Cooperative Network™

2027 Resolutions DRAFT

Preamble
Cooperative Network Organization and Purpose

- Cooperative Network is organized on a cooperative basis under Minnesota cooperative law, Chapter 308B, to advance the cooperative form of governance through the following primary activities:
    (1) Provide legislative and regulatory representation for member cooperatives primarily at the state capitols in Madison and Saint Paul, and in Washington, D.C. when requested by members;
    (2) Provide education to members on governance, financial, human resources, and other issues to ensure cooperative boards, management and staff have the tools to function in accordance with relevant federal and state laws and regulations and to provide education to youth to develop our future cooperative leaders;
    (3) Provide communications resources to member cooperatives to help ensure cooperative businesses have the tools to effectively communicate the benefits of operating as a member-owned cooperative with the general public, policy makers, the media, and their own member-owners; and
    (4) Provide environmental, technical, and other consulting services to member cooperatives as requested.
- Cooperative Network is a broad-based association of cooperative businesses from across the cooperative spectrum, including but not limited to electric and telecommunications utility; agricultural production and processing; farm supply; grain and fuel; livestock; farm credit; credit union; senior housing, education; health care; mutual insurance; grocery; consumer; transportation; and worker-owned cooperatives;
- Consistent with Cooperative Network's articles and bylaws, membership is open to all cooperatives operating in Minnesota and Wisconsin and those businesses operating under cooperative principles in the two states;
- Cooperative Network conducts its operations consistent with its federal tax filing status as a non-for-profit organization.
- Cooperative Network's Board of Directors exercises its policy-making and oversight authority and regularly engage in strategic and succession planning;
- Cooperative Network partners with the UWCC, the U.W. Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin Extension, the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resources Sciences, and University of Minnesota Extension -- along with other public and private college and university partners -- to advance the cooperative form of business;
- Cooperative Network operates as a non-partisan organization with a politically diverse board of directors and membership and is committed to the policy of not endorsing candidates for partisan elective office;

- Cooperative Network's Board of Directors and staff are committed to a high standard of ethics in the conduct of its government affairs program in Minnesota and Wisconsin;
- Cooperative Network maintains political action committee (PAC) and conduit accounts for the purposes of supporting lawmakers and candidates for state office who demonstrate a commitment to the cooperative form of governance and/or to issues of importance to cooperative businesses. Decisions on which state candidates to support are based on the analysis and decisions conducted by PAC committees annually appointed by the Cooperative Network board chair and approved by the Cooperative Network Board of Directors;
- Cooperative Network ensures its state PACs and conduits meet or exceed the reporting requirements of state law;
- Cooperative Network shall ensure, to the greatest extent possible, its PAC contributions are used to support candidates for state office who have demonstrated a history of support for cooperative businesses;
- Cooperative Network's Board of Directors is committed to hiring and retaining a highly qualified Executive Director to effectively carry out the policies adopted by the Cooperative Network Board of Directors and membership;
- Cooperative Network's government affairs staff members are hired by the Cooperative Network Executive Director with a view towards operating an effective, bi-partisan government affairs team that enjoys a strong reputation for honesty and effectiveness at the state capitols in Madison and Saint Paul and in Washington, D.C.;
- Cooperative Network's educational, communications, technical and administrative services staff are hired with a view towards providing such services to members in a professional, effective and efficient manner; and
- Cooperative Network is committed to advancing the cooperative form of business to the greatest extent possible within the limits imposed by available financial and staff resources.

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Shaded titles denote resolutions up for review this year.
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Agriculture Resolutions

(AG) Agriculture

AG 1.01 Capper-Volstead Act

Cooperative Network supports the Capper-Volstead Act which allows agricultural producers to act jointly through farmer owned and controlled cooperatives for the purpose of processing, handling, and marketing their products. We oppose any effort to weaken the right of farmers to form, join, and act together through agricultural cooperatives. (R/27)

AG 1.02 Cooperative Services Program

Cooperative Network remains committed to maintaining its support for the USDA's Cooperative Services (CS) Program. The Cooperative Services group has long played a crucial role in assisting agricultural cooperatives of all types by providing resources and technical assistance, conducting basic cooperative research, and providing educational materials.

Cooperative Network calls on the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to revitalize the program that is the only one of its kind in the Federal Government. (R/28)

AG 1.03 Agriculture Education and Rural Careers

Cooperative Network supports continuation of programs such as Minnesota Ag in the Classroom, Wisconsin Ag in the Classroom, FFA, 4-H, Associations of Agricultural Educators in both states and the Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council. Cooperative Network encourages inclusion of curriculum on cooperative businesses. Cooperative Network encourages state and school districts policies to award science credits, not just elective credits, for agricultural courses. Cooperative Network urges the development of training and education assistance programs for farmers and rural residents and continued funding for technical colleges, Extension, and other higher education. The goal of the programs should be to help individuals develop new skills and provide opportunities for those individuals to stay in rural communities. (R/29)

AG 1.04 Risk Management and Revenue Assurance

An adequate farm safety net is critical to the stability of the farm and rural economy. Cooperative Network supports improved risk management programs that work in all areas of the country in the instance of poor production conditions or very low commodity prices. Programs should be available to producers of all crops and livestock and eligibility for these programs should not be affected by operation size. (R/27)

AG 1.05 Farmland Assessment

Cooperative Network supports policies regarding the assessment of agricultural lands that reflect their current use value. Any new farmland valuation method should reflect the income-producing capability of the land based on the soil survey. Publicly owned farmland, woodland, and wetlands should be taxed at the same rate as private lands, and the revenue should revert to the local community. (R/27)

Agriculture Resolutions

AG 1.06 International Trade
It is important to expand foreign markets for Midwest agricultural products, which will also help the nation's trade balance. Cooperative Network urges cooperatives to actively pursue international trade.

Cooperative Network supports overseas food aid programs as well as direct funding on the state and federal level for market development programs of U.S. agricultural commodities. Cooperatives should be eligible for all such programs regardless of the cooperative's size or revenue level.

Cooperative Network supports World Trade Organization (WTO) policy designed to protect domestic producers from tariffs and non-tariff regulatory barriers and urges more effective enforcement and administration of existing WTO policy.

Cooperative Network supports federal legislation and trade policy that would require imported food products to meet production, processing, and quality standards equal to those required for our domestic products.

When negotiating trade agreements with other nations, Cooperative Network urges caution to ensure that intellectual property that gives U.S. producers and processors a competitive edge in production capability is not given away. (R/28)

AG 1.07 Meatpacker Concentration
Livestock producers rely on a competitive meatpacking marketplace to receive fair prices for their animals. However, recent mergers and acquisitions raise concerns about reduced competition and lower returns for producers.

Cooperative Network supports the current price reporting system to improve transparency in price discovery. We also support a cooperative exemption in any legislation restricting packer ownership of livestock. In addition, we urge USDA and state agriculture departments to maintain adequate meat inspection staff to meet industry needs. (R/29)

AG 1.08 Integrity of Organic Agriculture
Cooperative Network supports strong federal standards for organic production and opposes any revisions or interpretations which would weaken them or result in a lessening of consumer confidence in the "USDA ORGANIC" label and National Organic Program. We call on the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to resist any attempts to undermine the spirit and integrity of true organic production. In addition, USDA should ensure instances of competitive harm among certified operations are resolved and that organic certifying agents are properly qualified and that they act to protect the integrity of organic production. (R/27)

AG 1.09 State Agricultural Statistics and USDA Reports
Cooperative Network calls upon federal and state governments to maintain their commitment to provide funding and other resources necessary to collect and make available county agricultural statistics. (R/27)

Agriculture Resolutions

AG 1.10 Technology and Agriculture
Cooperative Network supports continuing and expanding research into new alternative agricultural methods and products including biotechnology that holds promise for improving agricultural efficiency and profitability. Reasonable protection for public and environmental safety, as well as privacy of individuals and particular technologies should be provided through uniform regulation developed by regulatory agencies. (R/28)

AG 1.11 Agricultural Stewardship
Cooperative Network urges that pollution controls—such as dust, odor, and nutrient regulations—be practical, workable, and protective of both agricultural productivity and community living standards. We support increased state and industry funding for research on environmental solutions and encourage flexible, performance-based approaches to compliance.

We further urge Congress to protect the interests of cooperatives and their members by ensuring Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act programs, including climate incentives, are cost-effective, science-based, and focused on significant environmental concerns. (R/29)

AG 1.12 Water Quality
Cooperative Network supports maintaining and improving the quality of the state's waters, including keeping our waters in our region and preventing them from being exported and diverted. We support cost-sharing programs that provide resources to farmers and cooperatives working to reduce nutrient runoff and soil erosion. We urge USDA NRCS to maintain a financial commitment to soil conservation compliance, and to develop and use standards that are compatible with and coordinated with universally accepted agricultural performance standards.

Cooperative Network will work with its members and other stakeholders to make sure that the rules are not harmful or unfair to agriculture when regulating groundwater and surface water withdrawals, usage, and reporting.

To the extent possible, we encourage development of reasonable and uniform standards and regulations, as well as enforcement and coordination between state agencies and the federal government. We believe state policy must recognize this is a local problem which should be resolved through education, cost-sharing and modified practices. (R/27)

AG 1.13 Animal Identification Systems
Cooperative Network supports the development of a national animal identification program. A national program is needed to meet food safety and animal health objectives. We support the restoration of USDA funding to implement the program. (R/27)

AG 1.14 Animal Well Being

Cooperative Network supports a vibrant and viable livestock sector and believes in maintaining consumer confidence in the country's food supply. Quality animal care is at the heart of livestock production and Cooperative Network supports ethical treatment by farmers, handlers, and processors. We support educational and evaluation programs and initiatives for livestock and poultry care standards that are based on sound veterinary science, sound information, economic feasibility, and best management practices. (R/28)

AG 1.15 Biotechnology

Cooperative Network believes that new biotechnology offers great potential for improving agricultural production efficiency and improving the environment. Cooperative Network urges the federal government and the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) to maintain rigid scientific standards for approval of new biotechnology products.

Cooperative Network opposes local and state restrictions on biotechnologies that have been approved at the federal level. We oppose trade barriers that restrict market access to food and agricultural commodities derived from new biotechnologies.

Cooperative Network supports a federal marketing standard for ingredients made with biotechnology. Any rules developed by USDA should be flexible and supportive of innovation while responsive to consumer demands and consistent with international trade obligations. (R/27)

AG 1.16 Dairy Industry Support

Cooperative Network supports efforts to identify incentives that can be used by dairy producers and dairy cooperatives to modernize their facilities. Cooperative Network supports appropriations by the legislature from the general fund and other sources to support the development and enhancement of new and existing educational programs for dairy farmers. (R/27)

AG 1.17 Inspection Programs for Dairy

Cooperative Network supports legislation that reduces costs for dairy farmers. Fees are paid for inspection of dairy farms and plants. Inspections of dairy farms and plants protect the consumer public, assure a safe supply of quality dairy products, and protect public health, and should be financed by public tax dollars. (R/28)

AG 1.18 Food Safety

A safe, high-quality food supply is in the public's best interests. Cooperative Network commends efforts that have made America's food among the safest in the world and supports the use of sound science as the basis for food safety standards.

