other reason is to thank Senator Barrasso for his support for this program.

When we arrived in Washington, D.C., the staff at the NRECA had been looking in the Senate for a lead champion to write a letter to Senate appropriators supporting \$6.5 billion (as opposed to the \$6 billion in President Obama's budget), opposing any restrictions on RUS lending to co-ops and allowing the RUS to lend money for baseload generation projects.

We talked to Senator Barrasso about the program, and in short order, he agreed to be the lead sponsor of the letter. So, a big thanks to Senator Barrasso and his staff.

I would also like to thank Senator Enzi and Representative Lummis and their staff for their support on all of the issues we covered with them.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone from Wyoming who made the trip and participated in the meetings. Because of everything our delegation is asked to focus on this year, the relationships we have with our legislators and their respective staffs are more important than ever. This annual trip helps keep those relationships alive and well.