

Refuting the Petition

Dear Co-op Member:

As you probably know by now, the staff and board of directors of the Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC) continually strive to provide you the best electrical service at the best possible rate. In part we achieve that goal by continuing to improve the way the board of trustees governs the co-op. As a democratically elected board, we're highly responsive to the needs of our members, who can express their wishes at co-op Annual Meetings or at special meetings as provided in our by-laws.

An Unworkable Petition

Some SEC members recently signed a petition circulated by a small group of members requesting a special meeting July 27, 2013. The petition calls for a vote on proposals to amend the co-op's by-laws. Co-op staff have diligently checked every name on the petition and have been unable to verify many of them as members. I want to point out that the petition lacks the required number of names to go forward. The board majority and co-op management are concerned the petition has raised false expectations among members about the proposed special meeting. The members should understand there are several problems with the petition. Finally, legal problems with many of the proposed by-law amendments make it impossible to even vote on them until those problems are fixed.

False Expectations and Fear Tactics

Some people who signed the petition might think it called for a meeting where they could vote to lower their electric rates. That's simply not true. Because such amendment to the bylaws had not been publicized beforehand, it could not be placed on the agenda of this proposed special meeting. Other people might have thought signing the petition could help protect the co-op's tax-exempt status. In fact, our tax-exempt status is secure, with no problems or threats, whatsoever.

Specific Agenda Required

The by-laws state that a meeting agenda must be announced ahead of time and it must be specific. Nothing else can be considered. For that reason, the requested special meeting could only consider proposals that members made at the 2013 Annual Meeting on May 5, 2013, or the continuation of that meeting on June 8, 2013. So you can see how the petition's call for consideration and vote on "any new business or other amendments" violates the co-op's bylaws and state law.

Small Number with a Loud Voice

The majority of the board of trustees and co-op management are concerned that the petition was an attempt to undercut co-op procedures as spelled out in its by-laws, state law, and other regulations. The legal and other problems with the proposed amendments mean they need to be rewritten or scrapped altogether. I believe most co-op members don't support their intent, in any case. In future communications to you, we as a board will address the problems with these amendments and our approach to improve the by-laws in a systematic, legally sound, and democratically responsive way. The small number with loud voice have misinformed the membership. We will provide you with the facts and let you make your decision as member.

Thank you for your attention in considering these important matters.

Sincerely,

Luis Aguilar