We encourage agricultural groups to help the public understand risks in context and to avoid overreaction that could lead to legislation reducing food quality or quantity. With the growing use of imported ingredients and rising recalls of contaminated products, Cooperative Network supports strong federal oversight of imports. We also

support all efforts to keep imported livestock and meat products free from foreign diseases such as screw worm. (R/29)

AG 1.19 Nutrition Programs

Cooperative Network is committed to nutrition education programs at both the state and federal level. We support strengthening and expanding these programs through adequate funding and maintenance of quality standards. We favor continuation of the complementary relationship both within the agricultural community and between agriculture, the nutrition community, and USDA's Food and Nutrition Service.

The Commodity Donation Program should be maintained and strengthened as the primary commodity source for the feeding programs, for the needy, and for disaster assistance. USDA is urged to assure that free commodity donations to individuals are effectively managed by the states so the needy are served and commercial markets are not disrupted.

Cooperative Network supports federal nutrition assistance programs designed to supplement the diets of low-income families and children. We support expansion and extension of these programs, as well as administration of these programs in a manner that will ensure maximum nutritional value for the recipients. Cooperative Network opposes efforts by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service to reduce the fluid milk allocation for the Women's Infant's and Children's (WIC) Program.

Cooperative Network supports efforts to expand daily choices of dairy products in school nutrition programs and encourages the use of yogurt, cheese, and milk, including flavored milk. We oppose efforts to reduce the container size of dairy products in school nutrition programs. We also support the daily use of meat in school nutrition programs. (R/27)

AG 1.20 Integrity of Dairy Products

The Food and Drug Administration should vigorously enforce rules and regulations on dairy labeling. We oppose misleading advertising of non-dairy products. We oppose the use of "milk" on the labels of non-dairy products. We oppose the use of non-dairy protein sources in all dairy products.

Cooperative Network supports prominent labeling identifying the use of cheese substitutes or imitation cheese when used in the making of pizza. We support requirements that all pizzas contain a "cheese component" of at least 12 percent of their total weight, and that cheese is natural cheese.

Cooperative Network opposes any efforts by the European Union to establish Geographic Indicators in the labeling of food products.

To ensure food safety, Cooperative Network encourages producers to follow label instructions and withdrawal times for medications and participate in national milk quality assurance programs.

Cooperative Network supports creation of a drug screening program which establishes uniformity at an acceptable cost.

Cooperative Network opposes legislation allowing a dairy farmer to sell unpasteurized milk to consumers. (R/27)

AG 1.22 Dairy Development

Cooperative Network will continue working with members, legislators, agencies, and partners to support a strong and growing animal agriculture sector. To keep pace with production, processing capacity must expand.

We support efforts that encourage cooperatives to modernize and grow their processing facilities, including programs such as the Minnesota Dairy Growth Alliance, the DATCP Dairy Processor Grant Program, and the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance. Cooperative Network also supports increasing dairy exports to ensure continued growth and market opportunities for producers. (R/29)

AG 1.23 Dairy Self-Help Programs

Cooperative Network recognizes the success of Cooperatives Working Together (CWT) and the need to continue programs like CWT that improve dairy producers' farm income levels. Cooperative Network supports enabling dairy producers to work together to enhance their ability to promote voluntary and self-help programs. (R/27)

AG 1.24 Federal Dairy Policy

Cooperative Network recognizes that the U.S. dairy industry is a national industry. As such it is essential that we have a comprehensive, national dairy policy that addresses the needs of producers in all regions and does not discriminate against producers on the basis of location, type or size of dairy operations. (R/28)

AG 1.25 Marketing Order Program Regulation

Cooperative Network supports federal policies and programs to protect and enhance the ability of farmers to join together in cooperative efforts and urges the President and the Congress to take necessary action to advance a timelier federal milk marketing order amendment process.

Cooperative Network proposes a requirement that a preliminary economic impact analysis be produced and submitted into the hearing record before any marketing order is recommended to be altered or eliminated by federal government action. Cooperative Network supports allowing farmer cooperatives and their elected boards of directors to block vote on behalf of their farmer members as provided under existing law. (R/29)

AG 1.26 Alien Land Ownership

Wisconsin and Minnesota have long-standing laws limiting the purchase or ownership of land by non-resident individuals, or businesses not created under federal or state laws. Wisconsin law limits ownership by such "aliens" to no more than 640 acres each while Minnesota law prohibits such "aliens" from acquiring any interest in agricultural land.

Cooperative Network supports the existing alien land ownership prohibition in both Wisconsin and Minnesota law. Cooperative Network is aware that several cooperatives have international partners which are crucial to their success. Any policy related to foreign landownership should focus on limiting threats to national security. (R/27)

AG 1.27 Below Cost Selling/Unfair Sales Act

Cooperative Network urges the Minnesota Legislature to maintain the statutory prohibition against selling motor fuels below the RACK price and urges the Wisconsin Legislature to maintain the Unfair Sales Act. Without the protection of these laws, many motor fuel retailers would be threatened. Consumers would end up with less competition in the marketplace and eventually may be hurt by higher motor fuel prices. Cooperative Network urges the Legislatures and Administrations to appropriate funds sufficient to adequately enforce these laws. (R/27)

AG 1.28 Card Processing Fees and Cash Discounts

Card processing fees significantly erode retail margins on petroleum products as wholesale prices rise. This is in part due to the competitive nature of the business that keeps margins low. Cooperative Network is supportive of legislative efforts that allow convenience stores and other retail locations to offer cash discounts. (R/28)

AG 1.29 Agriculture Business Climate

Minnesota and Wisconsin agriculture has undergone significant change, and farmers have invested too much in cooperative facilities to risk losing them. Cooperative Network urges legislative and administrative actions that:

- Ensure a favorable economic, organizational, and regulatory climate for agriculture to remain competitive in regional and global markets.
- Stimulate livestock growth to better utilize grain production.
- Support both new production opportunities and traditional sectors; and
- Provide fair, equitable incentives for developing and expanding in-state energy sources. (R/29)

AG 1.30 Animal Health and Crop Protection Products in Food Production

Current scientific technology has made it possible to measure very minute quantities of additives used in food production, often well below any reasonable level of health risk. Cooperative Network urges food producers and allied professionals to follow approved labels in the administration and use of chemicals and drugs in food production. Dairy and livestock producers should work with their veterinarians to establish a valid Veterinary Client Patient Relationship (VCPR) to ensure continued confidence in meat and dairy products. Crop farmers should work with their local co-op agronomists regarding best management practices as it relates to pesticide-based approaches to

herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides. Cooperative Network urges state and federal agencies to take a logical and scientific approach based on proven health risks in establishing acceptable practices and restriction of product use. In addition, Cooperative Network opposes state labels that are more restrictive than federal labeling standards. (R/27)

AG 1.31 Point Source Phosphorus Regulations

Cooperative Network supports maintaining the current phosphorus standard at 1 mg/L. If stricter enforcement standards are considered, these standards must be based on sound science and take into consideration cost of compliance and dairy industry competitiveness. As nutrient trading programs are developed, cooperatives should be able to work with their members to comply with any nutrient trading program directed at reducing cumulative phosphorus discharges. (R/27)

AG 1.32 Guest Worker Reform

Cooperative Network supports the availability of a legal and stable year-round workforce. Rural America has a need for a stable, legal supply of workers to sustain and grow agricultural production and processing. Cooperative Network supports comprehensive federal immigration legislation that improves the stability of labor in rural America. Any immigration reform must include the following provisions:

- The availability to all agricultural producers, including cooperatives, without regard to the temporary, seasonal or year-round nature of the job; (◦ Section 3121(g) of title 26 of the US Code specifically excludes cooperative organizations under the definition of 'agricultural labor'.) Farmer-owned cooperatives are an extension of the farmer and as such should not be discriminated against in how this definition is applied to the H-2A program. Therefore H-2A workers should be allowed to work on all activities inclusive to a cooperative's day-to-day business.
- Revision of the Standard Occupational Codes (SOCs) to recognize the diversity of duties in agricultural jobs for H-2A workers. States should be aligned with each other on SOCs to decrease regulatory uncertainty and streamline the approval process.
- An allowance for immigrants currently employed to earn the right to work legally.
- An expansion of H-2A worker rules to allow for year-round dairy work.
- Provisions that place the responsibility for ultimate verification of the legal status of a worker with the government not the employers.
- prompt employer notification of any violations with detailed information on what matters need attention or correction.

Cooperative Network opposes immigration legislation that would require any of the following:

- applicants to return to their home countries in order to apply for legal status

- any sanctions against employers who unknowingly hire illegal immigrant workers or implications that would impede their ability to hire (R/27)

AG 1.33 Somatic Cell Counts (SCC)
Cooperative Network supports reducing the maximum threshold of allowable somatic cells in milk at the farm level from the current 750,000 cells/mL, down to 400,000 cells/mL. (R/27)

AG 1.34 Preservation of Agricultural Land
Cooperative Network urges farmers and others who support the continuation of production agriculture to be actively involved in local government decision making about zoning, comprehensive planning, annexation, and other issues impacting the future of farming. Municipal boundary disputes can result in inefficient delivery of public services, urban sprawl, and negative effects on agricultural land. We encourage more boundary agreements among municipalities. Adjustment of boundaries through mutual agreement or by third-party resolution is a likely improvement to the current one-sided situation.

State Legislatures have provided new tools to protect and enhance working agricultural lands, including the Green Acres Program in Minnesota and the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) and Agricultural Enterprise Areas (AEAs) in Wisconsin.

Cooperative Network encourages local government and landowners to work together to understand these tools and to implement the ones that best help stem the loss of valuable farming lands, while also balancing the need for housing and energy in their local areas.

In both the short—and long—run, a profitable agricultural sector will assure the preservation of farmland more than any government program or policy. (R/28)

AG 1.35 Interstate Winery and Spirits Shipments
Cooperative Network will work for easier distribution access and markets across state lines for the benefit of small wineries and spirit manufacturers. (R/28)

AG 1.36 Commodity Promotion Programs
Cooperative Network urges the continuance and support of all appropriations and programs for the promotion of Minnesota and Wisconsin agricultural products.

We support the continued election of members to these commodity promotion boards, as opposed to appointments. (R/27)

AG 1.37 Truth in Labeling
Cooperative Network supports efforts to clearly identify foods for consumers. As such, products should only be labeled as “milk”, “dairy”, or “ice cream” if they are made from the milk of a cow or other hooved mammals. Similarly, Cooperative Network believes products should only be labeled as “meat”, or similar terms, such as “burger”,

"sausage", or "bacon", if they come from animals and not if they are derived from plant-based or cell-based production. (R/28)

AG 1.38 Contaminated Materials

Cooperative Network supports assistance and compensation for remediation and disposal of chemicals and compounds (i.e., PFAS) contaminated material.

We oppose new government programs mandating monitoring or remediation of "forever chemicals" that impose retroactive liability on those using these chemicals and compounds in compliance with existing laws, rules, and regulations. This specifically includes retroactive liability on cooperatives found to have contaminated materials onsite. (R/27)

AG 1.39 Liquid Fuels, including Biofuels

Cooperative Network supports the development of economically viable biofuel markets — including ethanol, biodiesel, sustainable aviation fuel, and other emerging fuels. Cooperative Network urges that legislation and regulations include waivers, exclusions, or off-ramps to address potential product quality issues or supply constraints.

Cooperative Network supports continued research into alternative biomass sources for the production of ethanol, methane, and biodiesel.

