

## Iowa Rural Power Candidate Questionnaire

*Candidate 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).*

### 1. How much interaction have you had or do you currently have with electric cooperatives in your home state?

Bernie has spent his career fighting for electric cooperatives. His home state of Vermont has a long history of environmental activism and stewardship involving publicly-owned, democratically controlled utilities. In the early 1900s Burlington, Vermont residents, tired of paying exorbitant rates to a private utility company, formed a municipally owned electric utility.

As Mayor of Burlington, Bernie oversaw the transition of the former coal-fired power plant to a more green alternative. Burlington Electric also developed sustainable harvesting standards ensuring the new protocols were as green as possible. During this time there was also a move towards energy savings in Burlington's public and commercial buildings. The progressive ideals that Bernie championed during his time as mayor remained when he was elected to serve in Congress. Throughout his career Bernie's commitment to sustainable energy development remained, and in 2014, Burlington became the first city in America to run entirely on renewable energy.

As a Member of Congress Bernie has fought to expand renewable publicly and cooperatively-owned energy utilities and secured massive investments in Vermont's energy sector. As President, Bernie will bring the same commitment to empowering people and communities as they work to expand renewable energy.

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

Some for-profit utility companies like MidAmerican Energy in Iowa, have acted in direct opposition to our goals of transforming our energy system away from fossil fuels to 100 percent energy efficiency and sustainable energy by 2030 at the latest and delivering resilient renewable energy equitably. We need to end greed in our energy system if we are going to be successful in saving our planet.

Bernie's Green New Deal will expand the existing federal Power Marketing Administrations to build the necessary new solar, wind, and geothermal energy sources needed to provide power to every single community in this country.

The renewable energy generated by the Green New Deal will be publicly owned, managed by the Federal Power Marketing Administrations, the Bureau of Reclamation

and the Tennessee Valley Authority and sold to distribution utilities with a preference to public power districts, municipally- and cooperatively-owned utilities with democratic, public ownership and will crack down on the greed from investor-owned utilities like PG&E in California, and provide assistance to transition them to publicly owned, democratically controlled utilities if they fail to act in the public interest. We will sell the electricity generated by these PMAs with a preference for democratically and publicly owned and operated utilities at stable, affordable rates — after 2035, electricity will be virtually free to all people in the U.S.

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 and limits on battery storage technology. For example, **how will your energy plan compensate for electricity needs in February during a polar vortex (because...Iowa) and the sun isn't shining, the wind isn't blowing, and our limited battery storage options are depleted due to their performance in cold temperatures?**

Bernie's Green New Deal would provide resilient, 100 percent renewable energy to everyone in this country. We can ensure that everyone in this country gets power delivered to them by building a modern smart grid. A smart grid means a resilient, secure, and intelligent electric grid system that is capable of managing high amounts of renewable energy, charging electric vehicles quickly, and maximizing efficiency. Bernie will spend \$526 billion on a modern, high-volt, underground, renewable, direct current, smart, electric transmission and distribution grid will ensure our transition to 100 percent sustainable energy is safe and smooth.

Iowa's electric cooperatives have led the way in transforming our energy system away from fossil fuels. As President, Bernie will work with them to provide the country with 100 percent energy efficiency and sustainable energy by 2030 at the latest. The New Deal provided inexpensive electricity to America through efforts like the Rural Electrification Administration and the Federal Power Marketing Administrations. If the federal government was able to electrify America under FDR without computers or any of the modern technologies we have available to us today, think of what we can do today. Municipal and cooperative electric utilities still provide some of the least expensive electricity in the country today. As part of the Green New Deal, we will expand on that success.

We will do this by building enough renewable energy generation capacity for the nation's growing needs. Currently, four federal Power Marketing Administrations (PMAs) and the Tennessee Valley Authority generate and transmit power to distribution utilities in 33 states. We will create one more PMA to cover the remaining states and territories and expand the existing PMAs to build more than enough wind, solar, energy storage and geothermal power plants. We will spend \$1.52 trillion on renewable energy and \$852

billion to build energy storage capacity. Together, with an EPA federal renewable energy standard, this will fully drive out non-sustainable generation sources.

