

YOUTH TOUR STUDY GUIDE

2025

SOUTHERN RIVERS ENERGY

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for your interest in the Washington Youth Tour contest. The Youth Tour is a unique leadership and educational experience. Sponsored by local electric co-ops like Southern Rivers Energy, this trip is awarded to exceptional high school students who compete for a chance to tour Washington, D.C., alongside more than 100 other teens from across the state and over 1,400 teens from across the country! We wish you the best of luck during the competition process.

This is the study packet for your application submission and interview process. After reviewing the provided materials, you will create a video covering information about the history of rural electrification, Southern Rivers Energy, and the U.S. government. **The topic of your submission is: What did you learn from the study materials, and why should you represent Southern Rivers Energy on the Youth Tour?**

Remember, you are trying to stand out among your peers—be creative. Submissions will be judged based on the following criteria:

Knowledge of material: 35 points
Composition and grammar: 15 points
Originality and creativity: 40 points
Adherence to all instructions: 10 points

Submit your video in either hard copy or electronic format to Southern Rivers Energy. Please ensure that you include the **WYT application** with your submission. This form can be found at southernriversenergy.com/washington-youth-tour

Video submission options:

Drop-off (jump drive) at:
Southern Rivers Energy
Attn: Youth Tour - Kathryn Green
1367 Highway 341 S
Barnesville, GA 30204

Email entries to: kathryn@srivers.net

Your video submission is due by February 3 at 5 p.m. at our headquarters at 1367 Hwy 341 S. in Barnesville. The highest-scoring students will be invited to participate in the interview process, beginning at 11:00 a.m. on Feb. 13. Students must score at least 80 to qualify for the interview. The interview will be judged on personality, knowledge of the study packet information and current events, communication ability, appearance and poise, leadership qualities, and goals. Please dress appropriately, as if you were attending a job interview. After their scheduled interview, students are free to leave. Two students will be selected to win a trip to Washington, D.C., from June 15-20.

Kathryn Green
WYT Coordinator
kathryn@srivers.net • 770-358-5772

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Study Tip:

Each study section includes helpful videos and QR codes.
Be sure to click or scan the pdf or copy and paste the url.



ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

THIS SECTION COVERS:

- **RURAL ELECTRIFICATION**
- **VIDEO: COOPERATIVE PURPOSE**
- **7 COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES**
- **WHAT IS AN ELECTRIC CO-OP?**
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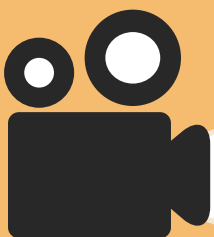
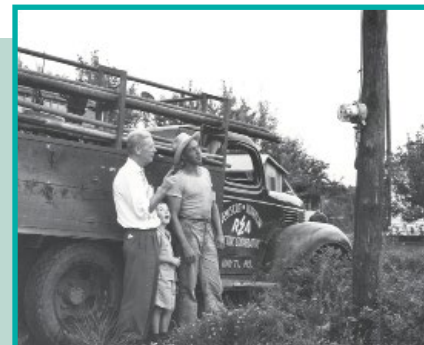
RURAL ELECTRIFICATION

In the 1930s, for-profit electric utility companies refused to serve rural areas because they claimed they couldn't make money. When utilities did provide electricity to rural areas, they required customers to pay the cost of extending power lines (*which was roughly a year's annual income at the time!*). Afterwards rural customers often had to pay DOUBLE the price for power that urban customers paid.

As part of his New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the federal Rural Electrification Administration in 1935. Electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) soon sprouted across the nation, formed by members, for members. People paid \$5 to be a member and co-ops secured loans from the government to start operations.

Part of what sets co-ops apart from the larger Investor Owned Utilities is that EMCs are member-owned and not-for-profit. This means that any revenue that is collected after covering operating costs is returned to the members in the form of capital credits based on each member's energy usage for a given year. Southern Rivers Energy typically refunds capital credits in December. As of this year, Southern Rivers Energy has refunded more than \$22.6 million to its members and co-ops across the nation retire over \$600 million in capital credits annually.

