



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## My Turn

### When the lights go out

#### ALMA DURÁN

I, like many other Kit Carson Electric Cooperative members, support our elected Kit Carson trustees. But, first, and foremost, I support and thank all the employees of Kit Carson Electric for the reliable electric service we receive 24/7. I have been in business for 20 years. Without electric power our business is essentially closed.

Does anyone want to pay more for anything, including electricity? “Well, honestly, probably not.”

A petition is being circulated for the removal of nine trustees from office. I urge you not to sign this petition and when these trustees are up for re-election, use your voice by voting. Let me start by saying, three years ago a community meeting was held in Costilla for Costilla and Amalia residents. Qwest officials along with Kit Carson CEO Luis Reyes and all Kit Carson trustees were invited.

At that time, Qwest officials promised, before the then-state Public Regulation Commission Chairman Ben Ray Lujan, Luis Reyes and most of the Kit Carson trustees, to bring fiber optic lines to our communities. At that time, Kit Carson offered to help Qwest — offering its electric lines to make this a reality for the people of Costilla and Amalia. Qwest refused any help from Kit Carson.

We, the residents of Costilla and Amalia, knew then that these infrastructures were necessary for our communities to grow and expand.

Except, Qwest did not follow through with its promise.

Why? Because, big companies, like Qwest, would rather invest their monies in growing, thriving cities.

Poor rural New Mexico communities are not priorities and or good for their bottom line.

Fortunately, Luis Reyes and the trustees had the foresight to apply for some of the stimulus monies available to bring broadband to our rural areas; \$64 million was awarded to Kit Carson Electric Cooperative!

Hence, here's where the \$19 million loan comes into question. We, the members of Kit Carson get \$64 million and only the users of this needed or wanted service (broadband) will pay back the \$19 million 30-year loan.

The long-term winners are all people living in rural communities like Amalia and Costilla and the approximate 60 permanent jobs this service will create. The short-term winners are the

companies and all the people who get hired by these companies that install the 2,700 miles of broadband lines. These jobs will create other jobs thus helping the local economies even more.

Would rural communities like Amalia and Costilla have community water, sewer or even electricity if government agencies and cooperatives, like Kit Carson, were not willing to invest and even loan money to poor rural communities?

Some Kit Carson members may think that the trustees are unfairly subjecting its members to an unwanted loan, but many of us wanted and asked for this service and I thank the trustees for listening and looking to the future of all its members. All too often, in business diversification enhances the primary business. I see this, not as a "gamble" but as an investment for all rural residents served by Kit Carson Electric Cooperative.

But most importantly, I want reliable service to continue at our business and at our home. Our electric service is reliable and, I feel, at a competitive rate. I encourage members to do cost comparisons with other surrounding electric cooperatives and you will find our rates are not unreasonable or "out of control."

Any Kit Carson workforce layoffs would be detrimental to our reliable service and not to mention also to our local economies.

I urge all members to attend scheduled Kit Carson meetings. If necessary, ask for group or town meetings.

Remember, every member does have a voice and a vote.

The "better way" is to get involved, be informed, attend meetings and vote!

*Alma Durán is a resident of Costilla. She is the owner of Durán's Shamrock & Grocery Store and has been in business for 20 years.*