And as part of Bernie's Green New Deal, we will dramatically decrease the cost of energy storage. The Obama administration successfully decreased the cost of installed solar by 90 percent through a Department of Energy program called SunShot. There are similar energy storage programs at DOE and some of our National Labs that aim to decrease the cost of solutions like batteries. We will similarly decrease the cost of energy storage and meet daily and long term reliability needs. We will invest \$30 billion for a StorageShot initiative to meet those goals. The StorageShot program will have a goal of commercializing technologies that can provide energy lasting 24 hours to multiple days at a capital cost lower than \$1,000 a kilowatt to support the renewable energy needed to phase out coal and natural gas plants that currently serve as base generation on the grid. The program will also aim to decrease the cost of daily cycling storage resources by at least a factor of three in order to reliably and affordably replace all coal and natural gas plants that serve as backup on the grid. Additionally, in order to ensure an affordable and complete transition away from fossil fuels in the transportation sector, we will also spend \$100 billion to decrease the cost of a new electric vehicle to at most \$18,000.

The only way we can ensure all of these investments lead to a 100 percent transition to renewable energy that is resilient, and delivered to all equitably is by ending greed in our energy system. The renewable energy generated by the Green New Deal will be publicly owned, managed by the Federal Power Marketing Administrations, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Tennessee Valley Authority and sold to distribution utilities with a preference for public power districts, municipally- and cooperatively-owned utilities with democratic, public ownership, and other existing utilities that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. The Department of Energy will provide technical assistance to states and municipalities that would like to establish publicly owned distribution utilities or community choice aggregation programs in their communities. Electricity will be sold at current rates to keep the cost of electricity stable during this transition.

4. Co-ops are very proud of their role in electrifying America but couldn't have done it without the support from FDR and the Federal Government. **Will your energy plan emphasize partnerships with entities like co-ops to implement your vision for the future of electricity delivery in the U.S.?**

Yes. Bernie has spent his entire career fighting to expand cooperative entities. The New Deal provided inexpensive electricity to America through efforts like the Rural Electrification Administration and the Federal Power Marketing Administrations. If the federal government was able to electrify America under FDR without computers or any of the modern technologies we have available to us today, think of what we can do

today. Municipal and cooperative electric utilities still provide some of the least expensive electricity in the country today. As part of the Green New Deal, we will expand on that success. The renewable energy generated by the Green New Deal will be publicly owned, managed by the Federal Power Marketing Administrations, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Tennessee Valley Authority and sold to distribution utilities with a preference to public power districts, municipally- and cooperatively-owned utilities with democratic, public ownership and will crack down on the greed from investor-owned utilities like PG&E in California, and provide assistance to transition them to publicly owned, democratically controlled utilities if they fail to act in the public interest. The Department of Energy will provide technical assistance to states and municipalities that would like to establish publicly owned distribution utilities or community choice aggregation programs in their communities.

As president, Bernie Sanders will boldly embrace the moral imperative of addressing the climate crisis and act immediately to mobilize millions of people across the country in support of the Green New Deal. From the Oval Office to the streets, Bernie will generate the political will necessary for a wholesale transformation of our society, with support for frontline and vulnerable communities and massive investments in sustainable energy, energy efficiency, and a transformation of our transportation system.

**5. What other ideas on strengthening rural America are unique to your campaign that would be of interest to electric cooperative member-consumers?**

For the past 28 years, Bernie has had the honor of representing one of the most rural states in America - the State of Vermont - where people in small towns know each other by name. Where they go to the same schools together. Where they go to the same restaurants, stores and movie theatres. Where their children play in the same little league baseball games. Where they go to the same doctors and hospitals when they get sick. Where their parents and grandparents go to the same nursing homes. Where people grow up together, raise families and grow old together. In other words, where there is a real sense of community. I know that is true in Vermont and it is true in Iowa as well.

There is something very beautiful and special about the rural way of life and it is something that we should celebrate and cherish with every fiber of our being. But let me be very honest with you. What you understand and what Bernie understands is that rural America is in a state of massive decline and that is an issue that we have got to address.

