

## My Turn

### **Kit Carson's goal: Fair, reasonable and affordable rates**

#### **LUIS REYES**

I continue to work with members of Kit Carson Electric Cooperative, Inc. (KCEC) to explain the proposed rate adjustment and any other issues members have. KCEC's goal is to attain fair, reasonable and affordable rates.

A recent My Turn letter to *The Taos News* ("Efforts to derail the recall are totally out of control"), submitted by an Albuquerque lawyer who moved to Ranchos de Taos five years ago, falsely insinuates wrong doing, makes false and misleading attacks and does not address the proposed rate increase or diversification but talks about a politically motivated recall of a duly elected co-op board.

I am disappointed that the writer would use this forum to mislead and misinform KCEC members about the facts related to the recall petition, proposed rate increase and diversification. KCEC members deserve better and are intelligent enough to know that the writer's interest doesn't lie in finding a solution to the rates or other concerns but to continue to falsely accuse and smear nine decent, honest, hardworking public servants.

That said, I will take the "high road" and continue to inform members of the facts and benefits of the rate case and benefits of our diversification projects including Broadband.

First, it has been 25 years since KCEC raised its distribution rates. There have been two rate decreases totaling 10 percent during that time period.

Our members have seen rate increases of over 60 percent from our power supplier since 2000 which the nine trustees have fought.

The trustees have taken on their fiduciary responsibility and studied the proposed rate increase with due diligence, understanding the sensitivity to the low income and elderly on fixed income. Trustees have made KCEC a model cooperative of the United States.

The nine trustees have roots in the community, i.e. respected bankers, business owners, public servants, and veterans who fought for our freedom so people like the writer may exercise the constitutional rights of free speech.

Second, the recall is not needed and should not be supported. The leaders of the recall have not been specific as to why there should be a recall. It has come to our attention that members are being misinformed when they are approached to sign the recall petition. Members are misled to believe by signing the petition their rates would not increase. KCEC is still moving forward with the proposed rate increase.

This recall is the poorest form of democracy. The writer and his critics would appoint the trustees versus the members electing them through the democratic process. The writer states trustees should let democracy take its course and what better way than during elections in 2012.

Third, members in 2000 voted unanimously to enter into propane and telecommunication services and to help create jobs. Diversification issues are not causing the rate increase.

The truth is KCEC has not increased rates for 25 years and the cost of providing electric service has increased over that time. KCEC would need a rate increase even if KCEC would not be involved in diversified projects. The rate increase would ensure that we continue to have a safe and reliable electric system for years to come.

The essential facts that KCEC has been increasingly reliable and offers affordable electricity for customers throughout the service area would tend to support that the writer and his cohorts' persistent level of hostility is driven by something other than what he claims.

I believe the best way to find a solution to their concerns is to discuss the issues and attempt to arrive at solutions, not to attack the board with false and misleading accusations.

It is difficult to understand why the writer would want to deny our members' affordable propane, high-paying construction jobs and high speed broadband when that's what our members want. I do know KCEC has a professional employee team which is well versed on the issues affecting KCEC and its members.

I am fortunate that we have employees that took it upon themselves to express their collective opinions in supporting the board. Decisions made by employees are their own decisions and to imply otherwise belittles employees.

In closing, all members including employees and trustees pay the same rate for electricity and there are no "sweetheart deals or other under the table benefits" for anyone. The purpose of bringing electricity to rural Northern New Mexico was to enhance the quality of life for rural people; bringing broadband to rural New Mexico would enhance the quality of our life. Why would anyone be against enhancing our quality of life?

*Luis A. Reyes Jr. has been employed by Kit Carson Electric Cooperative for 26 years. He was hired as an electrical engineer. He has been CEO for over 18 years.*