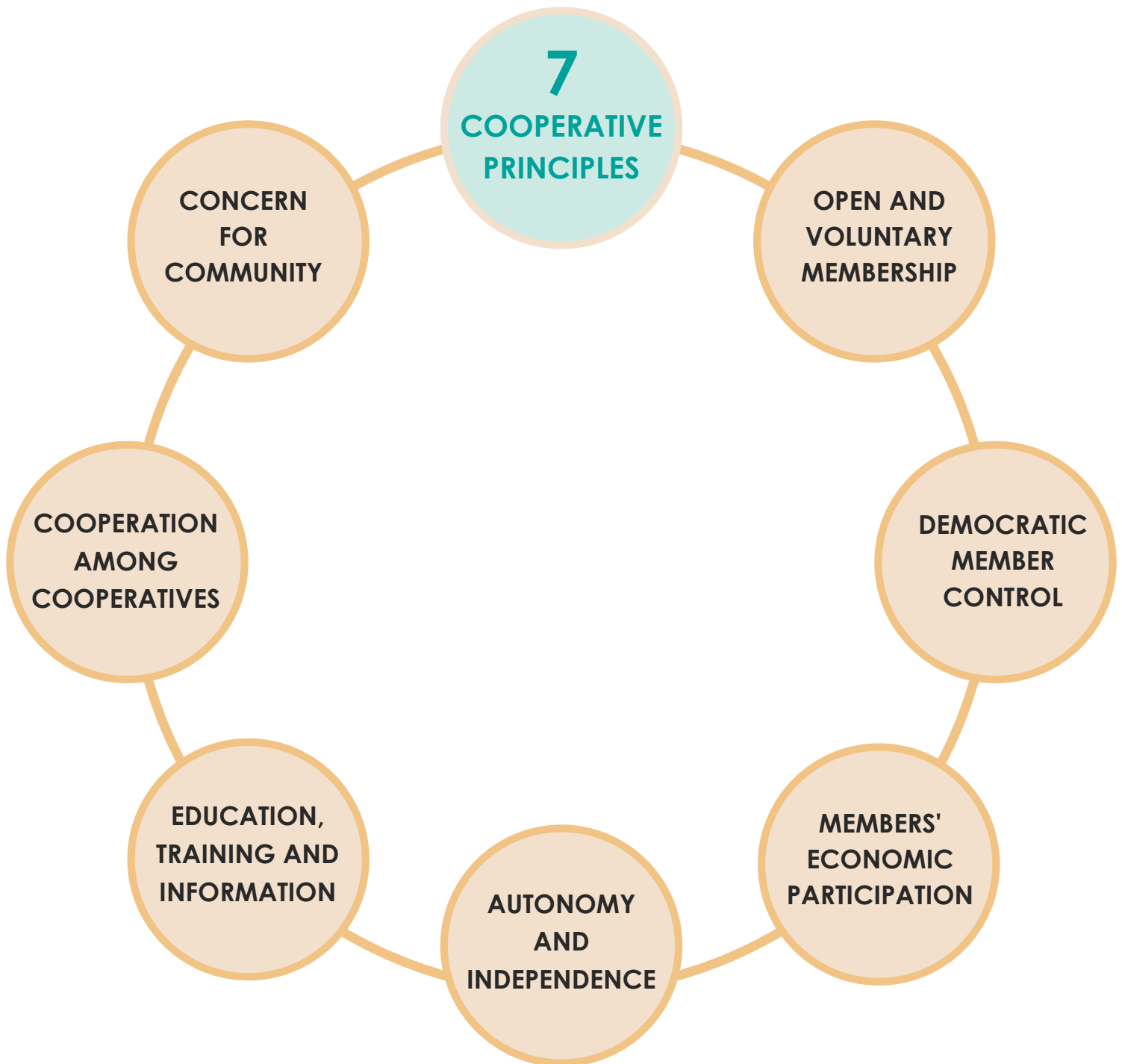
Today, rural electric co-ops provide electricity to more than 42 million Americans across 48 states. There are 41 electric membership cooperatives (EMCs) in Georgia. These member-owned utilities serve roughly 4.4 million Georgians and cover 73% of the state's land area.



COOPERATIVE PURPOSE

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG19VaDzWUs>

COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES



The International Cooperative Alliance adopted a set of business principles in 1995. Today, cooperatives worldwide operate using the same principles.

co•op•er•a•tive

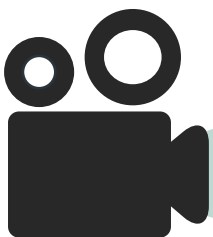
A farm, business or other organization that is owned and run jointly by its members, who share the profits or benefits.

WHAT IS AN ELECTRIC CO-OP?

An electric co-op is a private, non-profit company whose purpose is to deliver electricity to its customers or members. As a cooperative, we are required to fulfill two requirements including reinvesting revenue into our service area communities through stable rates and infrastructure or returning it to members through patronage capital. Cooperatives are also required to operate using a model of democracy.

Cooperative membership is a powerful thing. It means you have an energy source you can trust to look out for you and your community's best interests, not its own bottom line. We exist to meet our members' needs.

The Cooperative Difference is how we treat our members, how we collaborate and how we support community. The difference is clear. We take pride in offering electricity and other services to our members.



