



# Rural Power

Iowa's electric cooperatives | Energizing rural economic growth

Iowa Rural

Power

## Candidate Questionnaire

*Candidates can provide answers via video message, "op-ed" style submission, or another written form of response. Responses will be shared in their entirety with the member-consumers of Iowa's electric cooperatives and posted on [www.iaruralpower.org](http://www.iaruralpower.org).*

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Examples of questions most relevant to our members are:

### 1. How much interaction do you have with electric cooperatives in Iowa?

When I served in the state legislature, I had the chance to work with Iowa's rural electric cooperatives on a range of issues, ensuring that Iowans had continued access to affordable and reliable power, particularly in our most rural areas.

More recently, following the devastating derecho storm in Iowa, I had the chance to interact with our rural electric providers as did so many other Iowans who were affected. Our farm and my husband's family farm that we operate, were severely affected by the storm. We lost several buildings, portions of our fields were flattened, and we operated on a generator for power and running water for three weeks. While our farm is served by Alliant Energy, my neighbors and my husband's family farm are served by a rural electric cooperative, Eastern Iowa Light and Power worked extra hours to restore power to the farms and the thousands of other Iowans who were affected and to keep people safe in the process. When disasters like the derecho happen, it's a reminder that we need to continue supporting our rural electric cooperatives so that they can continue providing affordable and reliable power to those who need it most.

### 2. How will your energy plans provide affordable and reliable power to rural Iowa?

We need a strategic plan to transition us to a more carbon free environment. We've got to work together to meet our climate and energy goals and create a cleaner and brighter future for our children and grandchildren. Iowa is a leader in renewable energy. We need to build on that to reduce our carbon footprint. Keeping costs low means that we need to support our energy producers and invest in innovation that will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and create jobs here in Iowa.

We also need to get serious about passing an infrastructure package and making sure that the rural electric cooperatives are a part of that conversation. We need an infrastructure bill that adequately

funds our roads and bridges, locks and dams, and our parks and outdoor spaces. We also need to make sure that we are investing in and updating power grid and energy production systems, and any infrastructure bill must include a plan that provides rural broadband internet. Iowa is a great place to live. We just have to ensure our communities, workers, and small businesses have what they need to compete and build a sustainable economy.

**3. Iowa's electric cooperatives are successful proponents of renewable energy resources in our state. However, obstacles remain for shifting to a 100% renewable portfolio, such as extreme weather patterns, source intermittency, and limits on battery storage technology. Simply put, how will your energy plan compensate for electricity needs in February when the sun isn't shining, the wind isn't blowing, and battery storage options are limited due to their current performance in colder temperatures?**

I am a life-long rural Iowan. I grew up on a dairy farm in Charles City and my husband, Paul, and I are farmers to this day. My dad taught me to never underestimate the ingenuity of the American farmer. One of the policies I'm most excited about working on is how we unleash that ingenuity and let the American farmer charter the path forward to a cleaner and more energy renewable future.

That being said, I have been clear in my campaign that as we work to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, we need to have an all of the above energy approach and a realization that we must have a pragmatic transition plan in place that will protect consumers from increased energy costs. As a state senator, I was proud to be a leader on renewable energy issues, working to strengthen Iowa's solar, wind, and biofuels industries that power our homes and businesses and create thousands of jobs in this state. I believe strongly in innovation and taking advantage of new technologies that consumers want and that are more and more viable every day without. However, as we move in that direction, we have to make sure that we do not jeopardize the affordable energy that rural America needs to be reliable and competitive. A one-size fits all mandate from Washington is not an approach that I support. I want to work with our local rural electric cooperative leaders to keep the power on and costs low.

