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Climate change policy will hit your pocketbook. There are no two ways about it. This fall, Congress will resume the debate on climate change legislation. The policy, legislators eventually choose, will decide how much—not if—your electric bill will increase.

Climate change legislation will focus on reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Congress is leaning toward a cap-and-trade program to do this. Cap-and-trade systems work by setting a specific limit on airborne pollutants from sources like power plants, factories, and refineries, and require those sources to

account for all emissions with issued allowances.

Cap-and-trade has worked well over the past 15 years to reduce emissions of acid rain-causing sulfur dioxide nationwide and over the last decade to curb smog-creating nitrogen oxides. However, some cap-and-trade tax proposals for carbon dioxide contain a new twist: pricey allowances.

Allowances would be auctioned off at undetermined prices, leading to huge cost burdens for any source of carbon dioxide emissions. In the case of power plants, those costs would ultimately be passed on to consumers using the power, in some cases adding to electric bills. The federal government has said such a system would create a new, substantial source of revenue.

We need to help Congress draft energy solutions that accomplish environmental goals while taking affordability into account. But time may be

tight: if Congress fails to act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stands ready to step in, leaving decisions that affect consumers' pocketbooks up to unelected officials.

Some have claimed that electric cooperatives, and utility companies in general, are against carbon dioxide legislation. That's simply not true. However, we believe national energy and climate change policy must focus on reducing emissions, not on "revenue enhancement" for federal government.

We believe money generated—through cap-and-trade programs or otherwise—must be used wisely: devoted to developing related technology or returned to those who foot the bill. We believe Congress should take the lead on climate change, not regulators or Wall Street speculators.

Electric cooperatives are asking elected officials to address climate change issues

in an affordable and environmentally responsible fashion. We're ready to provide insight into how various policy proposals will affect consumers, and we'll urge lawmakers to reach the right answers.

We need you to join us. Ask your U.S. representatives and senators to keep electric bills affordable. Get involved in this effort by participating in the Our Energy, Our Future™ grassroots campaign at www.ourenergy.coop.

I especially encourage you to visit this site now and to join in a postcard campaign launched by Colorado Rural Electric Association to ensure Colorado's interests are represented.

We need a plan people can live with today while we deal with the climate change problem of tomorrow.

**SAN LUIS VALLEY
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Let's Keep Electricity Affordable