



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.

Examples of questions most relevant to our members are:

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

I was pleased to participate in the Iowa Institute of Cooperatives virtual candidate series over the summer to answer questions about how I’ll fight for rural communities in Iowa.

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

Iowa is already a leader in renewable energy, as we get about 40% of our electricity from wind. I’d like to continue making key investments and incentivizing continued economic growth in that sector. In fact, my “Small Towns, Bigger Paychecks” plan to grow our economy prioritizes rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure – which I believe is a great opportunity to continue investing in renewable energy. And quite frankly, I’m frustrated with both parties for failing to make these crucial investments, as our roads, electric grids and rural broadband need to be improved and modernized.

Additionally, the damage from the derecho is another reminder that we need to strengthen our electric grid to prepare for natural disasters and ensure we’re building our communities to be climate resilient.

I’d also like to make conservation a major economic opportunity for our farmers and rural communities. As my “Fair Shot For Our Farmers” plan outlines, when we incentivize best practices and invest in the research for soil health, sequestering and storing carbon, capturing and converting methane – it will also create new conservation and energy markets for our farmers, shorten supply chains, and launch new businesses in our rural communities.

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?

We need to invest in research and development for energy and conservation, including advancing battery technologies to enable long-term storage. We also need to make sure our grids and infrastructure are climate resilient and prepared for disasters and additional changes to the climate. I’m ready to roll up my sleeves and work with anyone to get this done.

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?

Yes, I support the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act.

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?

I am a strong supporter of the Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant Program (REDLG) and I will work with anyone to shore up rural development in the next farm bill. As outlined in my "Fair Shot for Our Farmers" plan, one way I'll do this is by taking action to ensure there is once again a dedicated USDA Undersecretary of Agriculture for Rural Development, which will streamline these necessary investments in our rural communities

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?

We need to protect and expand Iowa's ethanol and biofuels industry. It's an essential market in Iowa for our farmers, which also generates thousands of good-paying jobs. Senator Ernst has taken over \$450,000 from Big Oil and turned her back on our farmers by voting to confirm Big Oil allies to run the EPA, including the current Administrator, Andrew Wheeler, who is a former fossil fuel lobbyist. As a result, the EPA has issued over 80 RFS waivers that devastated Iowa's biofuels and farming economy, while lining the pockets of Big Oil.

As a U.S. Senator for Iowa, Theresa will vote to confirm appointees at the EPA and USDA who are supportive of Iowa's biofuels economy. If an EPA administrator continues to abuse the SRE waiver system on Theresa's watch, she will file legislation to ensure such waivers need congressional approval.

Theresa supports urgent, dedicated economic relief for Iowa's biofuels industry, which Senator Ernst has still failed to deliver during this pandemic, choosing instead to sign a letter urging COVID-19 relief that would benefit fossil fuel companies.

We must establish E-15 as a meaningful national standard. That means returning to the initial structure of the biofuels infrastructure program and increasing investments, so retailers and consumers across the country actually have access to higher blends of ethanol at modernized pumping systems.

Additionally, we need to increase research to expand the use of biofuels in aviation and marine vessels. This has the potential to dramatically expand new markets for Iowa's biofuels industry and farmers, while also making the United States less reliant on foreign oil.

Please email candidate responses to Haley Moon (hmoon@iowarec.org).