Cooperative Network recognizes that meaningful carbon reduction will require a diverse mix of liquid fuels and electric energy solutions. Any future low-carbon fuel standard (LCFS) proposals must deliver direct benefits to farmers. (R/27)

AG 1.40 Cooperatives and Taxation

Cooperative Network supports continuation of the single-tax treatment of cooperatives and their patrons. Cooperative Network opposes state or federal legislation that would sunset or eliminate tax expenditures for not-for-profit or non-profit cooperatives.

Internal Revenue Code section 199A(g), also known as the Qualified Business Income Deduction, as it is beneficial to agricultural job creation and increased spending on agricultural infrastructure. This provision provides valuable tax benefits to farmers and their cooperatives and should be made permanent at the federal level. Cooperative Network also supports integrating this deduction into state tax policy. (R/27)

AG 1.41 Waters of the United States (WOTUS)

Cooperative Network supports implementation of rules based on a clear, consistent and reasonable definition of what constitutes waters of the United States under the Clean Water Act as well as limiting the application of the Clean Water Act to point sources as congress intended. (R/27)

AG 1.42 Dairy Marketing Principles

Cooperative Network supports a dairy industry that facilitates orderly marketing and trust between processors and farmers, with all parties operating in good faith and equal opportunities for all patrons. (R/27)

Agriculture Resolutions

AG 1.43 Dairy Verification Organizations
Cooperative Network supports all dairy farmers having the ability to choose and utilize USDA-certified organizations to verify milk weights, component tests and samples. These verification organizations may be allowed to provide additional services to farmers. (R/27)

AG 1.44 Bottle/Container Tax
Cooperative Network opposes a bottle/container tax, or recycling fee, on agricultural products. (R/28)

AG 1.45 H5N1/Avian Influenza in Dairy Cattle
Cooperative Network opposes mandatory testing for any disease not classified as a foreign animal disease for that species. State and federal cost-sharing should be provided to encourage voluntary testing, vaccination, and biosecurity measures. (R/28)

AG 1.46 Non-point Pollution Control
Government should use common-sense, science-based, practical approaches when implementing pollution control measures to abate water pollution attributable to agricultural sources and animal waste. Further, government must cost-share with farmers when requiring them to make costly pollution-abatement investments. Cooperative Network calls upon policymakers to make the appropriation of cost-share money a budget priority. (R/28)

AG Minnesota

AG 2.01 Agricultural Chemical Response and Reimbursement Account

Cooperative Network supports the continuation of the ACRRA program and believes that all eligible program users must pay their proportion of the fees that fund it. Cooperative Network supports efforts that will ensure that fees are paid on all eligible fertilizer and pesticide products used in the state as long as the process does not create an overly burdensome process for retailers. Cooperative Network supports an ACRRA program review including an increase in site cap to keep up with inflation. (R/27)

AG 2.03 Livestock Industry

Cooperative Network is concerned about changes in livestock production and processing. A strong livestock industry supports family farms, rural employment, and economic vitality. Laws protecting farmers from nuisance lawsuits and updates to the corporate farm law help Minnesota livestock producers compete nationally and internationally through their cooperatives.

We urge the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to explore financing solutions and improve access to capital, including expanding the Rural Finance Authority to support beginning farmers. Cost-sharing programs and grants, such as the Livestock Investment Grant Program, can help producers upgrade operations and strengthen the state's livestock economy.

Cooperative Network supports research and technology development by the University of Minnesota, educational programs to help producers understand livestock rules, and statewide standards for environmental permitting. We encourage continued improvements in livestock siting regulations, oppose moratoriums on facility construction, and support interagency "one-stop" centers to streamline the permitting process. (R/29)

AG 2.04 Petrofund

Cooperative Network commends the results of the Petrofund and urges that the program be made permanent. Minnesota's Petrofund is an excellent example of environmental legislation. It has created an incentive for owners of petroleum storage tanks to inspect tanks, monitor inventories to detect problems, and modernize infrastructure. Early action has minimized literally thousands of potential threats to groundwater. (R/27)

AG 2.05 Wetlands and Drainage

Cooperative Network urges a simplified, common-sense approach to wetland regulations. Wetland regulation should allow for proper drainage of wet farm areas within normal crop acres compliant with proven water conservation practices.

Cooperative Network opposes changes to state or federal drainage laws that will restrict the ability of producers to drain farmland for agricultural production purposes or restrict the ability to repair or improve existing drainage systems. Cooperative Network supports the current state wetland exemptions for agricultural land. (R/27)

AG 2.06 MPCA Citizens' Board

Cooperative Network opposes the re-creation of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Citizens' Board. (R/27)

AG Wisconsin

AG 3.01 Cabinet Form of Government
The citizen boards of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provide an invaluable mechanism for allowing input to the Departments. Rural Wisconsinites have repeatedly stated their belief by their support of numerous resolutions calling for the continuation of DATCP and DNR citizen boards. Cooperative Network goes on record in support of the continuation of DATCP and the DNR as agencies under the direction of part-time citizen boards. (R/28)

AG 3.03 Right to Farm
Cooperative Network supports Wisconsin Statute 823.08, the Right to Farm law. We will support and may act in defense of challenges to right to farm, including lawsuits against individual producers and broader based efforts that would undermine both principle and intent of the law. Cooperative Network supports the right of farmers to modernize and structure their farm businesses to respond to changes outside the scope of the livestock facility siting and expansion law. We oppose efforts to impose moratoriums on livestock siting expansions, or local ordinances that exceed state standards. (R/27)

AG 3.04 UW Board of Regents Agriculture Representative
Wisconsin has some of the nation's strongest agricultural research, education, and outreach programs. Colleges of agriculture at Madison, River Falls, Platteville, and UW-Extension have been central to making agriculture Wisconsin's largest and most diverse industry and have driven innovations in food, medicine, science, and other fields. Agriculture and allied food industries also account for nearly one-quarter of all Wisconsin jobs.

Cooperative Network encourages the governor to ensure that the UW Board of Regents always includes at least one well-qualified agricultural representative. (R/29)

AG 3.05 Fairs and Expositions
Cooperative Network supports all Fairs that have a strong agricultural and youth emphasis.

Cooperative Network supports a state coordinator for county and district fairs at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP).

Cooperative Network supports continued state funding for World Dairy Expo. (R/27)

AG 3.07 Animal Disease Control
The health of our livestock population directly affects the supply, quality and price of meat and milk products available to consumers. It is essential, therefore, that we maintain a continuing eradication and control and prevention effort on the major livestock diseases in order to protect human and animal health and to maintain a positive image of our products. This effort needs to be applied to not only those

diseases present in or known to the United States and Wisconsin, but also to others from which we are not immune, to ensure the continued strength of our markets and stability of livestock producers.

It is essential to put in place the necessary management and communications systems to anticipate major animal health emergencies in Wisconsin. Cooperative Network participates and supports the activities of the Wisconsin Incident Management Network (WIMN), an alliance of more than 40 cooperatives and public and private organizations involved with the dairy industry. WIMN participants will work with the emergency management systems in the state to help assure consumer confidence in our food and food production systems in the event of an animal health incident or emergency.

Cooperative Network supports increased research and improved testing programs emphasizing the use of the Wisconsin Veterinary School and the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. (R/29)

AG 3.08 U.W. Center for Dairy Research

The University of Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research (CDR) provides research in new dairy products and technologies. Wisconsin dairy producers are the source of three quarters of the annual budget through the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin and National Dairy Board/Dairy Management Inc. (DMI). Cooperative Network urges continued UW Madison support and involvement with CDR as the long-term health of the dairy industry benefits from their activities. (R/27)

AG 3.10 Producer Security

The Agriculture Producer Security (APS) fund provides an important safety net for Wisconsin producers.

Cooperative Network opposes mandatory assessments into the fund for dairy purchasers and processors that already meet required financial standards. We support a more cost-effective and efficient program that:

- Limits each industry's access to the fund to the balance it contributes;
- Eliminates the need for contractors who pay into the fund to also maintain private financial security;
- Provides exemptions for investments in processing plants; and
- Releases grain warehouse keepers from APS contributions if they qualify under federal standards. (R/29)

AG 3.11 High Capacity Wells

High-capacity wells are critical to Wisconsin agriculture. We support the ability of landowners to repair or replace existing high-capacity wells. Cooperative Network opposes proposals that would restrict the amount of groundwater that could be withdrawn. (R/27)

AG 3.12 Agricultural Chemical Cleanup Program

Cooperative Network supports the continuation of the agricultural chemical cleanup program (ACCP).

Cooperative Network supports changes leading to an approximate annual balance of program revenues and expenditures. (R/27)

AG 3.13 Non-point Pollution Control

As stated in AG 1.50, Cooperative Network believes government should use science-based, cost-effective approaches when requiring pollution control measures and cost-share with farmers when mandating costly pollution-abatement investments. The Wisconsin Agriculture Stewardship Initiative (WASI) and the UW-Madison Extension Discovery Farms should be used as resources in the development of legislation. (R/28)

(CU) Credit Union

CU 1.01 Taxation of Credit Unions

Credit unions are not-for-profit, member-owned, democratically controlled financial cooperatives. Additional taxes on cooperatives and credit unions are therefore a tax on individual members, who already pay income tax on dividends received.

Cooperative Network strongly opposes any proposals at the state or federal level that would erode the tax exemption afforded credit unions and cooperatives in general. (R/27)

CU 1.02 Credit Unions and Cooperative Movement

In the spirit of cooperation among cooperatives, Cooperative Network supports credit unions efforts to assist with the financing and development of new and existing cooperative ventures in communities across Minnesota and Wisconsin to the degree that their charters and bylaws allow. Cooperative Network urges credit unions to work closely with Cooperative Network on cooperative development and to assist in efforts to secure financing that will foster and nurture new and expanding cooperative enterprises. (R/27)

CU 1.03 National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund

The National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund (NCUSIF) is and can be challenged by crisis outside of the control of natural-person credit unions who capitalize the fund. Cooperative Network strongly opposes federal efforts to risk the strong and well-capitalized NCUSIF in an effort to bail out the insurance funds of banks, savings and loan institutions, and savings banks. In addition, excessive or unreasonable premium assessments which harm the strong capital position of natural-person credit unions will be opposed. Cooperative Network strongly supports efforts to capitalize this fund in a fashion that protects individual credit union contributors. Cooperative Network therefore resolves to work with the Minnesota Credit Union Network, Wisconsin Credit Union League and credit unions to encourage a strong NCUSIF and fight any merger of the deposit insurance funds or unfair assessments. (R/28)

CU 1.04 Dual Chartering

Dual chartering, the choice between a federal and state charter, has provided healthy competition between federal and state governments to appropriately control and respond to geographic and economic situations.

Credit unions' dual chartering system has benefited by the competitive interplay and balance of power between NCUA and state regulators to provide the best system of examination, supervision and regulation. The continuation of this competitive interplay and balance of power is essential to the future of the dual chartering system.

Minnesota and Wisconsin credit unions are largely state chartered. Cooperative Network believes this form of local control is responsible in part for the vitality of the credit union movement in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Cooperative Network supports the

dual chartering system and opposes any proposal which would supersede states' rights or usurp the power of state regulators. (R/29)

CU 1.05 Access to Credit Union Services

As cooperatives member-owned and led by a board democratically elected from the membership, credit unions' decisions are innately driven by their members' interests. Credit union members, by virtue of the direct control they exert through the organizational structure and operations of the credit union, should collectively have complete authority to decide which financial services should be offered and to whom.

