



Sec. Naig visits with Corn Belt Power member co-ops

As part of his 99 county tour, Mike Naig, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, visited Corn Belt Power Cooperative in Humboldt county on Wednesday, October 9.

Naig met with representatives from all of Corn Belt Power's member-cooperatives. The group discussed topics ranging from agricultural industry threats to trade and the rural farm economy.

"We want to thank Secretary Naig for visiting with Corn Belt Power and its member co-ops," said Jim Vermeer, vice president, business development, Corn Belt Power. "It's vital for our cooperative representatives to have open dialogue with statewide policymakers. One of the keys to having a strong rural economy is being on the same page with our elected officials and key staff."

Naig updated the group on what his office is doing to face threats posed by African Swine Fever and poultry-related diseases. Naig reports his office is in contact with the United States Department of Agriculture and other states on ways to mitigate risk posed by disease outbreaks across the world. Iowa's department of agriculture recently took part in a four-day, 14-state emergency response drill.

"We're doing a lot of exercises," he said. "We have to work as an industry and as a government to keep disease where it is. We need to keep it out of North America. If it happens to make it to North America then we have to keep disease out of our farms. If a facility gets the disease, then we have to respond and recover."

The conversation then shifted to rural economic development, trade and government regulation.



99-county tour brings Secretary of Ag to Humboldt

Above | Mike Naig, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, visits with Corn Belt Power and member cooperatives at Corn Belt Power headquarters Oct. 9. Naig spoke on a variety of topics including rural economy and threats to Iowa farms.

Naig complemented several communities in Corn Belt Power's footprint on what they've done with childcare.

"I'm more and more convinced, economic development is all-of-the-above, including daycare," he said. "It's quality education, it's access to health care, it's affordable and quality housing. If you can't get those pieces all figured out, you either have to move or not work. It goes to the core of economic development."

Naig discussed his office's work on the impact of the Trump administration's small refinery ethanol waivers.

"We know we have plants that have idled back," he said. "We had a two-month effort to work with the White House to reassign those gallons and account for those waivers. We went in and said we had to do something with those gallons and if that doesn't happen, nothing else matters."

Policymakers have recently come to an agreement on how to make up for the

waiver process.

"They can still grant the waivers, but whatever they do, they have to make up for it in the industry," Naig said. "We basically got what we wanted."

Naig said the process is now subject to Environmental Protection Agency rule making.

On trade, Naig was encouraged by recent agreements with Japan and holds out hope that the new United States Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA) will be finalized soon.

"They could make the decision today and in theory it could get done by the end of the week," Naig said of the USMCA trade agreement. "If they don't get it done this fall, then we get into presidential politics (in an election year). I'm still hopeful."

After meeting with Corn Belt Power member-cooperative officials, Naig toured Prestage Foods of Iowa's pork processing plant in Eagle Grove and Hawkeye Pride egg farm in Corwith. ■



Above | Iowa Senators Joni Ernst and Chuck Grassley meet with cooperative representatives during the September Fly-In. The passage of the Rural Act was top-of-mind for the group. The 2017 tax law included an unintended consequence that impacts cooperative tax-exempt status.

Iowa cooperative employees fly-in to D.C.

Watching out for the bottom lines of cooperative members across the state is important. That's why dozens of electric co-op employees went to Washington, D.C. September 23-25 to lobby members of congress on various issues, some of which include:

- The Rural Act – Protecting the tax-exempt status of electric cooperatives.

- The Retirement Enhancement and Savings Act – Rolling back current rules designed for other types of pension plans are increasing volatility and cost pressures on participating electric cooperatives costing Iowans nearly \$1 million dollars annually.

- Promoting needs of rural communities and rural infrastructure.
- The Expanding Access to Sustainable

Energy Act – Helping electric co-ops develop energy storage.

All of these issues are important, none more than the Rural Act. The Rural Act addresses unintended consequences from the 2017 tax reform.

To maintain tax exempt status, co-ops across the country have to maintain an 85/15 ratio on their income statements, meaning 85-percent of revenues have to come from member-owners.

The new law now counts FEMA funds, government loans and grants as non-member income. This can negatively impact cooperatives, especially ones that have seen natural disasters in their service territory.

Cooperatives across the country encourage congress to amend Section 501(c)12 to retain the tax-exempt status of nearly 900 rural electric co-ops to allow the use of public grants to benefit the capital projects that enhance our rural economies and way of life.

Iowa's electric cooperative representatives will be back in Washington late April to lobby again on behalf of cooperatives across the state and country. ■

Wisdom solar project under construction

Contractors broke ground September 30 on Corn Belt Power's first ever solar project.

The Wisdom Station power plant array will feature two different types of photovoltaic panel arrangements, a fixed-tilt array and an array of single-axis tracking panels.

The panels will live on what once was the power plant's coal pile. Wisdom Station re-established natural gas as the plant's primary fuel source with fuel oil back up in 2014.

