



*Big Country Electric  
Cooperative, Inc.*

## MEMBERGRAM

October 2018

*Happy Fall, Y'all!*

### October is Co-op Month!

Please join us Thursday, October 25 for our annual Member Appreciation Day Open House at each BCEC office.

Come and go 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

As our way of saying  
**THANK YOU** for  
being a co-op member,  
we'll have great food  
and useful energy  
efficiency kits.

Drawings will be held for  
\$300, \$200 and \$100 bill credits,  
you don't want to miss your chance  
to win one of those!

*We hope to see YOU!*



## Big Country Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Monday - Thursday 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Friday 7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Call Toll Free: 1-888-662-2232

Roby: (325) 776-2244 Stamford: (325) 773-3684

Snyder (325) 573-3161

Please call your local BCEC office to report power outages!

[www.bigcountry.coop](http://www.bigcountry.coop)



### We're mobile!

Access your BCEC account anytime, from anywhere! [bigcountry.coop](http://bigcountry.coop) - click on the Smart Hub icon. Download the free SmartHub app from

the App Store

or Google play and have access to pay your bill, view usage, request service and more!



### Ask about our partnerships with:



Call 811 at least 2 working days before you dig. Visit [www.texas811.org](http://www.texas811.org) for more information.

### Rural Development Assistance Available Through BCEC

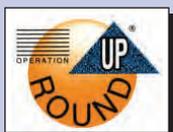
Big Country Electric Cooperative, Inc. has a limited amount of funds available for low-interest loans to qualified applicants to stimulate rural development. Applicant does not have to be a member of Big Country Electric Cooperative. Please contact Sarah McLen at [smclen@bigcountry.coop](mailto:smclen@bigcountry.coop) for details.



BCEC is an Equal Opportunity Lender

**Agricultural Tax Exemptions** - In order to claim an exemption from Texas sales and use taxes on electricity and other items used in agricultural and timber operations, you are required to provide us with a registration number on Texas Agriculture Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification Form 01-924. All water wells should be exempt if used for irrigation or watering livestock. The Texas Comptroller's Office issues the registration number and those wanting to claim the exemption must fill out an application. Registration numbers must be renewed every four years. Applicants can request a paper application to mail in by calling 1-800-252-5555 or download a copy from the comptroller's website, [www.getreadytexas.org](http://www.getreadytexas.org). The generic exemption certificate, Form 01-339, cannot be used to claim the agricultural exemption. Accounts that do not have the new required form on file will be subject to taxation.

**Commercial Tax Exemption Records** - A completed and signed exemption form is required for each commercial tax exempt account. Accounts that do not have current exemptions on file will be changed to taxable accounts. Any refunds for taxes must be claimed from the State of Texas. Thank you for your help.



For complete information about our Operation Round Up program or to opt out of participation, visit [bigcountry.coop](http://bigcountry.coop) and click on the Operation Round Up icon.

## Join Us at the Polls on November

Our co-op's number one priority is providing our consumer-members with safe, reliable and affordable electricity. But doing this job requires a lot more than stringing and maintaining power lines throughout our service territory. It requires political engagement. That may seem far removed from our core mission, but it's absolutely essential to serving you, our consumer-members.

That's why we're participating in a national program of America's electric cooperatives called Co-ops Vote.

Co-ops Vote encourages all co-op members to participate in national, state and local elections while educating political candidates and elected officials about the important role played by electric cooperatives in their communities.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the service organization representing the nation's electric co-ops, launched Co-ops Vote in 2016. Co-ops Vote started as a national non-partisan get-out-the-vote initiative that helped drive rural voter turnout in the 2016 presidential election.

Through this program, electric co-ops realized they had a unique advantage: As co-ops, the civic virtue of voting is in our DNA. We show concern for community—one of the seven cooperative principles—through participation in our democracy.

Co-ops have another advantage. Elected officials

and decision-making across the spectrum because of work the cooperative has put in engagement we all get we can make happen and in our communities.

Our participation in rural issues are supported isn't just for you.

