



## Special session on horizon?

Legislative leaders gathered again in St. Paul last month to discuss prospects for a potential special session. Talks did not result in an agreement on session parameters, but Gov. Mark Dayton, House Speaker Kurt Daudt (R-Crown), and Senate Majority Leader Tom Bakk (DFL-Cook) announced after the two-hour meeting that they had made progress defining the need for a special session and that one could be

held later this month.

The 2016 session ended with three major pieces of legislation hanging in the balance: tax, bonding, and transportation finance bills. Dayton indicated early this summer what his parameters would be if he called a special session to address the tax bill he vetoed and to revisit a reconstituted version of the bonding bill that would include transportation finance components. During the press conference last month, Dayton indicated he had withdrawn his request that additional spending on various state programs be a condition for holding a special session.

As leaders continue to negotiate conditions for a special session, one of the main questions that remains is how additional transit funding would be secured in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Several other bills vetoed by the governor could also be resurrected if a special session is called in August. More should be known after the dust of the major political conventions settles and the Aug. 9 primary elections conclude.

### Emmer to headline Electric Sector Meeting

U.S. Congressman Tom Emmer (R-MN) will address the Cooperative Network Electric Sector Meeting, Aug. 9, 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., at the Best Western Kelly Inn in St. Cloud. The



Rep. Tom Emmer

meeting will take place in conjunction with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association Energy Issues Summit.

Emmer is serving his first term representing Minnesota's 6th Congressional District and is a member of the House Financial Services Committee and Rural Broadband Caucus. He was elected to the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2004, 2006, and 2008. After serving in the Minnesota Legislature, he ran for governor in 2010 and was narrowly defeated by current Gov. Mark Dayton.

Emmer will address issues including energy policy and rural broadband. A more detailed agenda will be distributed via email closer to the event.

The Electric Sector Meeting is no cost to Cooperative Network members and \$50 for nonmembers. Those planning to attend are should RSVP to Patrick Murray at [patrick.murray@cooperativenetwork.coop](mailto:patrick.murray@cooperativenetwork.coop) or (651) 280-4901.

### Co-op Builder Award nominations open

Cooperative Network is accepting nominations through Sept. 2, 2016, for its Cooperative Builder Award, the association's highest honor.

The Cooperative Builder Award recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions at the local, state, or national level to advance the cooperative philosophy and ideals. Nominees may be co-op members, employees, or supporters. Previous winners and current Cooperative Network directors are ineligible to receive the award.

Honorees will be celebrated at the Cooperative Network annual meeting banquet at the Holiday Inn and Convention Center in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, on Nov. 14.

Nomination forms and a list of past winners are online at [cooperativenetwork.coop](http://cooperativenetwork.coop). Contact Dawn Bausch, [dawn.bausch@cooperativenetwork.coop](mailto:dawn.bausch@cooperativenetwork.coop) or (608) 258-4390, with questions.

## State agencies set to reduce carbon footprint

Citing the State of Minnesota's continued commitment to address climate change, Lt. Gov. Tina Smith announced the creation of the Office of Enterprise Sustainability on July 20. The new office is designed to serve as a resource to state agencies as they implement sustainable initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and water usage, increase energy efficiency and recycling, and better coordinate state government efforts.

The Dayton-Smith Administration is directing state agencies to reduce their carbon footprints by doing such things as ensuring buildings are more energy efficient, increasing the State of Minnesota's reliance on renewable energies, choosing more fuel-efficient fleet vehicles, and making more informed purchasing decisions. The Office of Enterprise Security, a division of the Department of Administration, will also be tasked with identifying and sharing best management practices in environmentally responsible operations. State agencies will track and report their greenhouse gas emissions, assist in directing and managing sustainability initiatives, and leverage the expertise of sustainable practice leaders.

With 38,000 employees, the State of Minnesota is among the state's largest employers. It owns more than 29 million square feet of building space and leases 3.6 million square feet.

# Drone legislation signed into law

On July 15, President Obama signed legislation into law reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration through September 2017. Included in the bill, supported by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), was language to streamline the permitting process for drone use.

Also known as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), drones have proven helpful to electric cooperatives in performing such tasks as routine equipment maintenance, right-of-way inspections, and plotting responses to natural disasters.