By the project's end, 600 total panels will be installed on Corn Belt Power's Wisdom Station grounds for a total 150-kilowatt generating capacity – a 75-kilowatt fixed-tilt array and a 75-kilowatt single-axis tracking array.

The co-op's goal with this project is to provide Corn Belt Power's membership with accurate information from which to help make informed decisions about the best kind of array to install.

A fixed-tilt array is an array in which the panels never move and are pointed in

one direction at all times.

The single-axis tracking panels will move with the sun to maximize energy generation.

Corn Belt Power selected Iowa Choice Renewables to provide turnkey design, procurement, installation and project commissioning. Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative will provide services and equipment required to interconnect the

array with their distribution system.

The project will add to the seven megawatts of small renewable nameplate capacity already on Corn Belt Power's system at 207 locations across north central Iowa.

Following project commissioning, Corn Belt Power co-op members will be able to observe online how the two different arrays perform. ■



Power from the sun

Above | Contractors build the first portion of Corn Belt Power's new solar array at Wisdom Station Oct. 10. The 150-kilowatt system should be complete in the beginning of 2020.



Country Maid receives RLF loans

Corn Belt Power and Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative each loaned \$124,000 from their Revolving Loan Funds to Country Maid for new equipment. The new equipment will allow Country Maid to make ambient cake rolls, which are able to be stored on the shelf without being refrigerated for 7-10 days. The new cake rolls are sold under the trademark, River Bend Bakery.

By expanding to the ambient cake roll business, Country Maid was able to sign a contract with Walmart and expand their business opportunities. Country Maid anticipates adding three new jobs with this project. Pictured from left: Jed Skogerbee, ILEC; Darin Massner, Country Maid; and Brittany Dickey, Corn Belt Power.

News In Brief

Momentum is Building conference on horizon

The annual conference that brings building contractors and cooperative representatives together will be February 6-7, 2020.

Event registration opens November 18, 2019 at www.momentumisbuilding.com.

Momentum is Building is an annual conference to promote energy efficiency, gain better building skills and tips of the trade, network with exhibitors and attendees, learn new ways to improve business, and earn up to six Continuing Education Units for electricians and HVAC professionals. This year's speakers have new business practices and strategies to complement high-performance projects.

Keynote speaker, Sandra Adomatis, is the owner of Adomatis Appraisal Service and a national speaker on valuing high performance features. Sandra literally wrote the book on high performance appraisals currently used by builders, appraisers and energy organizations around the country. In her keynote address, she will instruct on strategies to help earn higher project valuations.

Mike Foti, president, Innovate Building Solutions and Innovate Home Org, is a self-described "DMG" (digital marketing geek). He uses his construction industry and business knowledge to help contractors increase profits and work efficiently using digital media.

Ryan Meres, program director, Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET), uses his 13 years of experience in energy and water efficiency, energy policy and building energy codes to provide the motivation and steps for contractors to deliver what builders need; and builders to deliver a home that buyers want.

Scott Siepker, best known for his work as the "Iowa Nice Guy," as seen on ESPN's College Football Daily, uses humor to deliver an unforgettable closer. Learn why Scott decided to stay in Iowa and why you can have a successful career in Iowa, too.

More information will be available at www.momentumisbuilding.com as the registration date draws near.



Presidential stop

Above | Steve Bullock, Montana Gov. and presidential candidate, shares his vision for rural America with co-op members at his Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric stop Oct. 21.

Gov. Bullock visits Iowa cooperative

Montana governor and current presidential candidate Steve Bullock visited Nishnabotna Valley Rural Electric Cooperative on Monday, October 21.

Bill McKim, CEO and General Manager, Nishnabotna Valley and Midland Power, greeted Bullock with a presentation on Iowa's electric cooperatives and how organizations statewide enhance the quality of life for rural Iowans.

Following a short presentation, Bullock spoke on his energy and rural economic plans. He also took questions from cooperative employees in attendance. Bullock noted climate change as one of the major issues facing our country today. Bullock said he wants the United States to rejoin the Paris Climate Agreement and require each federal agency to develop a plan to reduce carbon emissions.

Bullock, a democratic presidential candidate, became the 24th governor of Montana on January 7, 2013. ■