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC CO-OPS: ENERGY IS US

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBJAD1N2Bic>

CONNECTING RURAL COMMUNITIES TO THE MODERN ECONOMY

More than 6 million households served by electric co-ops still lack broadband internet access. Electric co-ops are helping to solve this problem and bringing new life to communities—creating jobs, improving health care and enhancing education.

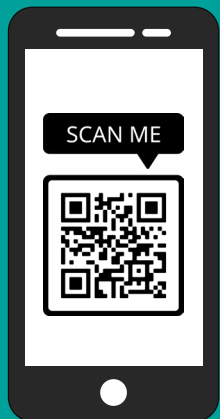
In 1938, neighbors joined together to improve their quality of life by forming an electric membership cooperative and providing electricity to our rural communities. Eighty-three years later, we are working to improve the quality of life in a different way and have expanded our services to include a fiber network to strengthen our grid and provide access to fiber internet service through a unique partnership.

SRE is proud to partner with Conexon Connect to bring fast, reliable high-speed internet, at an affordable price with the same quality customer service you expect from your electric cooperative, to all SRE members.

Visit conexonconnect.com/southernriversenergy for more information.

Notes:

THE FUTURE OF SRE



We saw the need for broadband firsthand in our communities and began researching potential solutions for our members in 2017. Thanks to the dedication of our leadership team and the vision of your board, we are proud to say the wait is over. Southern Rivers Energy's partnership with Conexon to design and build a fiber network will help our communities thrive for decades to come by strengthening our electric grid and expanding rural broadband. The build was completed in 2023. Our members now enjoy the benefit of improved electric service and access to reliable, affordable fiber-to-the-home internet service through Connect, powered by Southern Rivers Energy.

[SRE's Annual Report](#)

HOW ELECTRICITY REACHES YOU

Today, Americans rely on electricity more than ever to power their lives. Without a reliable electric grid, we'd all be left in the dark, and once our cell phones ran out of battery life, most of us would be cut off from family and friends.

The electric grid is a complex system of power plants, transmission lines, substations and distribution lines that transmit electric power from the place where it's generated, all the way to consumer-members at the end of the line.

Here's a breakdown of the path electricity takes to get to your home:

GENERATION:

Electricity is generated at a power plant. (Nuclear, wind, solar, hydro, coal or gas)

TRANSMISSION:

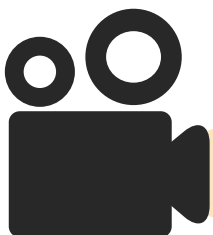
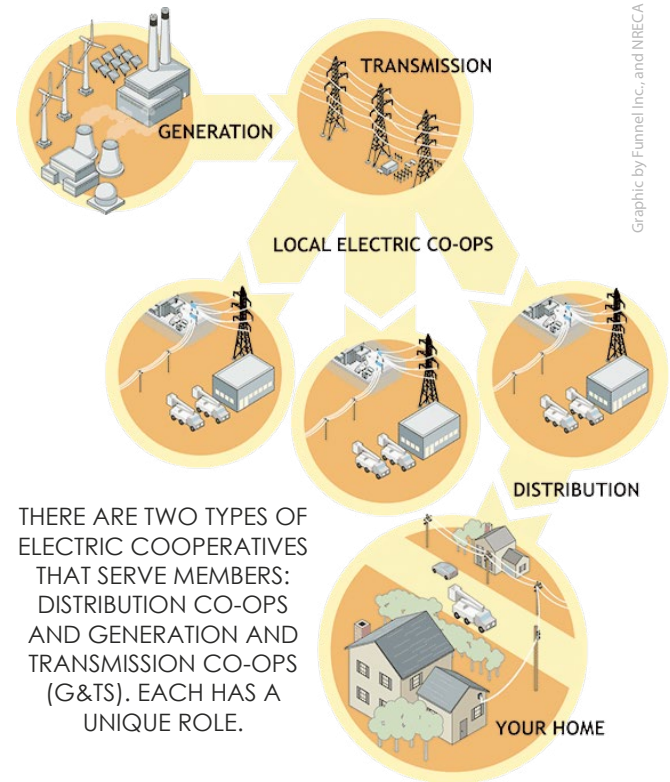
It is converted to a high voltage to be transmitted to your neighborhood.

DISTRIBUTION:

Electricity is then distributed to homes, businesses and other facilities.

CONSUMER MEMBER:

Electricity powers phones, computers, and appliances and heats, lights and cools homes.



