

JIM MATHESON, CEO

The 2018 congressional elections are a few months away, but our work on advancing the political influence of America's electric cooperatives doesn't wait for elections. It's a full-time job.

We have a particularly great opportunity to have an impact on the 2018 elections through work we can all do now. This is the time to engage voters on the issues that matter to your communities and to meet the candidates running for office.

And there are *a lot* of new candidates.

As of this writing, 63 members of the U.S. House of Representatives have retired or have announced that they



community through participation in our democracy. Co-ops Vote is about more than voting—it's about engaging in the political life of your community. The political interests of a co-op are, by definition, the interests of its membership.

In Co-ops Vote, you have everything you need to start this essential conversation. Use it to get involved in our collective political mission. Bring your members and your neighbors together with the candidates who need to know who we are and what we stand for. Invite a member of Congress to lunch with the co-op board and employees.

“By participating in the Co-ops Vote program, you will continue to send a strong message to candidates at all levels that they must put rural America's concerns front and center to earn our vote.”

will not run for re-election. So, at a minimum, the House will have 63 new members when a new Congress takes office in January, and in today's volatile political environment, that number could be a lot higher.

Most advocacy groups will await the election results before they start establishing relationships with new members of Congress. In doing so, they will have missed an opportunity. Our political strength is based on the deep ties and trust that elected officials have with their electric cooperatives. By establishing relationships now with candidates running for office, we will be in a strong position well before Election Day.

Two years ago, NRECA launched the nonpartisan Co-ops Vote program. We recognized a unique advantage: As co-ops, the civic virtue of voting is in our DNA. We show concern for

Above all, make sure our elected leaders know we expect them to represent all the people we serve.

Everything we want to accomplish as co-ops involves political advocacy for our communities. Elected officials and decision-makers across the political spectrum trust us because of the work the electric cooperative family has put into political engagement. When we all get involved, we can make things happen politically and in our communities.

NRECA is poised to support your cooperative to ensure that rural issues remain part of the national discussion—and are supported by your elected officials. By participating in Co-ops Vote, you will continue to send a strong message to candidates at all levels that they must put rural America's concerns front and center to earn our vote. **RE**



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