State and federal laws and regulations should allow (or not restrict) credit unions to determine fields of membership, products, services, mergers, and acquisitions. Cooperative Network will assist the Minnesota Credit Union Network and the Wisconsin Credit Union League in pursuing law and policy changes that enable credit unions to provide more and better services to their members. (R/27)

CU 1.06 Promoting Financial Wellness, Literacy and Education

Cooperative Network believes that the promotion of financial wellness for all, including literacy, particularly among our youth, is critical to the future of Minnesota's and Wisconsin's economy.

Cooperative Network will work to maintain existing laws in Minnesota and Wisconsin that require financial education as a prerequisite to high school graduation. (R/27)

CU 1.07 Credit Unions Fighting Predatory Practices, Helping Low-Wealth Individuals

Cooperative Network strongly supports programs implemented by the Minnesota Credit Union Network, the Wisconsin Credit Union League and their member credit unions to develop products, services, and financial education that will combat predatory financial practices and meet the needs of consumers including low income persons, new Americans, and others who are not having their financial needs met by the financial services system. Cooperative Network also supports fair and reasonable legislation that seeks to protect credit union members from predatory lending practices. (R/28)

CU 1.08 Parity for State-Chartered Credit Unions

Cooperative Network supports efforts to achieve parity for state-chartered credit unions when federal credit unions gain powers and advantages not yet available at the state level. (R/29)

CU 1.09 Conversion of Credit Unions

In any sale, acquisition, merger or restructuring of a cooperative, members are entitled to transparency, honesty, disclosure of the terms of the proposed transaction and full involvement in the ultimate determination of the event. Therefore, Cooperative Network will oppose legislation or other efforts that remove protections for, reduce the transparency or disclosure requirements to, or seek to dilute the equity of credit union members in the process of conversion of a credit union to a different financial entity. (R/27)

CU 1.10 Credit Union Capital
Cooperative Network strongly supports legislation that improves credit unions' ability to raise capital to help them better serve businesses and members. (R/27)

CU 1.11 Credit Union Rural Districts
Cooperative Network supports the National Credit Union Administration's (NCUA) field of membership rules which allow for the establishment of rural districts by credit unions and thus provides rural communities with greater access to financial institutions. (R/28)

CU 1.12 Federal Regulation of Credit Unions
Cooperative Network opposes any effort to combine the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) with the four bank regulatory agencies. Credit union regulations should be kept separate from the for-profit banking world. (R/27)

CU 1.13 Member Business Loans
Credit unions provide vital funding to small businesses. Cooperative Network supports efforts to increase the amount that credit unions can loan to small businesses. (R/27)

CU Minnesota

CU 2.01 Regulation of Minnesota Credit Unions

Cooperative Network urges the Minnesota legislature and Minnesota Department of Commerce to recognize the unique regulatory structure necessary to oversee non-profit, member owned credit unions. Cooperative Network will work with the Minnesota Credit Union Network and the state's credit unions to maintain a regulatory climate that will ensure the highest level of service to credit union members. (R/29)

CU Wisconsin

CU 3.01 Regulation of Wisconsin Credit Unions

In 1996, the Wisconsin Legislature created the state Department of Financial Institutions (DFI) to oversee financial institutions serving Wisconsin consumers. Previously, Wisconsin credit unions were regulated by a separate and independent commissioner - a regulatory environment that helped make Wisconsin credit unions among the best in the country in terms of financial stability and consumer responsiveness. The Wisconsin Office of Credit Unions, a cabinet-level agency responsible for regulatory oversight of credit unions under Chapter 186, is now housed within DFI for administrative purposes.

Cooperative Network recognizes the importance of an independent, regulatory agency that understands the unique, cooperative structure and principles that govern the operation of credit unions. Therefore, we urge vigilance and extreme caution by the Legislature and the governor in overseeing the Office of Credit Unions. It is imperative that credit unions maintain separateness in policy-making decisions within DFI.

Cooperative Network further encourages the legislature to monitor the Department's operations to ensure credit unions, because of their unique structure as member-owned and controlled cooperatives, maintain the independent regulatory system and the Review Board process that has served Wisconsin credit union members and other financial institution customers well.

Cooperative Network, therefore, resolves to work with the Wisconsin Credit Union League and the state's credit unions to maintain a regulatory climate that will ensure the highest level of service to credit union members. (R/29)

(FC) Farm Credit System

FC 1.01 Farm Credit System

Agriculture in the United States is structurally diverse, complex, and consumer driven, with its success dependent upon vibrant rural communities and a broad base of marketing, processing and agriculturally related businesses that are located in rural areas.

Cooperative Network encourages the Farm Credit Administration, the Farm Credit System and Congress to work together to develop viable programs which will enable the System to continue serving agriculture and rural America in response to the structural, economic and demographic shifts that continue to occur in agriculture, including unfettered access to funding sources in the absence of fully functioning credit markets.

Furthermore, Cooperative Network believes that the Farm Credit System should be maintained as a strong and viable source of financial services for agriculture and rural America. We support maintaining the Farm Credit System under the jurisdiction of House and Senate agricultural committees and the retention of the Farm Credit Administration as a strong and independent regulator for the Farm Credit System.

Cooperative Network strongly opposes the imposition of user fees or new taxes on the Farm Credit System. System institutions now pay: the cost of their regulator, the Farm Credit Administration; and insurance premiums to the Farm Credit System Insurance Corporation. These costs are disproportionately high compared to those imposed by the government on other lenders. This inequity would be worsened if System institutions, and ultimately the cooperatives and producers who are their members, are required to pay an additional user fee or tax.

Cooperative Network supports federal legislation that will allow CoBank to finance any entity that meets the definition of an agricultural cooperative as provided under any state law.

Cooperative Network supports a flexible regulatory environment for providing mission-related investments, more effective use of System capital, and being responsive to customers' needs and market forces.

Agriculture remains a vital contributor to the U.S. economy and to the world's supply of food, fuel and fiber, and rural America remains an important contributor to our nation's culture, work ethic and way of life. Further, agriculture and rural America are changing and, correspondingly, their needs for financial services and capital, new investment, and infrastructure are changing.

The customer-owned Farm Credit System's mission is to support rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services, today and tomorrow. Farm Credit serves every part of agriculture from the smallest operations to the largest – and everything in between.

Farm Credit Resolutions

Because agriculture and rural communities – including members of Cooperative Network – need greater, more dependable access to competitive, flexible, financial resources in order to compete in a changing global economy, Cooperative Network will support regulatory and legislative changes that would provide agricultural producers, rural businesses, rural homeowners, and others in rural America with broader access to financing by the cooperative Farm Credit System. (R/28)

(GC) General Cooperative

GC 1.01 Cooperative Development Services

Cooperative Network has made it a priority issue to fill the gap in development assistance to new and established cooperatives. Cooperative Network urges cooperatives, cooperatively oriented organizations, and all other friends of co-ops to support Cooperative Development Services (CDS) and the Shared Capital Cooperative. Cooperative Network also urges state and local government officials, agencies, the University of Minnesota, the University of Wisconsin, the Cooperative Foundation, the Cooperative Development Foundation, Upper Midwest cooperative state councils and regional and local cooperatives to continue to lend their expertise, resources, and support to these cooperative endeavors. Further, we encourage these public, private, and non-profit organizations to support cooperative development by compiling data, conducting research, and disseminating information on the extent, role and value of cooperative enterprises in the Upper Midwest economy, and to support public policies that use cooperative strategies to improve the lives of all citizens of the region. Cooperative Network encourages the Minnesota Legislature to continue funding the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI). (R/29)

GC 1.02 Cooperative Education

Cooperative Network recognizes the value of cooperative education and encourages all public and private schools, including K-12 and post-secondary, to emphasize in their curricula the importance of cooperatives in the economy and the need for qualified cooperative personnel. We strongly urge all cooperatives to take an active role in cooperative education in their local schools. (R/27)

GC 1.03 Cooperative Form of Business

Cooperative Network has the responsibility to publicly and vigorously defend the cooperative form of business and the seven cooperative principles; Cooperative Network supports the right of member-owners to exercise democratic control of their cooperatives including the right to restructure or sell the cooperative. However, in any sale, acquisition, merger or restructuring of a cooperative, members are entitled to transparency, honesty, and full disclosure of the terms of the proposed transaction. The net worth of cooperatives belongs to the members and shall remain with them; there shall be no unjust enrichment of directors or senior management upon sale or conversion. Cooperative Network strongly believes that employee-owned enterprises organized as cooperatives should be an integral part of the state's employment and business mix. Cooperative Network also supports efforts to assist and educate both business owners and employees about the benefits of creation or conversion of their business to the cooperative form of business. (R/27)

GC 1.04 Cooperative Good Governance

Cooperative Network strongly recommends that all cooperative directors receive education and training in the following areas: a) board duties and responsibilities, including management relations; b) cooperative governance, structure, and financing; c) cooperative strategic planning; and d) membership communication and education. (R/28)

GC 1.05 Cooperative Finances and Equity Redemption

Adequate equity financing and equity redemption programs are critical to the success of cooperatives. Cooperative Network opposes any legislation requiring mandatory equity redemption. Cooperative Network should research opportunities that may provide cooperatives with adequate means of financing both debt and equity. This may include supporting a national strategy for purchasing co-op equities in a public pool or other such means to foster a business environment conducive to cooperative growth and prosperity. (R/29)

GC 1.06 Cooperatives' Right to Serve Members and Diversity in Size

Cooperative Network will oppose legislative or regulatory efforts to limit, curtail, prohibit or interfere with the efforts of its member cooperatives, credit unions and mutual insurers to furnish products and services that meet the needs and demands of their member-owners. (R/27)

GC 1.07 Cooperatives and Taxation

Cooperative Network supports continuation of the single-tax treatment of cooperatives and their patrons. Cooperative Network opposes state or federal legislation that would sunset or eliminate tax expenditures for not-for-profit or non-profit cooperatives. (R/28)

GC 1.08 Integrity of Segregated Funds

In recent years it has become increasingly more common that actions by both the governor and Legislature result in the diversion of money from state segregated funds to cover expenditures previously paid for through general fund revenue. This is a result of both looming general fund deficits and the aversion of state elected officials to balancing the state budget through tax and expenditure modifications sufficient to balance the general fund.

Cooperative Network believes that this practice of raiding segregated funds is inappropriate and should be curtailed. It damages the ability to cover functions or services that the segregated funds were created to provide. It also decreases our citizen's faith in the ability of their elected officials to protect funds derived from fee revenue from unintended uses. We call on the Governor and Legislature to stop diverting segregated fund revenue for uses that were never intended, and to address future general fund shortfalls through other budget actions. (R/28)

GC 1.09 International Cooperative Development

Cooperative Network urges the federal government to maintain or increase funding for the Cooperative Development Program and similar programs and agencies helping to promote cooperatives and the cooperative business model around the world. (R/29)

GC 1.10 Rural Development

Cooperative Network and its member cooperatives should continue their strong leadership in supporting and promoting activities to strengthen existing rural development programs and to promote new initiatives which expand the roles for cooperatives, including all Farm Credit institutions and rural broadband development. Rural cooperatives recognize and support the important contributions made by the

USDA and other state and federal programs in promoting the development of our rural communities. (R/27)

GC 1.11 Support for Universities and Cooperative Extension Commitment to Cooperatives

Cooperative Network supports state university systems, Extension, Cooperative Extension, as well as those departments that specialize in agriculture and other rural issues of importance in their efforts to:

- Improve the quality and relevance of research, education and development work by strongly linking these three related areas;
- Make cooperative research, education and development work more responsive to the co-op business community;
- Expand the capacity to conduct high quality research needed for co-op growth; and,
- Create a framework for building interstate linkages to other colleges and land grant institutions.

