



NWPPA August Recess Talking Points

August 2021

NWPPA represents 155 not-for-profit electric utilities: municipalities, cooperatives, and public/peoples' utility districts in nine Northwestern states (Alaska, California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming) and British Columbia, Canada. Our member utilities serve communities large and small, and we value local decision-making. Many NWPPA members operate federally licensed hydropower facilities and/or receive federal hydropower from Bonneville Power Administration or Western Area Power Administration.

Infrastructure Priorities

NWPPA supports inclusion of energy infrastructure provisions in the infrastructure bill.

- **Hydropower:**
 - NWPPA strongly supports including language to **streamline hydropower relicensing** in an infrastructure package. Our members support **H.R. 1588, the Hydropower Clean Energy Future Act** (McMorris Rodgers) and encourage bipartisan dialogue around this issue. [*Reps. Newhouse and Curtis have cosponsored.*] This bill is currently not a part of the bipartisan infrastructure package. NWPPA urges its delegation to quickly move to address this needed reform of the hydropower licensing process.
 - NWPPA supports inclusion of hydropower provisions in the infrastructure bill **to establish a new grant program that provides \$553 million to support grid resilience, dam safety upgrades, environmental enhancements at existing hydropower facilities, and funding to invest in the current hydropower fleet.**
- **Consumer-Owned Utility Financing Tools:**
 - NWPPA supports inclusion of legislation to allow **electric cooperatives to refinance Rural Utilities Service (RUS) loans** and **restoration of the ability to advance refund tax-exempt municipal bonds** to help leverage local investment in infrastructure.
 - NWPPA urges members of congress to **support S. 978 and H.R. 2244, the Flexible Financing for Rural America Act**, which would allow electric cooperatives to refinance RUS loans. [*Sens. Tester, Daines, and Barrasso have cosponsored S. 978 and Reps. Schrader, Rosendale, Kilmer, LaMalfa, Don Young, Schrier, Newhouse, Moore, and Garamendi have cosponsored H.R. 2244.*]
 - NWPPA urges senators to support **S. 479 (LOCAL Infrastructure Act)** and **H.R. 2288 (Investing in Our Communities Act)** to reinstate advance refunding tax-exempt municipal bonds. [*Sens. Barrasso, Feinstein, Lummis, Murkowski, Rosen, and Padilla have cosponsored S. 479 and Reps. Garamendi, Blumenauer, Kilmer, and Huffman have cosponsored H.R. 2288.*]
- **Disaster Relief Financing for Electric Utilities:**
 - **NWPPA supports inclusion of H.R. 3209 and S. 704, the Disaster Safe Power Grid Act, in the infrastructure bill and urges its delegation to cosponsor this bill.** Drought conditions in

the West have expanded wildfire season. Providing funding through a matching grant program for electric utilities to employ innovative strategies to prevent wildfires and ensure reliable delivery of electricity is key to preventing and quickly recovering from wildfires.

- **Broadband Funding:**

- NWPPA supports funding and other programs that help to bridge the digital divide by providing internet access in rural areas. (Current bipartisan infrastructure package includes \$65 billion in funding for building out broadband networks.)
- We have concerns with legislation included in the House Energy and Commerce Committee Republican broadband package that would **prevent municipalities from building out broadband networks**. This legislation would devastate the ability to provide broadband by consumer-owned utilities that have invested consumer funds into networks in rural areas. We need more broadband offerings, not restrictions on who can build networks in underserved places.
- We also support provisions for **funding for small modular reactors and advanced nuclear, cybersecurity, and electric vehicles** in an infrastructure bill. Federal grant programs and funding for specific projects such as the NuScale Small Modular Reactor at Idaho National Lab and the Advanced Reactor Demonstration Program will help unlock local investment. The infrastructure framework includes several provisions to fund and promote use of these technologies. They include:
 - A section that promotes nuclear energy by requiring DOE to report on the feasibility for using micro and small modular reactors to help meet resilience and carbon reduction goals;
 - \$7.5 billion to deploy electric vehicle charging infrastructure; and
 - Cybersecurity provisions that provide funding for critical infrastructure risk management, create grant programs to provide federal assistance to state and local governments, and establish a program to promote physical and cybersecurity of electric utilities.
- Any major **emissions reduction programs** focused on utilities should provide both time and flexibility to meet those program goals and should consider reliability and costs to consumers, especially in rural areas. If a Clean Energy Standard is considered, it should **value hydropower as a renewable, 100% emissions-free resource**.

Continued Support for Wildfire Prevention and Suppression

NWPPA appreciates what Congress has done to address wildfire funding issues for the federal land management agencies and continues to support emergency funding and federal land management actions—when needed—for fire suppression.

- NWPPA urges federal land managers **to work with utilities in implementing the 2018 vegetation management law and when considering forest management actions near utility rights of way on federal lands**.
- NWPPA supports **continued funding for wildfire prevention and suppression** and supports administrative efforts to finalize regulations to prevent wildfires on federal lands.
- NWPPA supports quick consideration and passage of S. 704 and HR 3209, the Disaster Safe Power Grid Act, and urges its delegation to cosponsor this legislation.