Among the bill's provisions that benefit electric co-ops include allowing drones to fly beyond the line-of-sight and during nighttime hours to conduct duties aligning with federal, state or local regulations. The bill also directs the secretary of transportation to establish a process to prohibit or restrict the operation of drones in close proximity to fixed-site facilities. Among those identified in the bill as critical infrastructure are energy

production, transmission, and distribution facilities and equipment, oil refineries, and chemical facilities. Additionally, the bill increases civil penalties to \$20,000 for drone users who interfere with law enforcement or emergency response activities.

NRECA representatives have said electric cooperatives will be able to take advantage of drone technology due to the regulatory and legislative changes included in the bill. They also stated the bill will enable cooperatives to reduce risk for their employees, shorten outage times, and save money for their member-owners.

## Resolutions Committee meets

In the true spirit of the second cooperative principle, "democratic member control," Cooperative Network's Resolutions Committee met last month to discuss submissions from various co-op sectors. Proposed new resolutions and amendments to existing resolutions were submitted to Cooperative Network staff in advance of the meeting. Final action on the resolutions will take place at the Cooperative Network annual meeting, Nov. 14–16, at the Holiday Inn and Convention Center in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

## Stray voltage workshop offers new insights

Cooperative Network attended a stray voltage workshop on a farm near Goodhue, Minnesota, July 12. Presenters included an attorney who explained the use of Ohm's law equation—the voltage difference between two points, the electric current flowing between them, and the resistance of the path of the current—to calculate a cow's resistance. A veterinarian also outlined how stray voltage affects a dairy cow's health and production.

Cooperative Network's presence at the workshop dovetails with a key role the organization played in last year's development of the Minnesota Stray Voltage Guide with the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) and others. The guide outlines the steps farmers, licensed electrical contractors, and utilities can take to discover and resolve stray voltage concerns on livestock farms. Cooperative Network reviewed the contents of the guide and how it is to be used by dairy plant field personnel to help dairy farmers who suspect a voltage issue on their farm.

Cooperative Network, MREA, and the groups that developed the guide are committed to solving stray voltage concerns and to updating the guide based on sound science. Attending events like the one in Goodhue help determine if the science and thresholds used in the guide are up-to-date.

The stray voltage guide is online at [minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com](http://minnesotastrayvoltageguide.com).

## Stock photos added to member collection

About 750 photos have been added to Cooperative Network's stock photography collection for members. The entire collection now contains nearly 2,000 high-resolution photos and is provided as a Cooperative Network member benefit thanks to financial support from the CHS Foundation. The collection is at [cooperativenetwork.smugmug.com](http://cooperativenetwork.smugmug.com). All member co-op managers should have received an email July 5 with the password. Contact Jenny Bernhardt, [jenny.bernhardt@cooperativenetwork.coop](mailto:jenny.bernhardt@cooperativenetwork.coop) or (608) 258-4391, if you have trouble accessing the site.

## Job market

**Master Electrician**—Agralite Electric Cooperative seeks Minnesota-licensed electrician to join Member Services Team. Position requires excellent written and oral communication skills. Must have strong working knowledge of National Electrical Code. Class A Master license preferred, or Class A Journeyman's license with prerequisites under MN 3800.3520 Subpart 5. Must be familiar with commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural wiring methods and applicable codes, irrigation equipment, variable frequency drives, and stand-by generators. Must have familiarity working with utility systems and equipment, especially load management devices. Applicant

must understand utility distribution systems and have experience or training working with low-voltage utility equipment. Should be familiar with energy efficiency principles, basic plumbing principles, basic lighting principles, basic HVAC principles. Competitive wage, excellent benefits, challenging work environment. Co-op headquarters are in Benson, west-central Minnesota. Agralite is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Applications accepted until position filled. Send confidential resume with recent salary history and three professional references to: Yusef Orest, Agralite Electric Cooperative, 320 E Hwy 12, P.O. Box 228, Benson, MN 56215.

Cooperative Network

### Capsule

Prepared monthly to provide timely information on matters pertaining to Minnesota's non-profit, consumer-owned rural electric cooperatives.

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