

CREA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



KENT SINGER

It's hard to believe, but it's been two years since our last in-person CREA Annual Meeting. In 2020, we had just wrapped up the CREA Annual Meeting (and the NRECA annual meeting) when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Then last year, after 75 years of in-person annual meetings, our 2021 annual meeting was conducted virtually.

We are thankful to be meeting again in person. While there are always lots of great speakers and opportunities to meet with state legislators and other officials, the best part of this meeting is getting together with all our electric co-op friends and colleagues from across the state. It is easier to listen to and learn from one another when we are face-to-face as opposed to meeting via little boxes on a computer screen.

Similar to its work during the first year of the pandemic, the CREA team continued to perform at a high level, delivering value to our co-op members in 2021.

Dale Kishbaugh's safety team and volunteers from several co-ops completed a record number of RESAP (Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program) evaluations in 2021. CREA was one of only five statewide associations that caught up on the 2020 postponed RESAP audits while also conducting 2021's visits. Dale's team initiated a streamlined RESAP evaluation process that was just as thorough but involved less co-op staff time.

The RESAP program continues to be one of the best barometers of how your co-op is doing in terms of safety practices and Dale and his team are committed to making it a valuable tool for our members.

In the government relations arena, we had one of our busiest years at the Colorado legislature in 2021. Geoff Hier, Tim Coleman and our contract lobbyists worked on 34 bills, providing testimony on nine. These bills related to co-op governance, greenhouse gas emissions, net metering, beneficial electrification, wholesale markets, building performance standards, wildfire mitigation and broadband deployment, among others. While our bill to protect co-ops from liability related to wildfires did not pass, we did mitigate the impacts of other bills on co-ops.

In November, Geoff retired as director of government relations after 14 years. While we miss Geoff, I promoted Tim to manager

of legislative affairs. He now handles our lobbying at the Capitol along with our contract lobbyists. I also hired Craig Johnson, an experienced utility lawyer, as CREA's director of government relations and general counsel. Going forward, I, Tim, Craig and our contract lobbyists will provide a formidable team of strong advocates for Colorado's electric co-ops.

On the communications front, Mona Neeley and her team continue to publish an excellent statewide magazine, *Colorado Country Life*, that is delivered to the consumer-members of 15 of our 22 member co-ops. *CCL* continues to be the best tool for our co-ops to communicate with their consumer-members. Surveys show that the magazine is highly valued and relied on by co-op members statewide.

As of this writing *CCL* is once again among the finalists in this year's competition for NRECA's George W. Haggard Memorial Journalism Award for best statewide magazine, competing with much bigger staffs at two other statewide; best of luck to Mona, Cassi Gloe and Kylee Coleman!

CREA's education program also continues to thrive. Liz Fiddes and Julie Baker work tirelessly to plan and deliver valuable and informative board meetings, manager meetings, webinars, conferences and web calls to keep our co-op directors and staff updated on changes in our dynamic industry.

Our 12th annual Energy Innovations Summit last fall was once again our benchmark conference in 2021, but it was only one of dozens of meetings that CREA facilitated. CREA's efforts in this area provide opportunities for co-op directors and staff to learn about industry trends and they enable co-op directors to save money while earning their credentials.

Working with the CREA board and managers, CREA also developed a new set of messaging principles in 2021. Collectively, we landed on the phrase "Colorado's Electric Cooperatives: Leaders for a Sustainable Future." This phrase summarizes where we see the co-op program within the overall Colorado electric industry. Under this heading, we agreed that there are three core principles that guide the activities of our membership: maintaining reliability and affordability; advancing innovative solutions; and enhancing community resilience.

While recognizing that there are different points of view among the CREA membership on a variety of issues, our membership is unanimous in supporting these three core principles. They will serve as a benchmark for the CREA staff in 2022 and beyond.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kent L. Singer". The signature is fluid and cursive.

KENT SINGER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR