



UP DATE



September, 2006



A Message From The General Manager/CEO

By Daniel G. Laws

“Human Connections”

Soon you will receive a ballot in the mail giving you the opportunity to participate in the election of directors to seats where terms have expired. Rio Grande Electric Co-op’s directors serve at the pleasure of the membership, and as a result of your thoughtful consideration. All directors are elected at large, which means you can vote for your choice in each race, regardless of whether you live in that district. The election is handled entirely by mail, so that everyone can participate. The process is simple and convenient. There really is no excuse for you not to participate, but I am reminded that, over the years, we rarely receive more than 18% of the ballots back.

For those who don’t know, Rio Grande has a provision in its bylaws that limits the number of terms a director can serve. If re-elected to successive terms, a director is limited to three three-year terms, and then must go off the board for at least one three-year term. Most electric cooperatives do not use term limits, but our board of directors implemented this provision more than 17 years ago, and each new board has held fast to the principle. There are, as I am sure you can imagine, compelling arguments that can be made for term limits, and equally compelling arguments against term limits. In the end, the argument that overrides all others is the fact that term limits permit more members the opportunity to participate in the management of the Cooperative, and that’s a good thing.

Two directors will reach term limits in October — Howard Wakefield and Chris Lacy. Both were elected in 1997, at the Annual Meeting, which was held in Carrizo Springs that year, and have served with distinction ever since. Chris and Howard achieved the status of Credentialed Certified Director, upon completion of the required course of study provided by our national association, NRECA. During their tenure on the board, they have grappled with some of the most difficult issues with which the Cooperative has ever dealt, and did so with your best interest in mind. You can be proud of the job they have done, and you can be assured they will be missed.

Finally, I want to mention one of our former directors, Paul O’Rourke. Paul passed away quietly Monday, August 21, at the age of 77. He served the membership of Rio Grande Electric Co-op as an employee before becoming a director. Paul was a director on the board that hired me, and served until 1997, when term limits required that a new person be elected to his seat. Though small in stature, it’s the size of his heart I will always remember. Amongst those memories are the times he consoled and counseled me as a father would a son. And, arguably, my most prominent memory of Paul, was a time when he defended me with the ferocity of a she-bear protecting her cub, at a time when I desperately needed defending. I know Paul’s wife, Elsa, and their children will appreciate your thoughts and prayers as they recover from their loss.

This month’s column can be summed up under the heading of “human connections”, and may seem a little out of place in an electric utility magazine. However, when you think about it—aren’t those human connections what makes Rio Grande your **“Home Team Advantage”**?