You can commit more information.

provided If you're us a call of the upcoming help you the polls

## Is Your Neighbor Stealing From You?

We sure hope not but every year, Big Country Electric Cooperative copes with thieves—folks who deliberately tamper with their electrical meters to steal power. Not only is this practice extremely dangerous it's a serious crime that can result in hefty fines and jail time.

According to the Cooperative Research Network, power surging through a compromised meter can cause an electrical catastrophe. A short circuit could produce an arc flash bright enough to cause blindness and powerful enough to launch fragments of shrapnel-like red-hot debris. Serious injury or death from electrocution, explosion or fire often results from meter tampering. Only trained co-op personnel wearing protective clothing should work on meters.

Electricity theft has several victims.

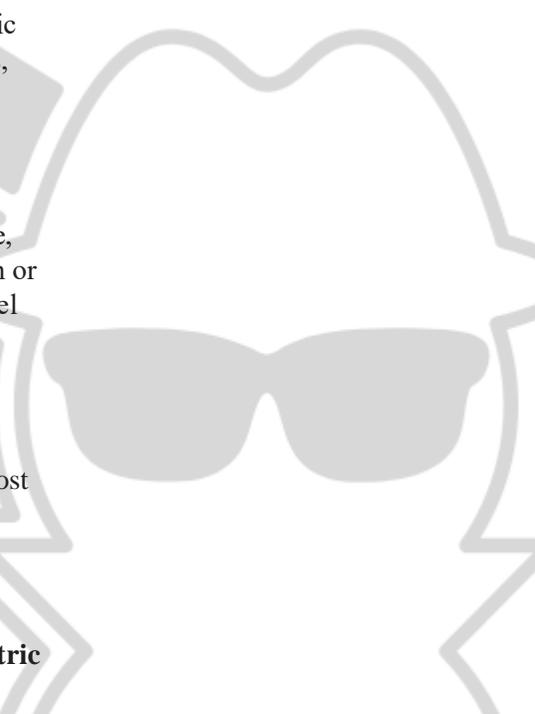
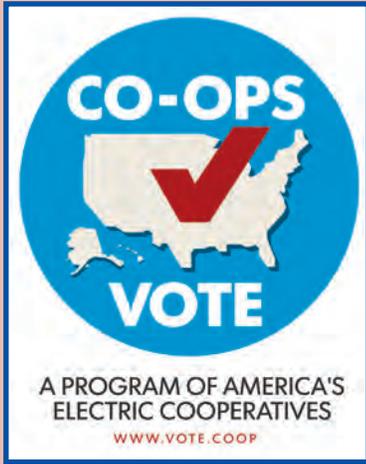
- The co-op loses revenue and expends resources to investigate tampering.
- Co-op members pay more for the power they use to cover the cost of the stolen electricity.
- And, most importantly, co-op personnel, members and the thief can be seriously injured when the meter's safety features are compromised.

Anyone witnessing or aware of someone tampering with an electrical meter should contact Big Country EC immediately.

6!

on-makers  
political  
trust us  
of the  
electric  
ve family  
to political  
ent. When  
involved,  
ake things  
olitically  
local  
ties.

Participation in Co-ops Vote helps to ensure that  
s remain part of the national discussion—and  
rted by our elected officials. But Co-ops Vote  
or co-ops. It's for co-op members just like you.  
n participate by registering to vote and  
ng to cast your ballot on November 6. Need  
ormation about voting in Texas? <https://www.gov/voting/where.html> is a great resource  
through the Texas Secretary of State office.  
interested in getting more involved, just give  
or visit [www.vote.coop](http://www.vote.coop) to learn more about  
ning elections and access online tools that can  
participate. We look forward to seeing you at  
on Election Day!



## Top Three Co-op Priorities for the Final Version of the Farm Bill

By Cathy Cash

The House and Senate each passed versions of the Farm Bill earlier this summer and are seeking to reach a compromise on the legislation in the fall.

NRECA is urging lawmakers on the Farm Bill conference committee, tasked with coming up with the final version of the bill, to consider electric co-ops' priorities.