Cooperative Network supports Land-Grant research, Extension and other departmental goals and will work aggressively to promote a responsive system of research and Extension education to serve the needs of our citizens. We support current levels of base funding for research, Extension and Cooperative Extension programs and increasing investments in such programs as new needs and initiatives warrant. (R/27)

GC 1.12 Transportation

Attaining an efficient, well-maintained transportation network (highways, bridges, waterways, locks and dams, railroads, and pipelines) and other components of a strong, multi-faceted infrastructure is vital to the future of cooperatives. States should embrace the role of leaders in the research and development of forward-looking technologies, including autonomous technology, by passing laws and regulations that facilitate their research, development and implementation.

Cooperative Network supports the following issues concerning transportation infrastructure, including finance:

- The federal government must establish clear-cut policies and well-defined objectives concerning transportation. Failure to do so thus far has had enormous consequences for cooperatives and their member-owners.
- The motor fuel excise tax shall be dedicated solely to the state transportation fund and transportation needs. There must not be further diversion of highway tax revenues from the state or federal level.
- Cooperative Network opposes any new tax on those who refine or distribute motor fuel.
- There must be equitable charges among all users of waterways, including recreational and commercial users.

- There must be timely investment of federal, state and industry matching dollars to improve the aging Upper Mississippi River lock-and-dam infrastructure. Cooperative Network urges Congress to support appropriations to implement the Corp of Engineers proposal for maintaining the river system for transportation in balance with recreational and conservation needs. We oppose a lockage fee that would unfairly burden shippers on the northern parts of the Mississippi River system. (R/28)

GC 1.13 Captive Shippers and Rail Transportation

Cooperative Network supports all legislative, judicial, and administrative remedies that would ensure fair competition in the railroad industry, provide reasonable rates and adequate service. We encourage the routing of railroad tracks in a manner that causes the least disruption to the agricultural community and consumes the least amount of valuable agricultural land. We support staying as close to existing right of way and property lines as possible in upgrading railroad tracks. In particular, Cooperative Network believes the Surface Transportation Board (STB) must be held accountable by the president, needs to be given resources and authority, and must exercise that authority to protect shippers from unfair economic actions by the rail companies. Congress and the Administration should review STB policies, procedures, and outcomes to reform the organization and to streamline the process of challenging excessive rates and uncompetitive policies.

We also believe Congress should repeal the rail anti-trust exemption and along with the STB, require minimum service standards in order to meet the public interest of reliable and affordable rail service. (R/29)

GC 1.14 New Cooperative Laws

Cooperative Network supports updating statutes regulating cooperative governance to ensure that cooperatives have the flexibility to competitively operate in the current dynamic business environment and global economy. Updates to these statutes should work to keep Minnesota and Wisconsin as the leading cooperative states in the nation, while remaining true to cooperative principles. (R/27)

GC 1.15 Climate Legislation

Cooperative Network supports carbon sequestration and climate change programs that are voluntary.

Programs offering payments for practices or program opportunities must allow fields to qualify for all programs applicable for the farm. Current/Past practices should be eligible for program recognition and programs should allow for continued qualification when "acts of god" impact a programs participant.

Programs need to be stackable, account for what a farmer has done or is doing, and account for weather events. Programs should be equitable across regions and crops, and farmers/ranchers who already employ these practices are rewarded for early adoption, not left out of new programs.

With regard to utilities, we the members of Cooperative Network support taking steps in power supply planning and day-to-day administration to reduce carbon intensity. We support research and technology development for projects that can manage greenhouse gas emissions, as well as methods to economically reduce carbon emissions. In the federal and state policy arena, we encourage a thoughtful and balanced approach to continued reductions in carbon intensity, recognizing the need to develop policies which provide system reliability, regional fairness and minimal economic impacts on our members. (R/27)

GC 1.16 Commercial Motor Vehicle Hours of Service

Cooperative Network encourages safe operation of commercial motor vehicles and does not oppose reasonable trucking regulations. Cooperative Network opposes restrictions on hours of service at both the state and federal level unless such proposals are based on sound science and are justified economically to the cooperative community. However, any rules proposed by the Federal Highway Administration restricting the hours of service that a commercial motor vehicle driver can work must not lead to substantial compliance costs for cooperatives, while yielding only questionable benefits. (R/28)

GC 1.17 Environmental Stewardship

Cooperative Network is supportive of efforts to protect the environment and public health and welfare, providing that the laws and standards are reasonable; equitable; achievable; economically feasible; and are based on sound, peer-reviewed science.

Cooperative Network urges those administrative agencies responsible for development of pollution abatement regulations to carefully consider the costs and benefits of such regulations on all segments of the economy. We support continued coordination between various governmental agencies which administer rules.

Cooperative Network also supports conservation programs and best management practices that are regionally focused and based on scientifically and economically sound practices, recognizing the unique nature of farmer cooperatives and production agriculture.

Cooperative Network will continue to give top priority to environmental compliance programs and urge all supply co-ops to actively participate in and support them. The goal will be a cleaner environment. (R/29)

GC 1.18 Government Agencies Supporting Cooperatives

Cooperative Network supports funding for cooperative economic research, loans, grants, and information services at the state and federal level. We support the continuation of USDA's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) traditional lending authority, and grants that reduce the cost of energy for rural consumers. (R/27)

GC 1.19 Stray Voltage

Dairy producers and their power suppliers depend on each other. Power suppliers need financially healthy producers. Dairy farmers need safe, reliable, reasonably priced electric power. All power suppliers and their customers will benefit from the continued cooperation to resolve power quality issues.

Those states which have established statutory procedures for on-farm testing and educational efforts for resolving stray voltage complaints have seen an improvement in complaint resolution in a timely fashion, and a reduction in stray voltage lawsuits.

Therefore, Cooperative Network supports statutory standards and procedures, consistent with the National Electrical Code, for addressing complaints in a timely fashion. (R/27)

GC 1.20 Tuition Reciprocity

Cooperative Network believes that the Tuition Reciprocity Agreement between Minnesota and Wisconsin gives students of both states better access to an affordable college education. Cooperative Network encourages legislators of both states to keep the Minnesota-Wisconsin Tuition Reciprocity Agreement in place. (R/28)

GC 1.21 Tax Expenditures

A tax expenditure is money the government exempts from taxation. An example of a tax expenditure is deducting your mortgage interest from your taxable income. Many different non-profits and not-for-profit co-ops such as credit unions constitute a tax expenditure because they do not pay state corporate income taxes.

Cooperative Network opposes efforts that could result in ending tax expenditures for non-profit and not-for-profit cooperatives. Co-op member-owners could be negatively impacted because tax benefits to eligible co-ops are passed on directly to their members in the form of cheaper services or lower fees. (R/27)

GC 1.22 Clean Air and Water Regulations

Cooperative Network urges Congress, state legislatures, and federal and state agencies to protect the interests of cooperatives and their members by ensuring that clean air and water standards and programs are cost-effective, reflect voluntary best management practices (BMPs) and are driven by scientific-based outcomes. (R/27)

GC 1.23 Cellphone Use While Driving

Cooperative Network supports state legislation limiting use of cellphones to hands-free only while driving. (R/27)

GC 1.24 Pension Premiums

Cooperative Network supports legislation to prevent the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) from overcharging premiums to "Cooperative and Small Employer Charity" defined pension plans. Premiums paid to the PBGC should be in line with actual loss experience. (R/27)

GC 1.25 Animal Health and Emergency Preparedness

Cooperative Network supports continued prevention, control, and eradication of major livestock diseases to protect animal and human health, ensure a safe and stable food supply, and maintain consumer confidence. We support development of management and communication systems to anticipate and respond to animal health emergencies, including coordination with state emergency management systems. We further support increased research and improved testing programs with state veterinary schools and veterinary diagnostic laboratories. (R/29)

GC Minnesota

GC 2.01 Energy Assistance for Propane and Heating Oil Users

Cooperative Network realizes that there are great numbers of Minnesota residents that are in need of energy assistance. Though Cooperative Network fully supports Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding, because of rapidly rising energy and delivery costs for dealers, Cooperative Network feels that changes must be made to the program's delivery. Cooperative Network encourages policymakers to create programs that educate recipients and encourage pre-arranged payment solutions for the portion of the recipient's energy needs that have not been historically covered by LIHEAP. Additionally, Cooperative Network asks policymakers and the Minnesota Department of Commerce to reevaluate "crisis funding" to make it reflective of higher costs of delivery and the minimum delivery policies that have been enacted by our dealers. Cooperative Network supports a policy of non-discrimination with regards to delivered fuels and believes that all customers who have the ability to pay should be served regardless of the source of payment.

Furthermore, Cooperative Network opposes the extension of the state's "Cold Weather Shut-off Rule" to the delivered fuels industry and the collection of proprietary data or other internal business information from fuel suppliers. We firmly believe that, should the "Cold Weather Shut-off Rule" be extended to the delivered fuels industry, there would be a great number of Minnesota residents that would be without a heating fuels supplier because of the resulting shift of the financial burden onto heating fuel suppliers. (R/28)

GC 2.02 Truck Weight Exemptions

Cooperative Network understands the need for local government to protect its highway infrastructure by placing spring load restrictions on local roads in rural Minnesota, but sometimes these restrictions add to the cost of living and doing business in rural Minnesota. With the transport of home heating fuel and propane, co-ops ensure that homes have a reliable source of heat. Under current law, highway maintenance vehicles, mobile library units, school buses, garbage haulers, emergency public utility vehicles and milk trucks are exempt from spring load restrictions. We believe that propane, fertilizer, feed, grain, and fuel oil hauler vehicles should be exempt from spring load restrictions and ask that they be included as exempt vehicles under Minnesota law 169.87. (R/29)

GC Wisconsin

GC 3.01 Cooperative Education

Cooperative Network believes education pertaining to cooperative forms of ownership should be available in the UW System and K-12 system and recognizes the value of the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives (UWCC). Wisconsin should continue to be a leader in furnishing the best in cooperative research, teaching, and extension. (R/27)

GC 3.02 Federated Youth Foundation

The Federated Youth Foundation (FYF), Inc., is a tax exempt, 501(c)(3) foundation, established as a vehicle for receiving donations, contributions, and gifts, including those resulting from unclaimed funds held by cooperatives and for using those funds for scholarships and charitable purposes. Cooperative Network strongly encourages all member organizations and others to join the FYF. (R/27)

GC 3.03 Good Government and Clean Politics

Wisconsin needs the public's trust and its long tradition of good government and clean politics. Cooperative Network and Wisconsin cooperatives therefore call for:

- Full disclosure of the names of all organizations and individuals making campaign donations, and strong statutory penalties for any willful concealment or nondisclosure;

- A prohibition on fundraising by state legislators during scheduled floor periods of the Legislature; and

- All such other steps as needed to make Wisconsin a model for good government. (R/28)

GC 3.04 Higher Education Support

We call on the Legislature to continue its commitment to higher education and ensure that important higher education initiatives aimed at strengthening Wisconsin and its economy receive sufficient financial support for the long term. (R/29)

GC 3.05 Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs)

Cooperative Network supports Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) which provide a variety of services for the state's school districts. Cost savings realized by districts are reinvested into priority programs directly benefiting students. CESAs provide valuable purchasing programs, and volume discounts for services and equipment that benefit schools in a number of ways. (R/27)

(HC) Health Care

HC 1.01 Health Insurance
Cooperative Network supports cost-based health care and insurance systems that include strong incentives for efficient, organized health care delivery. We support the promotion of primary care and prevention of illness. We support efforts to affect cost management while maintaining access to high quality local health care to cooperatives and their member owners. (R/27)

HC 1.02 Medicare Discrimination
The federal Medicare reimbursement system currently pays most Midwestern and rural health care facilities less than their costs and pays most urban health care facilities more than their costs for providing the same services. These payment differences are threatening the economic viability of these important community health care institutions.

