



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer and Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of America's more than 900 electric cooperatives who serve 42 million people, I would like to thank you for your swift, decisive and bipartisan efforts to combat the public health and economic crisis created by the COVID-19 epidemic. As Congress addresses these growing challenges, it is critical that you provide electric cooperatives with the tools and flexibility to ensure we can continue to keep the lights on. We respectfully submit the following recommendations for your consideration.

- 1) **USDA Rural Utilities Service (RUS):** Many cooperatives are USDA RUS borrowers. Congress should ensure we have flexibility to serve our communities.
  - a) ***Authorize the RUS to provide maximum flexibility to address any number of unique situations.***
  - b) ***Raise the amount of lending under the RUS's Guaranteed Loan Program.***
  - c) ***Eliminate prepayment penalties for RUS debt.***
  - d) ***Remove administrative barriers to electric cooperative infrastructure spending.***
- 2) **Protecting our Workforce:** Cooperative personnel are critical to keeping the lights on.
  - a) ***Provide access to personal protective equipment.***
- 3) **Rural Broadband:** More than 100 electric cooperatives are providing broadband service today, and many more are conducting evaluations of entering the broadband business.
  - a) ***Provide relief for consumers facing disconnection of their internet service provider.***
  - b) ***Temporarily waive buildout milestones with federal agencies that fund broadband projects.***
  - c) ***Sustain federal investment in broadband capability.***



- 4) **Disconnection Moratoria and Non-Payment:** States are rapidly moving in the direction of implementing a mandatory or voluntary moratorium on utility disconnections.
  - a) ***Increase Funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).***
  - b) ***Provide federal funding to address utility operational shortfalls.***
  
- 5) **Power Marketing Administration Operations:** More than 600 cooperatives nationwide receive cost-based hydropower from the Power Marketing Administrations (PMAs).
  - a) ***Ensure Emergency PMA Funding is Non-Reimbursable.***

I thank you in advance for your consideration of these proposals. On behalf of 42 million people across 48 states, America's Electric Cooperatives stand at the ready to provide detailed information regarding all of these proposals.

Sincerely,

Jim Matheson  
Chief Executive Officer