RESTORING POWER

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PrjKNCAix4>

SOUTHERN RIVERS ENERGY

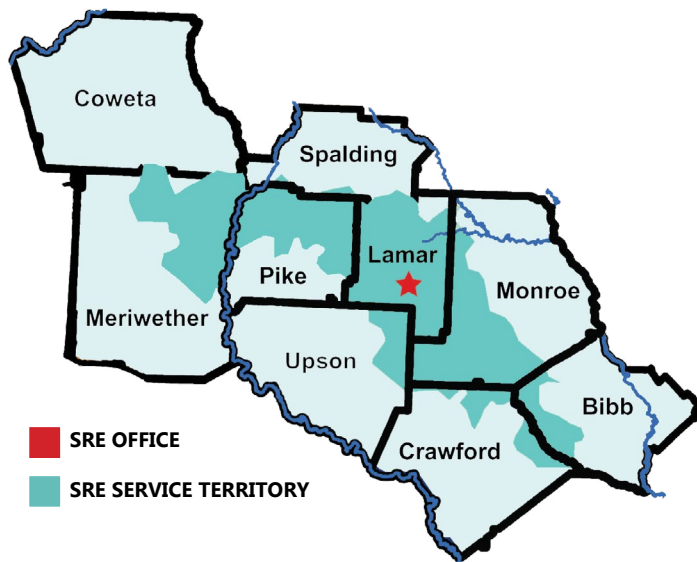
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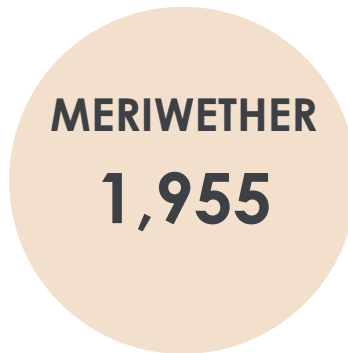
THE HISTORY OF SRE

Southern Rivers Energy was originally chartered as Lamar EMC in February 1938, after a group of local farmers got together to create a plan of action to bring power to their community through Franklin Roosevelt's Rural Electrification Administration (REA). They worked tirelessly to construct an electrical system, and on August 11, 1938, President Roosevelt came to Barnesville to symbolically throw the switch and begin our legacy of lighting the countryside. SRE is the only co-op in the country to be formally dedicated by Roosevelt.

Lamar EMC began with only 357 members, 144 miles of power line and 2 employees. Southern Rivers Energy changed its name from Lamar EMC in 2005, and now employs 67 people and provides service to 16,800 members and over 21,000 meters in nine counties: Bibb, Coweta, Crawford, Lamar, Meriwether, Monroe, Pike, Spalding and Upson.



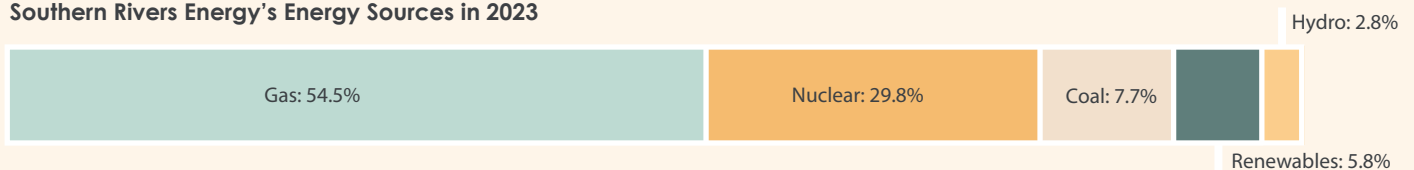
A BREAKDOWN OF SRE MEMBERS



SRE'S POWER SUPPLY

We rely on a diverse portfolio of fuels, including coal, natural gas, nuclear, hydropower, solar and other renewables. A diverse mix of resources ensures current and future electricity demands are met reliably and sustainably at the lowest reasonable cost.

Southern Rivers Energy's Energy Sources in 2023



SRE GOVERNANCE

Southern Rivers Energy is governed by an elected board of directors who represent our members in the business of the co-op. Southern Rivers Energy is based on a "one member, one vote" standard. We encourage members to be active in the cooperative by attending annual meetings, voting in cooperative elections, staying informed about current events and trends in the energy industry, speaking to directors about concerns, and even contacting elected government officials to voice ideas and concerns about public policy in the energy industry.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The board of directors of a co-op makes important strategic decisions for the organization, while the operations (day-to-day running of the business) is entrusted to the CEO and employees. They are SRE members. They live and work in our community, and they want the best quality of life for their families while preserving the integrity of small-town life.

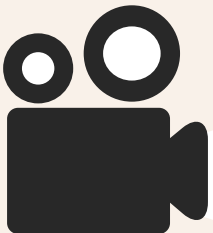
THE KEY PEOPLE IN A COOPERATIVE

MEMBERS
ELECT
DIRECTORS

DIRECTORS
EMPLOY
CEO

CEO
HIRES
EMPLOYEES

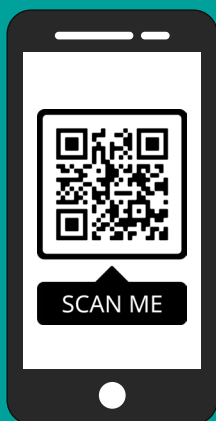
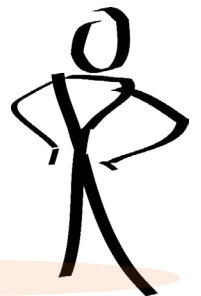
EMPLOYEES
SERVE
MEMBERS



WE'RE YOUR LOCAL CO-OP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aY3oJyvgNmQ&t=3s>

In 2023, SRE celebrated 85 years of providing safe, reliable electric service and excellent value to our members. Our employees and board of directors are committed to honoring the past while embracing the future. We remain dedicated to going above and beyond to address your ever-growing energy needs and look forward to another great year as your electric cooperative doing great things together.



'THEY'VE GOT OUR BACK'

From booming suburbs to remote rural farming communities, America's electric cooperatives are engines of economic development across 56 percent of the nation. Each electric co-op is shaped by the community it serves and responds to the specific needs of their members.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NrQC0E67YM>

KILOWATT-HOUR VS. KILOWATT

What's the difference between kilowatt vs. kilowatt-hour? A kilowatt is 1,000 watts, which is a measure of power. A kilowatt-hour, otherwise known as a kWh, is a way to measure how much energy a certain machine needs to run for one hour.

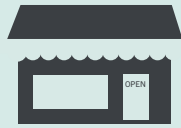
So, if you have a 1,000 watt device, it takes 1,000 watts (or one kW) to make it work. If you run that device for one hour, you'll have used up one kilowatt of energy for that hour, or one kWh.

2023 SRE KWH SOLD BY CATEGORY



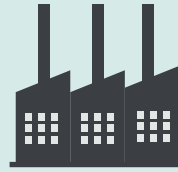
RESIDENTIAL

286,668,232 kWh



SMALL COMMERCIAL

38,283,115 kWh



LARGE COMMERCIAL AND SCHOOLS

24,234,923 kWh



IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

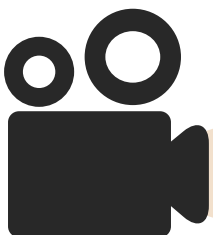
242,513 kWh

YOUR DOLLAR AT WORK

A breakdown of how each dollar is spent:



\$.45	POWER COST
\$.33	OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE
\$.10	DEPRECIATION
\$.07	MARGINS
\$.05	INTEREST
<hr/>	
\$1.00	



YOUR LOCAL TOUCHSTONE ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Video link: <https://vimeo.com/198229487>

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

THIS SECTION COVERS:

- **ANNUAL MEETING**
- **VIDEO: HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK**
- **KEY BENEFITS OF A CO-OP**
- **QR CODE: CO-OPS DURING COVID**
- **OPERATION ROUND UP**

Notes:

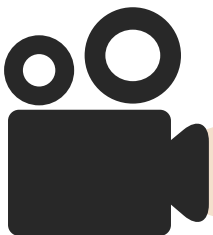
ANNUAL MEETING & MEMBERSHIP

Once a consumer pays the \$5 membership fee, they become a part owner of the cooperative. They have a voice in how the cooperative is operated and influence this process through casting their vote at the annual meeting.

Annual meetings are a tradition at electric cooperatives—a tradition that celebrates our unique business model and brings members together to share the many ways we work to serve their current and future needs. Our bylaws requires Southern Rivers Energy to hold a meeting of members once a year.

Each year in August, Southern Rivers Energy holds its annual meeting to keep the members informed of co-op news and active in the business of the co-op by voting for their board of directors. SRE's meeting usually includes a breakfast, a health fair, free gifts and door prizes. The annual meeting is also an opportunity for members to hear about their cooperative's financial condition, business programs and plans for the future.

SRE members are part owners of the cooperative, not customers, so we work for them and look out for their best interests. We strive to help members better understand their power bill, manage energy usage to control their costs and provide the tools and services to make their life easier. As a trusted energy partner, we listen to our members' needs and respond accordingly. We are constantly looking for the best, most economical ways to improve our service while supporting education and economic development in our communities.



HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzeHbdbFlso>

RETURN OF
CAPITAL
CREDITS

INVESTING
REVENUE INTO
OUR SERVICE
AREA

STABLE
ELECTRIC
RATES

MEMBERS
HAVE A VOTE
IN CO-OP
BUSINESS

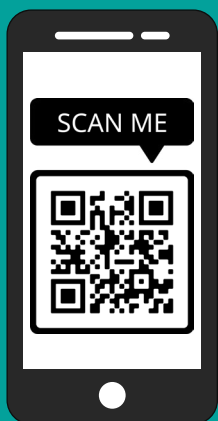
ADVANTAGES
OF AN
ELECTRIC
CO-OP

SERVICE-
FOCUSED
NOT PROFIT-
FOCUSED

DEDICATED
TO PROVIDING
SERVICES TO
RURAL AREAS

COMMUNITY-
FOCUSED

TRUSTED
ENERGY
ADVISOR
TO MEMBERS



CO-OPS HELP THROUGH COVID-19 CRISIS

When the pandemic began and the world shut down, SRE immediately suspended nonpayment disconnects and late fees to ensure that you, our members, would have power while you sheltered in place. You embraced using digital methods of payment and we had record downloads of our mobile app. SRE partnered with the Lamar County Health Department to provide a drive-thru COVID-19 testing and vaccination site under the equipment shed behind our office. We worked to identify ways to help our members and support our communities, which resulted in multiple emergency Operation Round Up grants for schools and food pantries.

<https://www.electric.coop/video-co-ops-support-communities-amid-covid-pandemic>



OPERATION ROUND UP

Southern Rivers Energy was founded 85 years ago with the mission to enhance the quality of life for residents of central Georgia. That same goal remains at the heart of everything we do today and serves as the inspiration for our charitable arm, Operation Round Up (ORU).

Southern Rivers Energy adopted ORU in 2005, providing our members with the opportunity to support local charities and individuals in need by simply rounding up their monthly power bill to the nearest even amount. Starting in 2019, members also have the option to make one-time donations each month via their electric bill. These tax-deductible contributions are deposited into the SRE Trust to provide funding for grants, college scholarships, and teacher grants, all aimed at supporting and strengthening our communities.

The average member contributes approximately \$6 a year, and every penny donated goes directly to grant and scholarship recipients. None of the funds donated are used to cover electric bills, other utilities, or general operating expenses. This innovative program embodies the spirit of neighbors helping neighbors, and although some donations may seem small, the impact is immeasurable.

The SRE Trust has invested \$1.7 million in worthwhile projects for local groups and individuals through ORU, and none of this would be possible without the generous support of our members. In addition to community grants, ORU also funds the SRE Trust Scholarship and Bright Ideas teacher grant programs.

You can find scholarship and teacher grant applications on our website at southernriversenergy.com. For more information about SRE's education opportunities, please feel free to contact Kathryn Green at kathryn@srivers.net or 770-358-5772.

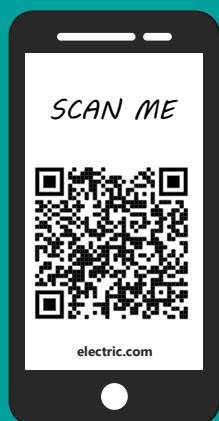
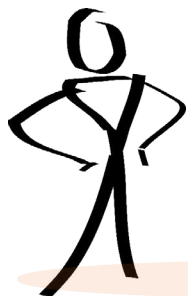
Notes:

YOUTH TOUR

THIS SECTION COVERS:

- QR CODE: ABOUT YOUTH TOUR
- SODA POP CO-OP
- YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
- VIDEO: 2019 YLC ADDRESS

Travel to Washington, D.C. to explore monuments and museums, meet with members of Congress and make lifelong friends with other students from across the country. You'll discover leadership lessons from our nation's history and be immersed in the cooperative spirit that built our nation, with all expenses paid by your local electric cooperative. Yeah, that's pretty amazing. Are you up for it?



ABOUT YOUTH TOUR

More than 1,800 of rural America's best and brightest high-schoolers will visit Washington, D.C., this summer to learn about the political process, interact with elected officials and gain an understanding of American history.

Link: <https://www.electric.coop/our-organization/youth-programs/about-the-youth-tour>

YOUTH LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

In 1976, the NRECA Board of Directors created the Youth Consulting Board (YCB). In 1998, the structure of the Youth Consulting Board was redesigned and became known as the NRECA Youth Leadership Council.

During Youth Tour, you can have the chance to be selected to represent your state on the NRECA Youth Leadership Council (YLC). One student from each state is selected and they will come back to Washington, D.C. in July for a leadership workshop, which will focus on the electric cooperative industry.

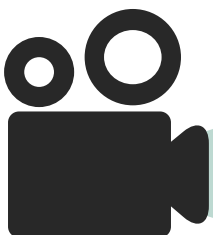
The purpose of the YLC conference is to build leadership and public speaking skills, and to enhance the delegates' knowledge of the energy industry and the cooperative form or business.