The reality is that we have a Congress, a White House and a corporate media that has, for far too long, ignored the many crises facing rural America. In Iowa, in Vermont and all over this country, we have seen more and more young people leave the small towns they grew up in and love, not because they don't want to stay, but because there are

fewer and fewer jobs that pay a living wage. According to a recent study, nearly 35 percent of rural counties in the United States are experiencing protracted and significant population loss. In Iowa and Vermont the numbers are even worse.

Two-thirds of Iowa's counties and more than half of the counties in Vermont have experienced declining populations. We have seen schools, churches and community centers shut down, and once vibrant Main Streets become boarded up and deserted.

In Iowa, in Vermont and all across rural America, we have seen family farmers go out of business as the prices they receive for their products decline rapidly and large agri-business corporations and factory farming take over agriculture. We have seen rural hospitals and nursing homes shut down, and not enough doctors, nurses and dentists to provide the quality health care that rural Americans deserve. Tragically, instead of seeing good jobs, education and health care coming into our rural communities, we are far too often seeing desperation and depression - and a terrible increase in suicide and opioid addiction.

We need to turn this around. We cannot create an economy that works for all Americans if we continue to neglect the needs of rural America. But let's be clear. If we are to accomplish our goals, we need a massive grassroots effort to stand up to the greed of corporate America - a greed which is destroying the American middle class in so many ways. It is true in agriculture, but it is also true in almost every part of our lives.

Bernie firmly believes in democracy. Democracy to Bernie is more than just casting a vote to elect your representatives, it is having control over the decisions that impact you and your community. It is why he believes in Iowa's electric cooperatives as a model for other sectors.

He will invest \$14.7 billion in cooperatively owned grocery stores. Local groceries and co-ops are more likely to buy local products, which will help grow markets for farmers to sell their goods. We will also use these funds to bring grocery stores to food deserts ensuring all people have access to healthy, local food. And he will expand cooperatively owned businesses by creating a U.S. Employee Ownership Bank. We will move to an economy where workers and communities feel that they're not just a cog in the machine - one where they have power over their jobs and communities and can make decisions. Democracy isn't just the opportunity to vote. What democracy really means is having control over your life.

Beyond expanding cooperatives, Bernie will fight to strengthen, rejuvenate and revitalize rural America. We're creating an economy and a government that works for all of us, not just the one percent. Together in the White House, we will:

- **Invest in local rural economies, not giant corporations.** As president, Bernie will invest \$31 billion in local food processing, so small producers have a chance to compete with the Tyson Foods of the world. He will invest \$14.7 billion in local, cooperatively owned grocery stores, which are more likely to buy from local producers and stock healthier options than the Dollar Generals that are invading the rural landscape and are increasingly, the only "grocery store" many have access to. Over half of the grocery stores in Iowa closed between 1976 and 2000. Bernie will also incentive schools to buy food from local sources, so kids can benefit from the healthy food grown in their communities and farmers can have another market for their produce. And Bernie will rebuild rural America's inefficient and crumbling infrastructure, including upgrading our aging and dangerous water and wastewater infrastructure, and make substantial investments in economic and community development in our rural communities.
- **Ensure affordable access to high-speed broadband internet to every American.** According to the FCC, 39% of Americans living in rural areas lacked access to high-speed broadband internet, 30% don't have access to mobile LTE broadband, and 60% of farmers say their internet is inadequate to run their businesses. We need strong broadband coverage across this country if business is going to thrive, create jobs and be competitive in the national and global economies. Quality broadband is essential for health care services, education and for the day-to-day needs of rural Americans. Bernie will provide \$150 billion in grants and technical assistance for municipalities and states to build publicly owned and democratically controlled, co-operative, or open access broadband networks.
- **Guarantee health care to all as a human right, regardless of income, race, gender, or immigration status.** Bernie's Medicare for All program will guarantee comprehensive health care to everyone in the United States. When we are in the White House, we will stand up to the large health insurance companies and Big Pharma and cover the cost of prescription drug prices through Medicare for All. Under Medicare for All, health care will be free at the time of service, with no co-payments, deductibles, premiums or surprise bills. Rural people in particular have suffered the negative consequences that result from a lack of access to affordable, quality health care. Access to health care is a top issue for farmers and have some of the highest uninsured rate, in fact 41% of dairy farmers lack health insurance. With Medicare-for-All, small business owners, including farmers, will no longer have to worry about providing health care to their families or employees.

