

April 9, 2015

SEC spending members' money for meeting

As a former member of the Socorro Electric Cooperative (SEC), I can no longer vote on issues, but I can observe—and what I see now is appalling.

Most of us know that the S.E.C. manager is paid more than the governor of our state, and we also know that the co-op has become a “cash cow” for the attorneys they pay to attend each and every meeting (not a local firm, I might remind you). In addition, they recently retained an attorney from North Carolina at a cost of \$200,000 (I'm told) to draft proposed changes in the existing bylaws. I attended one of the meetings to hear what some of those changes would be. Frankly, some of those changes would be welcome, and are excellent proposals. But those are simply tucked into an unwieldy document which in essence takes all control from the owner/members.

There is no need for me to list the issues; that information is obtainable in other places. My concern is the recognition of the amount of money the co-op is willing to spend to persuade members to vote “yes” in favor of these changes.

Did you notice the half-page ad in last week's El Defensor Chieftain? Hope you liked it. It cost just over \$1,100, and I suspect it won't be a one-time publication. There were also duplications of this ad on large cards mailed out to each member. I wonder what it cost to have that many cards made for around 10,000 members and how much it cost in postage. I'd guess that these ads were professionally done — probably by the PR firm that is also paid by the co-op.

In addition to which, they'll be mailing out ballots for that “yes” or “no” vote, but they need to have a quorum for the meeting. So they're offering a chance to win a used car and/or a television set. Attendance at the meeting will give you a \$10 credit on your next electric bill, and even marking your mail-in ballot will give you a \$5 credit.

And the last incentive is that they're offering to feed you, even though early registration doesn't start until 1 p.m., at which time most people have already eaten. I've been told this food prep will cost around \$5,000. If you could get the actual costs of this special meeting, you'd be shocked; and it only goes to prove how desperately they want it.

Ah yes, it must be nice to have money. Trouble is, it isn't their money — it's ours!

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