Each student will prepare a 5-7 minute speech about what inspired them during their Youth Tour trip. Also, the YLC National Spokesperson will be selected to address the membership at the NRECA Annual Meeting and to address the Youth Tour delegates the following year. These students will also give their speech at their statewide and local cooperative annual meeting.

Members of the YLC play an important role during NRECA's Annual Meeting the following spring. Now only are the YLC members recognized on stage, they have a hand-on experience with virtually every facet of the meeting including the resolutions process and helping our members communicate with their legislators.

YLC members leave more poised, confident and a better developed leader with a strong determination to improve your community and make their country a better place. Further, they leave having built life-long friendships with other student leaders from across the country.

Source: NRECA's Electric Cooperative Youth Tour



2019 YLC WYT ADDRESS

https://players.brightcove.net/1918791292001/default_default/index.html?videoId=6013177058001

U.S. GOVERNMENT

THIS SECTION COVERS:

- **THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH**
- **THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH**
- **THE JUDICIAL BRANCH**
- **QR CODE: WHO REPRESENTS YOU?**
- **VIDEO: HOW IS POWER DIVIDED?**
- **HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW**
- **BE PREPARED TO MEET LEGISLATORS**

THE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT

To ensure a separation of powers, the U.S. Federal Government is made up of three branches: legislative, executive and judicial. To ensure the government is effective and citizens' rights are protected, each branch has its own powers and responsibilities, including working with the other branches.

LEGISLATIVE (THE U.S. CAPITOL)



EXECUTIVE (THE WHITE HOUSE)



JUDICIAL (SUPREME COURT)



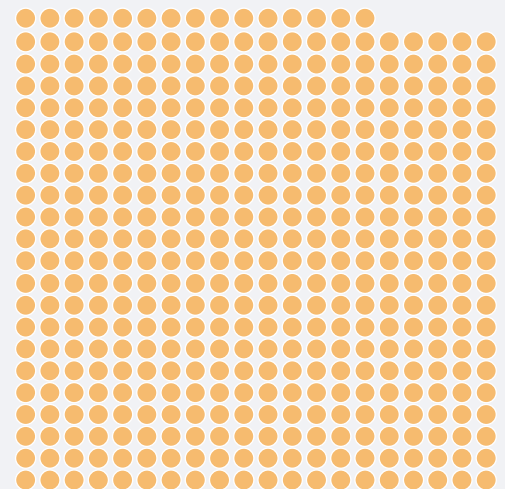
LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The legislative branch is made up of the House and Senate, known collectively as the Congress. The primary function of the legislative branch is to make laws, but it is also responsible for approving federal judges and justices, passing the national budget, and declaring war.

Each state gets two senators and a certain amount of representatives depending on how many people live in that state. Georgia has 14 U.S. representatives. This number is determined by the Georgia General Assembly.



100 U.S. SENATORS



**435 MEMBERS IN THE U.S.
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The executive branch consists of the President, his or her advisors and various departments and agencies. This branch is responsible for enforcing the laws of the land. The President works closely with a group of advisors known as the Cabinet (these appointees assist the President in making important decisions within their area of expertise; such as defense, the treasury and homeland security). This branch also appoints government officials, commands the armed forces, and meets with leaders of other nations.

JUDICIAL BRANCH

The judicial branch consists of the U.S. Supreme Court and the Federal Judicial Center. According to the Constitution, "The judicial power of the United States, shall be vested in one supreme Court, and in such inferior Courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish." The Federal Judicial Center is the education and research agency for the federal courts.

Courts interpret our nations laws and punish those who break them. The Supreme Court, settles disputes among states, hears and appeals from state and federal courts, and determines if federal laws are constitutional. Nine Justices make up the current Supreme Court: one Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices. Unlike any other job in our government, supreme court justices are appointed for life, or for as long as they want to stay.



WHO REPRESENTS YOU?

You have elected officials who represent you at every level of the government. It's their job to ensure that your needs are being met during the law-making process. So, how do you know who to contact in state or federal government with questions, comments, or ideas about legislation or public policies?

