

JANUARY 2016

# PUBLIC POLICY REPORT

## FEDERAL UPDATE

### **Obama Signs Transportation Bill that Provides Emergency Protection for Utilities**

President Obama has signed “breakthrough bipartisan transportation legislation that helps electric cooperatives respond during emergencies.” NRECA interim CEO Jeffrey Connor said, “Electric cooperatives are grateful that the surface transportation bill establishes clear policies that will allow co-ops to keep the lights on during an emergency without fear of fines and lawsuits from conflicts with environmental laws.”

### **DOE Releases Landmark Energy Efficiency Standard**

DOE released a new standard for commercial air conditioners and furnaces, “describing it as the ‘largest energy-saving standard in history’ and one that ‘will save more energy than any other standard issued by the Department to date.’” According to DOE, the new standard will produce \$167 billion in cost-savings for businesses over the life of the regulation, and result in the release of 885 million fewer tons of CO2.

### **NRECA Calls On EPA to Rework Clean Power Plan “Safety Valve”**

NRECA says the Environmental Protection Agency should “rework a ‘safety valve’ in the Clean Power Plan to provide for reliable and affordable electricity during grid emergencies.” In a petition on Dec. 21, NRECA called on EPA to “adopt a robust, dynamic reliability safety valve to protect reliability under the rule’s strict carbon dioxide emission limits,” and identify triggering conditions, such as lack of fuel or high costs, extreme weather, legal changes, and natural disasters. Rae Cronmiller, NRECA environmental counsel, said, “Because this issue is of central and critical relevance to the workability of the final rule and the reliable operation of the electric grid, EPA should grant NRECA’s petition for reconsideration and accept public comment on this issue.”

## STATE UPDATE

### **Iowa Senators Considering 'Ban the Box' Bill**

Senate lawmakers are considering a "ban the box" bill that would limit when employers can ask job applicants about their criminal histories. A three-member panel of the Senate Judiciary Committee discussed the bill Tuesday but took no action. They plan to meet soon to decide whether to advance it to a full committee. The bill would prohibit an employer or employment agency from inquiring about an applicant's criminal history until the applicant has been selected for an interview or after he or she has been given a conditional job offer.

### **Branstad Removes Bird Flu Funding From Budget**

Chicken and turkey farmers are afraid this year will bring a repeat outbreak of bird flu, which killed millions of birds and temporarily shut down many poultry operations last year. Agriculture Secretary Bill Northey had hoped to spend \$500,000 on a more aggressive state program to address the issue. His Republican colleague, Gov. Terry Branstad, left the appropriation out of his budget entirely.

### State Panel Approves New Air Pollution Fees

After years of study and negotiations, the Iowa Environmental Protection Commission this week approved new fees and air quality permit requirements designed to cover a budget shortfall in the air quality bureau. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources fees now will include a \$100 fee for notifications of potential asbestos issues, a \$385 fee for minor source construction permits, review fees of \$115 an hour for some permits and Title V emissions fees of \$70 per ton.

### Upcoming Activities in 2016

NET Conference – Ft. Myers, FL	February 2-4, 2016
IAEC Director’s Update – West Des Moines, IA	February 3-4, 2016
Momentum is Building 2016 – West Des Moines, IA	February 11-12, 2016
NRECA Director Education Programs – New Orleans, LA	February 11-14, 2016
NRECA Annual Meeting & Expo – New Orleans, LA	February 14-17, 2016
TechAdvantage Conference – New Orleans, LA	February 15-18, 2016

### Consumer Price Index

Month	Seasonally Adjusted Change from Previous Month
Dec. 2015	-0.1%
Nov. 2015	0.0%
Oct. 2015	0.2%
Sept. 2015	-0.2%
Aug. 2015	-0.1%
<b>Unadjusted Rolling 12 Month Average: 0.7%</b>	