"We are encouraging Congress to pass a final Farm Bill that supports several key policy issues for electric co-ops and their member-consumers in rural America," said NRECA CEO Jim Matheson.

Here are the top priorities for co-ops:

### • Remove Senate changes to Rural Electrification Act loan program

The House Farm Bill retains existing escrow accounts for co-op loan repayments and treatment of deposits into those accounts. The Senate-passed version eliminates the escrow or "cushion of credit" program that allows greater financial flexibility to co-ops and benefits the government by having funds pre-deposited toward loan payments.

"Cooperatives depend on the USDA's electric loan program and its escrow treatment to serve the most rural, hardest-to-serve areas of the country," said Matheson.

### • Promote true high-speed broadband for rural areas

The House version provides for significant financial investment in broadband development by electric co-ops and other providers in rural areas that have either no internet service or substandard service.

The Senate Farm Bill increases funds for rural broadband but provides only limited support for projects in areas with existing but inadequate service. "Deployment of rural broadband is essential to keeping rural communities competitive," said Matheson. "NRECA is working to ensure co-op member-consumers get high-speed internet service on par with the rest of the country."

### • Include funds for rural economic development and innovation

Co-ops use the Rural Economic Development Loan and Grant Program (REDLG) to finance economic development projects, such as refurbishing a library or buying emergency response vehicles. Both bills reauthorize and improve the program through 2021. NRECA supports the Senate provision, which also provides \$5 million for the program each year.

*Cathy Cash writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.*



thank you

# For Giving Back Through Your Participation in Operation Round Up!

For four years now, your Operation Round Up change contributions have helped families and service organizations locally. The Operation Round Up program has contributed more than \$200,000 to our local communities through organizations who provide charitable and educational services, as well as families with demonstrated financial need. Operation Round Up is supported by Big Country Electric Cooperative members whose electric bills are “Rounded Up” to the nearest dollar. The “Round Up” amount goes into the Operation Round Up fund for distribution in the counties we serve: Borden, Fisher, Garza, Haskell, Jones, Kent, Mitchell, Nolan, Scurry, Shackelford, Stonewall and Throckmorton. Every penny benefits folks right here at home.



Who can apply for help? Any local organization or program that provides vital community services. Food needs and food banks, family shelters, medical and health needs, rescue organizations, educational projects, child care programs and other special needs are just a few of the ways this fund helps organizations and families in our local communities. Various food banks and senior citizen centers, area volunteer fire departments, and a host of other community outreach programs have been recipients of these funds which extend the reach of helping hands in our communities. Families and individuals with demonstrated financial need are also eligible for assistance.

Applications are reviewed quarterly by the trust’s board of directors – your peers and neighbors, who volunteer their time, hearts and consideration to making decisions that will positively impact lives in our communities. At the September 2018 meeting of the Trust, the following organizations were awarded Operation Round Up grants:

Snyder Shares Free Store	\$1,500
Stamford Community Food Bank	\$1,500
Scurry County Ministerial Alliance Food Cupboard	\$1,500
Stonewall County Senior Citizens Center	\$1,500
Scurry County United Way	\$1,500
Scurry County Museum - Rural Arts Education Program	\$1,500
First Baptist Church, Roby - Community Playground	\$1,500
Brazos Bend Cowboy Church - Recovery Program	\$1,500
Stomping Grounds Coffee and Tea Company - Mentoring Program	\$1,050

The Operation Round Up board meets quarterly to review applications, and the next deadline is Thursday, November 29, 2018, at 5:00 p.m. To download an application, please visit [bigcountry.coop](http://bigcountry.coop) and click on Service Beyond Electricity. Please contact Sarah McLen at (325) 776-3803 or at [smclen@bigcountry.coop](mailto:smclen@bigcountry.coop) with any questions.

Big Country Electric Cooperative is proud to offer this program to share the cooperative spirit with our communities!

**ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES ARE**



COMMUNITY BORN  
COMMUNITY LED  
FOCUSED ON YOU

*No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.*  
-Aesop

**OCTOBER IS NATIONAL CO-OP MONTH**

[bigcountry.coop](http://bigcountry.coop)