Therefore, Cooperative Network urges Congress to stop this harmful discrimination against Midwestern and rural health care facilities and to reimburse similar health care services at the same level of federal support regardless of where the service is provided.

Whether individuals are insured through traditional Medicare or Medicare Advantage Plans, health care needs viable payments through both insurance products. (R/28)

HC 1.03 Cooperative Health Maintenance Organizations
Cooperative Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) represent a viable means for citizens to obtain high quality, affordable health care on a prepaid basis. These HMOs serve their members as non-profit consumer cooperatives.

Cooperative Network supports the formation of a legislative environment which is conducive to the successful operation of cooperative HMOs, which give member-consumers an active voice in the administrative decisions of the HMO through direct election of officers. (R/29)

HC 1.04 Closed Panel HMOs
Cooperative Network recognizes the need for managed care plans to contract with healthcare providers that meet the plan's quality standards and conform to the cost containment strategies adopted by the plan. As long as resulting managed care plan networks allow for consumers in both urban and rural areas to have access to care that is available in their local community, HMOs should be permitted to contract with all types of health care providers on a "closed panel" basis. The underlying premise is that the bargaining power of HMOs to contract with only certain providers promotes competition, lowers costs, and encourages prevention-oriented care. If all providers could join an HMO, incentives for efficient providers to offer competitive rates would disappear and the ability of HMOs to control quality would be reduced. Cooperative Network supports all legislative efforts to keep competitive, closed panel provisions intact. (R/27)

HC 1.05 Mandated Benefits

Cooperative Network supports the right of consumer-sponsored HMOs to determine the benefit plans they wish to offer their members. Expansion of benefits through government mandate interferes with market forces and aggravates a competitive inequity between state-regulated HMOs and the federally regulated self-insured plans. Furthermore, mandated benefits add considerably to the cost of health insurance for all consumers, even those that do not utilize mandated benefits.

We encourage the creation of benefit packages that are comprehensive in scope (hospital, ambulatory and home health services) with reasonable benefit limits to allow for cost containment and reasonable pricing. Benefits should be designed to address the overall health care needs of patients and not the needs or convenience of providers, payers, or special interest groups. Technology assessment should be based on clear scientific guidelines to ensure that safe and efficacious drugs and procedures are appropriately added to benefit packages. Cost-sharing arrangements should allow for flexibility. (R/27)

HC 1.06 Tax Status of Consumer Cooperative HMOs

Cooperative HMOs operate on a non-profit basis. Each of these HMOs has utilized its income tax-exempt status to serve a pioneering role and broad purpose within its community. Cooperative Network urges the restoration of the income tax exemption for non-profit cooperative HMOs. (R/28)

HC 1.07 Taxation of Health Insurance Premiums

Cooperative Network opposes any direct or indirect taxation assessments as a tax on essential health care services required by the citizenry. Cooperative Network further urges Congress to act immediately to make health insurance premiums paid by self-employed individuals fully deductible. (R/29)

HC 1.08 Rural Health Cooperation

Cooperative Network supports rural hospitals, physicians and other health care providers acting together to promote the preservation and further development of a coordinated system of rural health care. Rural health care systems provide both quality and efficient care in settings that best meet the needs of rural communities. Cooperative Network supports rural health care and rural communities in both private and public sectors, inclusive of closer working relationships between the health care sector and governmental public health. Cooperative Network supports uniform enforcement of anti-trust laws for a level playing field between rural health care providers and insurers. (R/27)

HC 1.09 Rural Health Care Professional Shortages

Cooperative Network supports innovative state initiatives to train and attract health care providers to rural areas. We support expanded broadband infrastructure in rural areas to enable the reliable provision of telemedicine. We support programs expanding access to mental health services in rural areas. Due to the aging population of our two states, Cooperative Network urges state and federal governments to address

forecasted healthcare shortages and forecasted increases in demand. Cooperative Network supports Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) designation that retains recruitment incentives for rural health care organizations. (R/27)

HC 1.10 Accessing Capital for Rural Health

As rural hospitals are already on average substantially older than the national average, more limited capital access is quickly becoming a critical barrier to maintaining a rural health network. Cooperative Network will promote programs for rural hospitals' physical plant improvements and equipment acquisition to ensure rural residents have access to modern medical technology. (R/28)

HC 1.11 Encouraging Cooperation and Collaboration in Health Care

Although there are many competing interests in the health care arena today, Cooperative Network lauds the many Minnesota and Wisconsin health care providers that have worked together to eliminate health care errors and improve health care delivery in our states. For example, consumer owned and operated HMOs have a proven track record of managing and containing health care cost increases.

Cooperative Network urges incorporation of successful cooperative models in health care reform efforts at both state and federal levels. Cooperative Network further supports health care reform initiatives that create incentives for employers, individuals, providers, and insurers to participate in reform efforts as partners. (R/29)

HC 1.12 Cooperative Health Care

Cooperative Network will seek to establish a legislative and regulatory environment that allows the formation and successful operation of health care purchasing alliances, health care cooperatives, and association health plans. Cooperative Network commits to supporting new health care cooperatives by providing cooperative governance and other expertise. (R/27)

HC 1.13 BadgerCare and MinnesotaCare Eligibility for Ag Producers

Wisconsin's BadgerCare program and Minnesota's MinnesotaCare program and the ACA were created to provide lower income working families with stable and affordable health insurance coverage. The intent was to prevent sudden illnesses or injuries from driving families out of work and into poverty. Eligibility criteria for these programs require that farm equipment depreciation be calculated as income, making it extremely difficult for even the lowest income producers to qualify for the program. Cooperative Network supports efforts to change these eligibility requirements to remove depreciation from the eligibility equation. (R/27)

HC 1.14 Health Care Reform

Cooperative Network understands health care reform is one of the most complex challenges facing our state and nation today. It is also one of the most critical issues to members across cooperative sectors, especially farmers, who struggle year after year with rising health expenditures. Just as there is no single cause to rising health care costs, there is no single solution. Comprehensive reform ideas, such as a single-payer health system, are extremely controversial. Cooperative Network urges the Minnesota and

Wisconsin Legislatures and the U.S. Congress to support and encourage, through legislation and appropriations, thoughtful and innovative ideas for improving our health care system. We support:

- Ideas that empower small groups and individuals to negotiate better cost and coverage options for health insurance.
- Cost containment measures to address fraud, waste and costly duplication.
- Efforts to get consumers more involved in health care decision-making through improved education and data dissemination programs.
- Programs that emphasize prevention and intervention to help consumers manage illnesses, prevent injury and save money.
- Efforts to provide access to more affordable medications including group prescription purchasing pools and medication importation, as well as increased price transparency and efforts to reduce overall medication costs.
- Collaborative efforts to prevent medical errors and promote quality in the health care arena.
- Initiatives that will improve access and delivery in rural and underserved areas.
- Efforts to decrease the numbers of uninsured individuals in Minnesota and Wisconsin to lessen costs ultimately passed on to health insurance consumers.
- An adequate safety net for both the lowest income individuals and those who have been priced out of the private health insurance market.
- Adequate reimbursement rates for Medicare and Medicaid to ensure that those costs are not shifted to consumers.
- Efforts to remove inefficiencies in the health care system while maintaining and growing local, rural access.
- Equity in the federal reimbursement rates for rural providers.
- Pooling efforts through voluntary purchasing alliances; and
- Cooperation between government and health insurers and providers regarding public health measures.
- Cooperative Network would oppose any legislation that would suboptimize cooperatives or farmers, or that would jeopardize farmers' access to pre-existing condition coverage or other consumer protections. (R/28)

HC 1.15 Maternal Care Services

Cooperative Network acknowledges the vital nature of providing rural maternal and obstetrical care. Cooperative Network supports legislative efforts to preserve and strengthen the availability of rural maternal and obstetrical care. (R/28)

(HO) Housing

HO 1.01 Affordable Housing
Cooperative Network encourages local, county, and statewide governments to include cooperative housing in the master plans of their communities and their strategies for promoting economic growth in their respective regions. Communities are also encouraged to investigate the advantages of limited equity cooperative housing for families as a way to ensure affordable home ownership opportunities into the future.

Cooperative Network will also assist in the development of cooperative housing projects for senior citizens by working with Cooperative Development Services (CDS), local communities and other stakeholders interested in improving housing options for seniors. We urge government agencies and elected officials at the local, state, and federal levels to assist in these efforts. (R/29)

HO 1.02 Rural and Urban Vitality
Cooperative Network encourages local, county, and statewide governments to include senior cooperative housing in the master plans of their communities and their strategies for promoting economic growth in their respective regions. Educational programs for seniors are encouraged to include a careful study and review of this relatively new and very appropriate alternative for housing for our rapidly increasing senior population. (R/27)

HO 1.03 Insurance for Senior Housing Cooperatives
Member-owners living in senior cooperative housing are enjoying an independent, social, and secure lifestyle. Senior housing cooperatives are included in the same insurance group as condominiums and town homes. Maintenance and safety records demonstrate that co-op member-owners are easier on wear and tear in the facility, thus lowering the maintenance costs and reducing loss control from an insurance perspective.

Cooperative Network urges the insurance industry to develop a distinct category for senior housing cooperatives that recognizes where these facilities are less risky for insurance purposes and distinguishes them from condominiums and town homes. (R/27)

HO 1.04 U.S. Housing and Urban Development Offices
Senior housing cooperatives located throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest enjoy a unique relationship with the U.S. Housing & Urban Development (HUD) multi-family offices in Minneapolis and Milwaukee. With just over 130 senior housing cooperatives located throughout the United States, 92 are located in Minnesota and Wisconsin alone. The majority of these senior housing cooperatives have their master mortgages financed through HUD and are required to have their annual budgets approved by HUD. In addition to the work HUD's multi-family office in Minneapolis performs for senior housing cooperatives, the office is one of the largest loan producers in the country and features specialized expertise in the processing of affordable housing loans, as well as housing related Native American projects.

The future of existing and proposed senior housing cooperatives in Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest was placed in jeopardy when HUD announced in May of 2013 that they would be closing the Minneapolis and Milwaukee multi-family housing offices in order to streamline services they provide to various housing sectors throughout the country. However, due to the advocacy efforts of Cooperative Network and other stakeholders, HUD opted not to close the offices. In addition, HUD centralized the origination of senior cooperative housing mortgages under Section 213 in the Minneapolis multi-family office.

