

EDITORIAL

Kit Carson recall petition a dubious maneuver

■ So, who do the petitioners hope to see take the nine trustees' places?

We ask those leading the protest against Kit Carson Electric's rate hike: why go through a process if you don't trust it?

After the majority of the co-op's trustees voted to raise rates last fall, members filed enough protests that the state Public Regulation Commission agreed in January to give the increase its close scrutiny. One big issue among members — and the PRC — is whether the co-op's less-than successful propane and Internet divisions were factors in the rate hike.

The PRC, which is the state agency that oversees utilities, will soon hold hearings to determine whether the rate hikes are justified and whether electric rate payers have been covering propane and Internet losses.

But those involved in the protest don't appear satisfied that the PRC will do its job. Perhaps they are betting against the outcome or they've been emboldened by the attention they've received.

So, a group of 10 protesters have led a campaign to recall nine of the co-op's 11 trustees — the ones who voted for the rate hike. They filed petitions with the signatures of 822 members at the co-op's offices; 673 were required.

Then, the empire struck back Friday with the trustees asking the courts to dismiss the recall petition. They claim the charges against the trustees were vague and that members were misled into signing the petition.

We don't know how many people who signed the recall petition were duped, but we wonder how many of them read the detailed reasons qualifying a recall. Among them are: breach of fiduciary duty; misfeasance and nonfeasance — that's illegal activities; or, hostility and lack of cooperation with other trustees.

We don't like to see our bills go up either. But the trustees were not doing anything overtly illegal or corrupt when they voted to raise rates. They were acting within their authority. And like it or not, these are the same people who were elected to make these kinds of controversial decisions. Besides, we question the wisdom of throwing the lot out and voting in new trustees at the annual meeting June 18, which is what would happen if the recall goes through.

If the nine trustees get booted, members present at that meeting would elect a new supermajority of the board.

So, who do the petitioners hope to see take the nine trustees' places? They certainly must have some ideas.

Maybe they are hoping to take over those seats.

We'd like to know.

And, once again, the co-op is leaning on its lawyers to subdue this most recent rebellion. Guess who's paying for that? Yep, rate payers.

We certainly are not happy with parts of the co-op's operations. For instance, we are still waiting for CEO Luis Reyes Jr. to release the records this newspaper and others have requested in an effort to get a clearer picture of the co-op's operations. Why the secrecy?

Secondly, we are tired of people being trustees for life.

Nice pay for the work — going to meetings and junkets on behalf of the co-op — but these should not be career positions. We favor limiting the length of service.

The co-op will have an election next year. That's ample time to come up with viable candidates for the open trustees positions.

In the meantime, let the PRC do its job. Isn't that what the protesters wanted in the first place?