**4. Co-ops across the country are able to deliver electric service to rural areas in part due to low-cost financing from the USDA's Rural Utilities Service. Allowing borrowers to refinance RUS debt would help make up for the expected \$10 billion loss nationwide due to COVID-19 and allow essential rural utilities to be a part of the long-term recovery for our members-consumers. It is estimated that \$200 million dollars in savings would be realized in Iowa alone. If elected, would you support or cosponsor the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act (H.R. 7483/S. 4152) to allow borrowers to refinance their RUS loans without penalty?**

I think it's important to remember that rural electric cooperatives exist as a product of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. These non-profit electric cooperatives came in to provide electricity in rural areas when nobody else would. They are owned and operated by the people they serve and the power and economic development that they provide allow rural Iowa to remain competitive.

Our communities depend on rural co-ops for reliable and affordable electricity, but also for economic development opportunities and I understand the importance of affordable government loans for co-ops from USDA's Rural Utilities Service to finance these opportunities. Currently, our rural co-ops are feeling the squeeze on these loans. As Iowans are out of work, through no fault of their own, and the coronavirus pandemic is causing economic stress for working families and small businesses, electric cooperatives are experiencing losses on these loans as customers struggle to pay bills and larger commercial operations are underutilized. I believe that our rural co-ops should have the ability to take advantage of current market rates and refinance on these loans so investment in Iowa remains competitive. I also know that this legislation has bipartisan support amongst Iowa's congressional delegation. Iowans are benefiting from this program and flexible financing makes sense to me. While I always want to see the details of a bill before I vote for it, this legislation supports our rural communities and that is always something I will prioritize.

**5. Iowa co-ops pride themselves on being champions for their community and leaders in economic development. Through the Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant Program (REDLG) through the USDA, electric co-ops have helped bring millions of dollars in investment to rural Iowa. How will you work to strengthen the REDLG program in the next Farm Bill and beyond?**

Rural electric cooperatives are the economic hub of the communities they serve, creating jobs and financing the development of infrastructure projects and local commerce. RECs are reliable borrowers and because the government makes money off of these loans, REDLG was established to push some of this money back into REC economic development projects and spur growth on Main Street. This program has benefitted Iowans and is a great investment for taxpayers. As a Member of Congress, I will work to ensure that REDLG is adequately funded.

**6. What other ideas on strengthening rural Iowa, such as support for the biofuels industry, are unique to your campaign that would be of interest to electric cooperative member-consumers?**

Supporting Iowa's biofuels and ethanol industries is about so much more than energy. It's about good-paying jobs, support for our farmers, and a competitive edge for our entire economy on a world stage. In 2016, I was proud to vote for a bill to extend biofuels production tax incentives. These tax credits incentivized producers to make investments in these industries that are critical of Iowa's energy future. This legislation was a major effort that had support from both sides of the aisle and I was proud then to support our biofuels industry. I am proud today to do the same.

Beyond energy priorities, I think there are two main focuses that I see as areas of partnership with the rural electric cooperatives.

The first is that we must make the investments in rural broadband internet connectivity so that all Iowans have equal access to this important delivery system. This is an absolutely huge issue - people need internet to compete. During the pandemic we were seeing firsthand the challenges it's bringing to our education system and our small businesses. So there are two things. We need money for public-private partnerships to ensure the last mile gets covered. Just like the Great Depression when we

electrified rural areas, we need that kind of focus here. Second, we need to fix the data problems. The FCC has terrible maps on this that don't recognize where there is and is not good service. We need to fix that as a starting point.

The second area of partnership is broader support for all rural Iowans, family farmers, and the ag economy. As I mentioned, I am a farmer. I grew up on a dairy farm. My husband and I used our savings from my job as a teacher and bought our farm in 1986. I care deeply about agriculture and helping rural communities thrive. We need to keep the rural economy strong because whether you live in Iowa City, Clinton, Keosauqua or somewhere in between, we all depend on what's grown and produced in Iowa's fields. Supporting Iowa farmers and Iowa's rural electric cooperatives are critical to Iowa's future and I look forward to working together in Congress.

***Please email candidate responses to Haley Moon ([hmoon@iowarec.org](mailto:hmoon@iowarec.org)).***