Cooperative Network continues to support the HUD centralization of the origination of senior housing mortgages under Section 213 in the Minneapolis multi-family office and HUD servicing of senior cooperative housing mortgages for the benefit of senior housing cooperatives. In addition, this benefits the local expertise provided to senior housing cooperatives by the practitioners in the development, architecture, legal and lending fields. (R/29)

HO 1.05 Manufactured Home Park Conversion to Cooperatives

Manufactured home parks are a critical source of affordable housing across the state. There are over 1,000 manufactured home parks in Minnesota and Wisconsin providing homes for approximately 125,000 people who have limited access to other housing options (predominantly working poor, limited income, and seniors). This sector of housing exists with virtually no public subsidy; yet the loss of this housing could result in the need for significant public subsidy to replace these units. If a manufactured home park is closed, it would be extremely difficult to rebuild the same number of affordable homes. New Hampshire passed legislation authorizing manufactured home park residents the first right to purchase their homes as a cooperative if the property was to be sold. Since the passage of this New Hampshire law, the benefits are distinct: the quality of life is clearly improved for the new owners and the surrounding communities: the parks are better maintained, there is increased financial security, the safety is improved, and there is the ability to have equity in a home. Since the early 1980's, in New Hampshire, dozens of manufactured home parks have been converted into cooperatives and not one has defaulted on their loans.

Minnesota currently has a law that permits residents the first right of refusal when a park is to be closed for change of use (usually to commercial development). Although this law has been on the books since 1987, it has never been exercised (usually due to conversion from residential to commercial purposes; or conventional lenders are reluctant to provide residential conversion financing). While current law gives some protection to residents, it does not go far enough to give residents the opportunity of purchasing the park to convert it to cooperative ownership.

Cooperative Network supports the conversion of manufactured home parks into cooperatively owned and operated parks. This could be facilitated by following the New Hampshire example and amending current Minnesota law to permit residents to collectively match any offer for sale. (R/28)

HO 1.06 Financing of Cooperative Conversions of Manufactured Home Parks

One issue that has hampered the cooperative conversion of manufactured home parks has been the inability of residents to access appropriate financing. In general, commercial banks are reluctant to lend on this type of property. The conversion into a cooperatively owned park adds another layer of complexity.

Following on the success of the Minnesota legislature's $10 million cooperative acquisition fund created in 2023, and Minnesota Housing's Cooperative acquisition loan product, Cooperative Network supports the allocation of additional state resources to guarantee long-term, low interest financing specifically for the purpose of converting manufactured home parks into cooperatively owned parks. (R/29)

HO Minnesota

HO 2.03 Senior Housing Cooperative Independence

Senior housing cooperatives provide an independent, social, and secure lifestyle for its member-owners. The cooperatives are directed and governed by a board of directors elected from and by the member-owners. Senior housing cooperatives enjoy an independent business status and, as with all cooperatives, are periodically required to file updates with the Minnesota Secretary of State. Senior housing cooperatives are opposed to any form of additional registration or regulation – voluntary or mandatory – especially if it has the potential of jeopardizing or in any way reducing the independence of these cooperative businesses or their members.

Cooperative Network opposes any legislation or regulatory efforts that attempt to recognize cooperatives in such a way that might provide impetus, whether or not intentional, for future registration or regulation. (R/27)

HO 2.05 Researching Development of Separate Housing Co-op Statute

Minnesota housing cooperatives are governed by both the Minnesota Cooperative Law, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 308A, and the Minnesota Common Interest Ownership Act, Minnesota Statutes Chapter 515B. As a unique form of cooperative ownership, there is a growing need to adopt legal provisions that apply specifically to cooperative housing and to have them, where possible, in one place to read. Therefore, the staff of Cooperative Network, is requested to continue the process of analyzing whether specific legal provisions related to Minnesota housing cooperatives should be incorporated into a separate section of Minnesota Statutes Chapter 308A or whether a new Minnesota Statutes Chapter 308C should be created. Furthermore, where possible, staff should seek grants from outside grantors to help conduct this research. (R/28)

HO 2.06 Sales Tax Exemption

Prior to the spring of 2009, Minnesota's senior housing cooperatives received sales tax exemptions under Minnesota Statutes Section 297A.70, subd. 4(a)(2). This statute generally provides that any senior citizen group for persons age 55 or older and operated on a not for profit basis is exempt from Minnesota Sales Tax. The 2009 Legislature amended the statute at the request of the Minnesota Department of Revenue and eliminated the provision permitting senior housing cooperatives to obtain a sales tax exemption. This short, but financially significant, provision was added to the 2009 Tax Bill in conference committee without prior notice to existing senior housing cooperatives or to Cooperative Network.

Cooperative Network supports the continued sales tax exemption for senior housing cooperatives. Cooperative Network supports legislation to restore the sales tax exemption for new senior housing cooperatives. (R/29)

HO 2.08 HUD Policy Requirement Precluding Senior Housing Cooperatives from Restricting Occupancy to Seniors

A United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) policy requirement stands to have a major effect on senior housing cooperatives throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Upper Midwest. During the previous administration, HUD established a policy which precludes senior housing cooperatives from restricting occupancy to seniors, making these communities functionally indistinguishable from any non-age restricted multi-family housing community.

This policy requirement is contrary to the Fair Housing Act, and it was never the intention of Congress to protect the adult and financially independent children of parents who live in a senior housing cooperative. It was the intent of the Act to allow seniors to live among their peers. Under the express terms of the Fair Housing Act, HUD has been charged with administering and enforcing the terms of the Act. HUD does not have the legal authority or standing to create policies or regulations that violate the Act.

It is the belief that HUD will not voluntarily change its position on this issue and that change may only likely come through Congressional inquiries and advocacy. Cooperative Network implores HUD to abandon this internal policy. (R/29)

(IN) Insurance

IN 1.01 Mutual Insurance
Cooperative Network urges that state and federal regulators recognize the inherent unique characteristics of statewide mutual insurance companies and reflect this fact in regulations. We call for minimum regulations, written with input from representatives of the local and statewide mutuals. (R/27)

IN 1.02 Federal Regulation of Mutual Insurance Companies
Cooperative Network supports maintaining the states as the sole regulator of the business of insurance and continues to support state efforts to streamline and simplify insurance regulation.

Cooperative Network will oppose any proposal to establish either a federal or a bifurcated system of regulation of insurance; that cedes any authority to federal agencies to regulate financial institutions involved in the business of insurance; or that otherwise pre-empts state regulation of insurance. (R/27)

IN 1.03 National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP)
Cooperative Network supports a long-term extension of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) with changes that will charge actuarially sound rates, eliminate subsidies, update, and improve the accuracy of flood plain maps, and discourage repetitive loss properties. Cooperative Network opposes adding wind coverage to the NFIP. (R/27)

IN 1.04 Building Codes
Cooperative Network supports Congressional legislation that would encourage states to adopt and enforce strong building codes and would increase federal disaster aid to states that adopt and enforce stronger codes. (R/27)

IN 1.06 Terrorism Reinsurance
Cooperative Network supports the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002 (TRIA) program and urges the Congress of the United States to reauthorize federally provided terrorism reinsurance for insurers in order to maintain stability in the insurance and reinsurance markets which benefits businesses, workers, consumers, and the overall economy. (R/27)

IN Wisconsin

IN 3.02 Changes in State Law Affecting Liability and Negligence Determination
Over the years, legislative proposals attempted to change existing law relating to determining liability, fault and jury instructions.

Some of the suggested provisions would allow certain defendants to be held liable for all of the damages in negligence lawsuits, combine the fault of all defendants and require jury instructions that would promote monetary awards based on ability to pay, rather than on the degree of responsibility for harm to a plaintiff.

Such changes to existing law would raise insurance rates, making it more difficult to obtain insurance and appropriate coverage. It would also expose entities with perceived resources such as insurance or money to more lawsuits and increased litigation costs.

With the help of the Civil Justice Coalition, which includes Cooperative Network, these measures were defeated in the past but are expected to be re-introduced in the future.

Cooperative Network opposes any legislative effort to change liability provisions in existing law. (R/27)

TE Telecommunications

TE 1.01 Statewide Broadband Development

Cooperative Network believes that rural citizens and businesses should have equal access to broadband.

Cooperative Network supports policies that encourage and facilitate new investment as well as continuous re-investment in broadband infrastructure and networks.

Cooperative Network also supports policies that promote investment and incentives that encourage employers, including cooperatives, to create jobs and expand telecommuting initiatives in rural communities. (R/28)

TE 1.02 Broadband Deployment

While the Federal Communications Commission reports high levels of broadband availability in Wisconsin and Minnesota compared to the national average, it also reports low levels of adoption of high-speed broadband relative to national averages.

Cooperative Network recognizes that its member telephone cooperatives have made broadband available to nearly 100% of their customers, positioning Wisconsin and Minnesota as leaders in rural broadband deployment. We support policies that address low broadband adoption rates despite this high availability, including initiatives that educate consumers and encourage adoption. We also support continued participation in broadband expansion programs, including the federal Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program, to build on our members' success and further expand rural fiber networks. (R/29)

TE Wisconsin

TE 3.01 Intercarrier Compensation Reform and National Broadband Plan
The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) continues to adopt reforms that impact and potentially threaten the future of telephone cooperatives and the service they provide.

Cooperative Network will continue its efforts to help positively influence the FCC process and will continue to collaborate with like-minded organizations in its federal advocacy efforts. Cooperative Network will support and highlight the efforts of Telecommunications Cooperatives, and lobby for priority as the named (ReConnect, Capital Projects, BEAD, etc.) state and federal grant programs become available. (R/27)

TE 3.04 Police and Fire Protection Surcharge 911 Fees
Cooperative Network will help ensure that the NG911 transition and implementation continues, following up on progress last session regarding NG911 provider cost recovery and work to eliminate the June 2027 sunset provision. (R/28)

TE 3.05 Broadband Funding Mechanisms
Cooperative Network will continue to advocate for funding mechanisms such as the Wisconsin Broadband Expansion Grant Program and 2019 Wisconsin Act 128 to aid in constructing broadband facilities throughout telecommunications cooperatives' service areas. The remaining Telephone Company Property Tax will be eliminated as of January 2027 (2023 Wisconsin Act 140). (R/28)

TE 3.06 Workforce Development
Workforce development and the need for skilled employees continues to be a high priority for Cooperative Network's telecommunications members. Cooperative Network supports the advancement of workforce development initiatives such as apprenticeship programs and youth apprenticeship programs to assist members in obtaining skilled and qualified employees. (R/28)

TE 3.07 Broadband Easements
High-speed internet service is no longer a luxury, but an essential part of everyday life. The economic, educational and social disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the urgency to expand rural access to high-speed internet service.

Cooperative Network supports policies that facilitate the deployment of infrastructure necessary for the delivery of rural high-speed internet service and encourages cooperation between rural electric cooperatives and existing telecommunications providers to optimize the delivery of high-speed internet service to unserved and underserved rural areas.