<https://georgia.gov/who-represents-you>

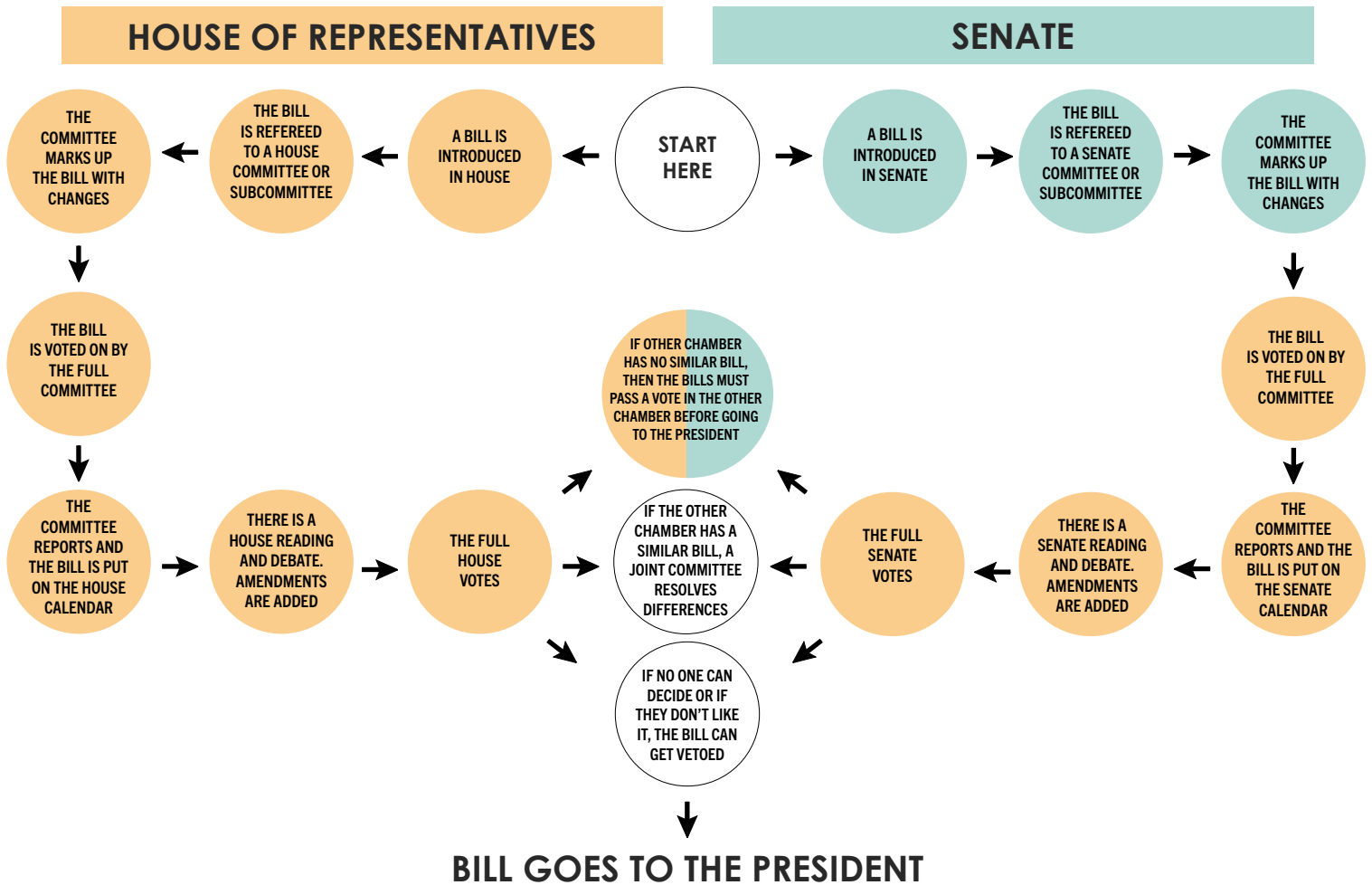
In 1957, Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson inspired the Youth Tour when he addressed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting in Chicago. The Senator, and future president, declared, “If one thing comes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents.” Since then, more than 50,000 students from rural areas and small towns across America have participated in this unique program.



HOW IS POWER DIVIDED IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HuFR5XBVLFU&t=26s>

HOW DOES A BILL BECOME A LAW?



Each bill starts off as either a house bill or a senate bill, sometimes even both (to increase the chances of getting a bill passed). A bill must pass the House and the Senate before going to the president to be signed and become law or vetoed.

Prior to meeting with elected officials, WYT delegates should be prepared. Delegates should find out who their elected officials are and what committees they serve on. These questions can be answered by visiting the U.S. House of Representatives website (www.house.gov) and the U.S. Senate website (www.senate.gov). After the trip, if you have additional questions or you would like to send a thank you note to your legislator, you can mail it to their local or state office. The letters will arrive sooner than if you mail it to their Washington, D.C. office.

We also encourage members and friends of the cooperative to get involved and make their voice heard on Capitol Hill. Please visit Action.coop for more information.

**WHAT DID YOU LEARN
FROM THE STUDY
MATERIALS AND WHY
SHOULD YOU REPRESENT
SOUTHERN RIVERS ENERGY
ON YOUTH TOUR?**

GOOD LUCK