- **Provide funding to rebuild and expand rural health care infrastructure, including hospitals, maternity wards, mental health clinics, dental clinics, dialysis centers, home care services, ambulance services, and emergency departments in rural areas.** Since 2010, 113 rural hospitals have closed. As part of the Affordable Care Act, Bernie helped secure \$11 billion for community health centers. In 2017, community health centers served one in five people living in rural areas and almost one million agricultural workers. When we are in the White House, we will provide even more funding for health centers. We will also expand funding for the National Health Service Corps, which places health care providers in underserved areas and will bring more providers to rural America.
- **Break up big agribusinesses that have a stranglehold on farmers and rural communities.** We will invest in family farms and rural communities -- not corporate ownership. In our country, just four companies slaughter 85 percent of beef cattle. USDA reports that between 2000 and 2015 “soybean sales from the largest four sellers rose from 51 to 76 percent.” Additionally, after the Bayer-Monsanto merger, the two largest conglomerates now control 78 percent of the corn seed market. If Teddy Roosevelt were alive today, he would say, “break them up.” And, working together, that is exactly what we are going to do.
- **Guarantee farmers a living wage.** Bernie will enact supply management programs to prevent shortages and surpluses to ensure farmers make a living wage and ensure consumers receive a high-quality, stable, and secure supply of agricultural goods. And as President, he will transition toward a parity system to guarantee farmers a living wage. That means setting price floors and matching supply with demand so farmers are guaranteed the cost of production and family living expenses. And he will guarantee farmers the right to repair their own equipment.
- **Guarantee safe drinking water as a human right.** Communities all over the country from Denmark, South Carolina, to rural Iowa are faced with similar dangerous contamination, such as lead, diseases, or other toxic pollution like PFAS. Bernie introduced the WATER Act, which would provide up to \$34.85 billion annually to ensure safe and clean drinking water for all.
- **Guarantee safe, decent, accessible, and affordable housing as a fundamental right to all.** In America today, there is a shortage of 7.4 million affordable homes for the lowest-income renters. This severe housing shortage is negatively impacting rural and urban communities throughout America. There has been a spike in the number of Americans in rural areas who spend over half of their limited incomes on housing. That has got to change. Bernie’s housing

plan will build nearly 10 million permanently affordable units to fully end the shortage of affordable housing in this country. He will invest an additional \$2 billion at USDA and an additional \$6 billion at HUD to create a first-time homebuyer assistance program that will increase home ownership, invest \$500 million to build new affordable developments in rural areas, and protect existing units from being converted to market rate housing, and invest \$50 billion over 10 years to provide grants to start and expand community land trusts and other shared equity homeownership models. This funding will enable over 1 million households to purchase affordable homes over the next 25 years.

- **Expand worker ownership.** Under this plan, a \$500 million U.S. Employee Ownership Bank will be created to provide low-interest loans, loan guarantees, and technical assistance to workers who want to purchase their own businesses through the establishment of Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) or Eligible Worker-Owned Cooperatives. And he will expand worker ownership centers, modeled after successful programs in Ohio and Vermont, to establish them in every state and regional center in the country. These centers will educate retiring business owners and workers about the benefits of employee ownership. It has been estimated that with education and financial assistance from the federal government between 150,000 to 300,000 retiring owners of small to mid-sized businesses could sell their companies to their workers.
- **Guarantee the right to a decent job that pays a living wage.** That means raising the minimum wage to a living wage for all and enacting a federal jobs guarantee. In a fair economy, no one working 40 hours a week should be struggling to make ends meet or worrying about being able to provide for their children.
- **Guarantee rural Americans access to financial services and end the exploitative practices of modern day loan sharks.** We will utilize the 31,000 post offices across the country to provide basic banking services and cap consumer interest rates at 15% while allowing states to go even further.
- **Make it easier for workers to join unions, not harder.** Our campaign is fighting alongside workers for their right to unionize, demand better working conditions, and basic rights to benefits like paid time off, family, sick, and maternity leave. Bernie understands when labor unions are strong, the U.S. economy is strong.