When created, few rural electric cooperatives' right-of-way easements and private property easements never envisioned the need for telecommunications infrastructure (like fiber) which today is used to support high-speed internet services.Cooperative

Network supports legislation enabling rural electric cooperatives to use their utility easements for installation of the infrastructure needed for the deployment of high-speed internet services. Broadband easement legislation should include the right and authority to apportion the easement to a third party. (R/27)

TE 3.08 Taxation and Tax Exemptions

Cooperative Network will pursue legislation to create an income tax exemption for government funds used for broadband expansion and a sales tax exemption for the purchase of broadband equipment. (R/29)

TE 3.09 Diggers Hotline Statutes

Cooperative Network supports ongoing stakeholder discussions and efforts to update and improve Gopher State One Call (GSOC) and Wisconsin's Diggers Hotline statutes. (R/29)

TE 3.10 Federal Universal Service Fund

Cooperative Network affirms its strong support for The National Telecommunications Cooperative Association (NTCA) for its proactive leadership and advocacy on federal broadband issues, including efforts to secure the long-term continuation of the Universal Service Fund (USF) following the Fifth Circuit's July 2024 ruling declaring it unconstitutional. Cooperative Network applauds NTCA's coordinated actions in litigation, lobbying, and stakeholder engagement—through initiatives such as the USF Strike Force—and commits to working alongside NTCA and its members to advance policies that protect and strengthen USF programs, ensuring that member cooperatives can continue to expand high-quality broadband access to the communities they serve. (R/29)

(UT) Utilities and Related Services

UT 1.01 Advanced Renewable Tariffs or Feed-in-Tariffs
Cooperative Network opposes rules or legislation creating Advanced Renewable Tariffs (ARTs) or feed-in tariffs intended to provide a profit for investors, which is essentially paid by not-for-profit electric cooperative members. These tariffs require payment for specified renewable generation at the price needed to provide the investor a "reasonable" rate of return, which is higher than avoided cost and may be higher than retail rates. (R/27)

UT 1.02 State Regulation of Utility Cooperatives
Cooperatives are governed and controlled directly by the members they serve. Cooperative Network believes that additional regulation of telecommunications, electric generation, transmission, and distribution cooperatives by state and/or federal regulatory bodies should only be considered after an affirmative vote of the cooperative members. (R/28)

UT 1.03 Service Territory Protection
Cooperative Network reaffirms the right and responsibility of all electric cooperative systems to serve those areas in which they initiated or were assigned service and continue to provide service or maintain facilities. We strongly oppose the imposition of conditions or restrictions which disadvantage the cooperatives in extending or continuing service as compared to other electric utilities, subject to state laws preventing duplication of electric facilities.

Acquisition of electric cooperative service territory by other entities reduces the vitality of the cooperative and its ability to meet loan obligations and maintain reasonable rates for remaining consumers. The State Public Service or Utilities Commission should be the governing body on territory disputes. Entities taking cooperative utility assets must have consent of the cooperative utility and provide equitable compensation, paid to all affected cooperatives reflective of the economic loss suffered over future years and for all facilities constructed to serve present and future customers in the affected area. (R/29)

UT 1.04 Nuclear Power
Cooperative Network encourages Minnesota policymakers to rescind the moratorium on the building of nuclear plants so that nuclear energy can be considered a viable option for baseload electric energy, providing diversity in the energy supply.

Cooperative Network supports research and development of new nuclear technologies. We support removing the barriers prohibiting the reprocessing of commercial spent nuclear fuel in order to safely and efficiently utilize the remaining available energy and reduce storage volume. Cooperative Network urges the federal government to properly fund and license the Yucca Mountain or other national repository for high level waste to meet the promise of the federal government dealing with this problem. In the short term, we support public or private centralized interim storage to allow shutdown plants to complete the decommissioning process. (R/27)

UT 1.05 Transmission

Cooperative Network is committed to maintaining reliable and reasonably priced electric service to our member cooperatives and the ultimate consumer. Because of this commitment, we support improvements, expansion, and interconnectedness of the electrical transmission grid in the Midwest.

Cooperative Network will continue to encourage the wise use of energy, while recognizing that conservation initiatives alone cannot adequately solve our supply problem especially with increasing demand for electricity and expanded use of renewable sources of energy.

Electric cooperatives own and operate thousands of miles of transmission and distribution lines. In many cases, cooperatives have provided these lines and service to rural residents for over 75 years. Cooperative Network supports a state policy to recognize that incumbent transmission providers, including rural electric cooperative, should maintain the "Right of First Refusal," or ROFR, giving the incumbent provider the first right to own and/or construct new transmission facilities within its service territory before others may initiate such projects.

Cooperative Network resolves to work with legislators, regulators, and the general public toward achieving the most responsible outcome that will result in an electric supply system that meets the demand for reliable and affordable electric power. (R/28)

UT 1.06 Energy Resources

Cooperative Network members support using diverse sources of energy for electricity production, including biogas, wind, solar, biomass, hydro, geothermal, coal, natural gas, nuclear, and other developing technologies.

Cooperative Network strongly supports an electric system that is reliable and cost-efficient. The boards of electric cooperatives are in the best position to make decisions regarding the best resource mix to serve their member-owners. (R/28)

UT 1.07 Third Party Ownership

Third Party Ownership (TPO) refers to a business arrangement where renewable energy generating equipment and technology is financed, owned, or leased and maintained by an entity that uses it to produce energy that is then sold directly to the end use consumer.

Legislative proposals have been considered to legalize the ability for a TPO entity to sell energy directly to the public without appropriate regulatory oversight.

Cooperative Network opposes third party ownership.

Cooperative Network supports defined service territories as the most cost-effective approach to ensuring affordable, reliable electric service that protects consumer interests.

Third party owners have no responsibility to serve. They are not accountable to the states appointed regulatory body. They have no responsibility to pay for or maintain the infrastructure necessary for them to operate. Cooperative Network opposes giving third party owners the authority to target loads within existing utility service. (R/27)

UT 1.08 Environmental Protection Agency Regulation of Greenhouse Gases, CO2

Cooperative Network supports responsible carbon dioxide regulation that: does not single out one, but includes all sectors of the economy (i.e., power generation, manufacturing, transportation, agriculture); can be implemented at power plants as well as at other sources; protects the reliability of the energy supply to cooperative-members and businesses; minimizes undue economic impact for cooperative-members; maximizes the value of legacy plant investments; and provides electric cooperatives with more long-term regulatory clarity and certainty. An approach that focuses on flexibility to pursue a diverse resource mix for power generation will allow cooperatives to respond to local and regional factors and member preferences while ensuring safe, affordable, and reliable power.

All electric cooperatives serving Minnesota and Wisconsin are aggressively but practically reducing greenhouse gas emissions from power supply, and are actively promoting beneficial electrification of other components of the economy where doing so satisfies at least one of these conditions without adversely affecting the other two: benefits the environment and reduces greenhouse gas emissions; keeps electric energy supply reliable and affordable; fosters a more robust and resilient electric grid. (R/27)

UT 1.09 Workforce Development – Electric Cooperatives

Cooperative Network recognizes the vital role of electric cooperative workers as first responders in maintaining public safety, community resilience and quality of life. We support expanding education and workforce development initiatives to ensure a highly skilled energy workforce, including careers in energy such as engineers, line workers and CDL drivers. We further support incentives for education, apprenticeship, and youth apprenticeship programs to attract and retain skilled employees, as well as dedicated funding for energy workforce training at technical colleges. (R/29)

UT Minnesota

UT 2.01 Right of Eminent Domain
Cooperative Network believes the right of eminent domain for public purposes is necessary for electrical systems, telecommunications, and fuel distribution-systems. (R/29)

UT 2.02 Taxation of Electric Cooperatives
Cooperative Network opposes legislation that would result in a shift or addition of taxes from investor-owned utilities to electric cooperative or municipal utility customers. (R/27)

UT 2.03 Renewable Energy Certificates
Cooperative Network supports maintaining the current standard to ensure flexibility and cost competitiveness. (R/27)

UT 2.04 Coal Generation
Cooperative Network supports rescinding the Minnesota state moratorium on new coal-fired electricity generation. (R/28)

UT Wisconsin

UT 3.01 Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing and High Level Nuclear Waste Disposal

The federal government's failure to formulate and implement specific programs for the processing of spent nuclear fuels and for the permanent storage of nuclear wastes is inconsistent with policies in place when rural electric cooperative nuclear generating facilities were built. This policy change has burdened utilities with substantial unexpected costs of prolonged storage of high-level radioactive waste and spent nuclear fuel.

Cooperative Network urges the Department of Energy, Congress, and the President to work diligently to fulfill their obligation to open a federal repository in a timely fashion and to work on creating a reprocessing option, as well. Until a permanent storage facility or reprocessing option is available, our federal elected officials should work with utilities to develop alternatives, including public or private centralized interim storage for spent nuclear fuel and associated independent spent fuel storage installation (ISFSI)—giving special consideration to those nuclear facilities that are shut down, particularly nuclear power demonstration facilities such as Dairyland Power Cooperative's La Crosse Boiling Water Reactor (LACBWR).

Until a solution is found, and spent fuel removed, Cooperative Network supports the federal government keeping its contractual obligation to provide funding to ratepayers to cover expenses of current storage of spent fuel. (R/29)

UT 3.02 Electric Restructuring and Retail Competition

Dependable, affordable, and safe electricity is the very lifeblood of our economy, affecting all segments of society and the competitive viability of our region.

Cooperative Network is concerned by efforts on both the state and national levels to restructure the electric utility industry without providing adequate infrastructure or appropriate safeguards for all consumers. In particular, we are concerned about radical deregulation with open retail competition. Without safeguards, these changes to our electric system may result in degradation of system reliability, and negatively affect long-range planning and the ability to provide reliable service to remaining ratepayers at a reasonable cost. Such efforts, whether on a state or national level, threaten to damage individual consumers and our entire state economy.

Given the importance of this issue, Cooperative Network supports essential provisions in any legislation relating to industry restructuring to insure that consumers are protected, and that our electric system is not placed at risk, endangering not only our economy, but public health, safety and welfare. The essential provisions we support are:

- All consumers must be treated equally.
- When stranded costs are to be recovered, they should be recovered in a competitively neutral manner, without placing an undue burden on residential and small business customers.

- All energy providers—not just utilities—must be subject to the same standards as utilities.
- All consumers must have universal access to affordable electric service. Reliability and safety must not be jeopardized.
- Exclusive distribution service areas must be maintained to avoid duplication of electrical facilities.
- There must be a transition and educational period before full consumer choice is implemented.
- Restructuring should not operate to divest retail end use consumers of rural electric cooperatives of their ownership interest in and control of their distribution, generation, and transmission cooperatives either by restricting the rights of distribution cooperatives to provide services to their retail end use consumers, or otherwise. (R/28)

UT 3.03 Energy-Related Research

America's energy future and economic health are dependent upon the federal government's consistent and aggressive involvement in energy-related research and development, and upon its ability and willingness to maintain continuity in its research efforts.

Rural electric cooperatives carry their fair share of the research burden. They have been participating in major research and development efforts through their voluntary contributions to the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) and the NRECA Business and Technology Strategies. (R/27)

UT 3.04 Electric Heating

In many rural areas electric heat systems offer comfort, safety, low cost, efficiency, renewable sources, and versatility. In addition, advances in technology allow electric heat systems to utilize geothermal or air-source heat pumps, radiant heating panels, thermal storage, and other means of heating.

Cooperative Network believes homeowners should be allowed to choose their heating system rather than have it dictated by a governing body or a code advisory committee such as the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) Council.

Cooperative Network supports administrative rule-making changes, which will provide fair treatment of all fuel sources and encourage fuel diversity and conservation. We urge state regulators to accurately credit electric heat systems when determining code compliance.

Cooperative Network opposes any legislative or regulatory restrictions on the use of electric heating systems. (R/28)

UT 3.05 Electrician Licensing/Farm Wiring Inspections

Wisconsin farmers and rural residents deserve the highest quality professional electric services; therefore, Cooperative Network supports the continuation of a statewide program of electrical inspection for residential, farm, commercial, and industrial properties. We also support the requirement that all electricians and electrical contractors be licensed by the state.

Cooperative Network urges state legislators to authorize adequate staffing and sufficient funding for state wiring inspections and electrician licensing programs. (R/29)

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