Register starting Nov. 18, 2019
momentumisbuilding.com

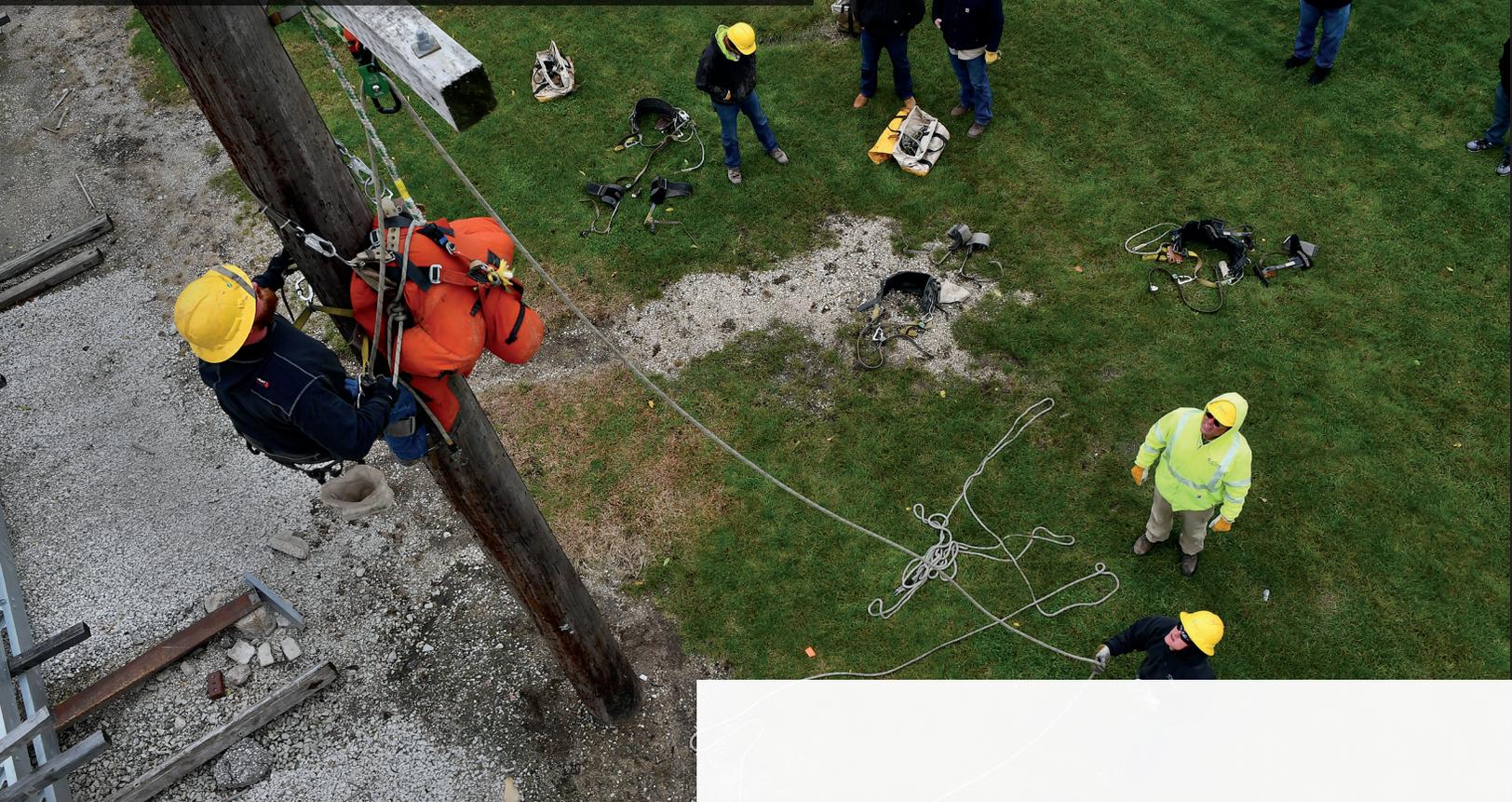
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Jeff Codner, apprentice lineman, Hampton transmission crew, left, tests his pole top safety rescue skills against the clock Oct. 11. Linemen must ascend the pole, secure and lower the 150-pound life-size practice dummy by rope to the ground and descend to administer CPR in less than four minutes.

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October Touchstone Energy Volunteer Challenge winner | Mark Saxton, journeyman lineman, Corn Belt Power Cooperative, donated his \$100 drawing prize to the Emmetsburg Youth Football program.



Pam Caboth

The power of human connections

Pam Caboth, vice president, administrative service, Iowa Lakes Electric Cooperative, demonstrates the Touchstone Energy value of commitment to community by volunteering for the Estherville Elks. Caboth (pictured far right) says over the years her focus has changed to not only include youth activities but also veterans and service personnel as well as mental health initiatives. She has served the Emmet County Wellness Coalition, Emmet County Public Health Board of Directors, Estherville Elks, Salt Lake City Fisher House and many other organizations. In April, she received the Elks Veteran Volunteer Award for her work with veterans.

Dreyer becomes a journeyman lineman

Reed Dreyer has completed his apprenticeship steps and has been promoted to journeyman lineman. Dreyer is a member of the Humboldt transmission crew and has worked for Corn Belt Power Cooperative since September 2016. ■



Corn Belt Power Cooperative Watts Watt

Watts Watt is published monthly for employees and associates of Corn Belt Power Cooperative, 1300 13th St. North, Humboldt, Iowa 50548-0508. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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