

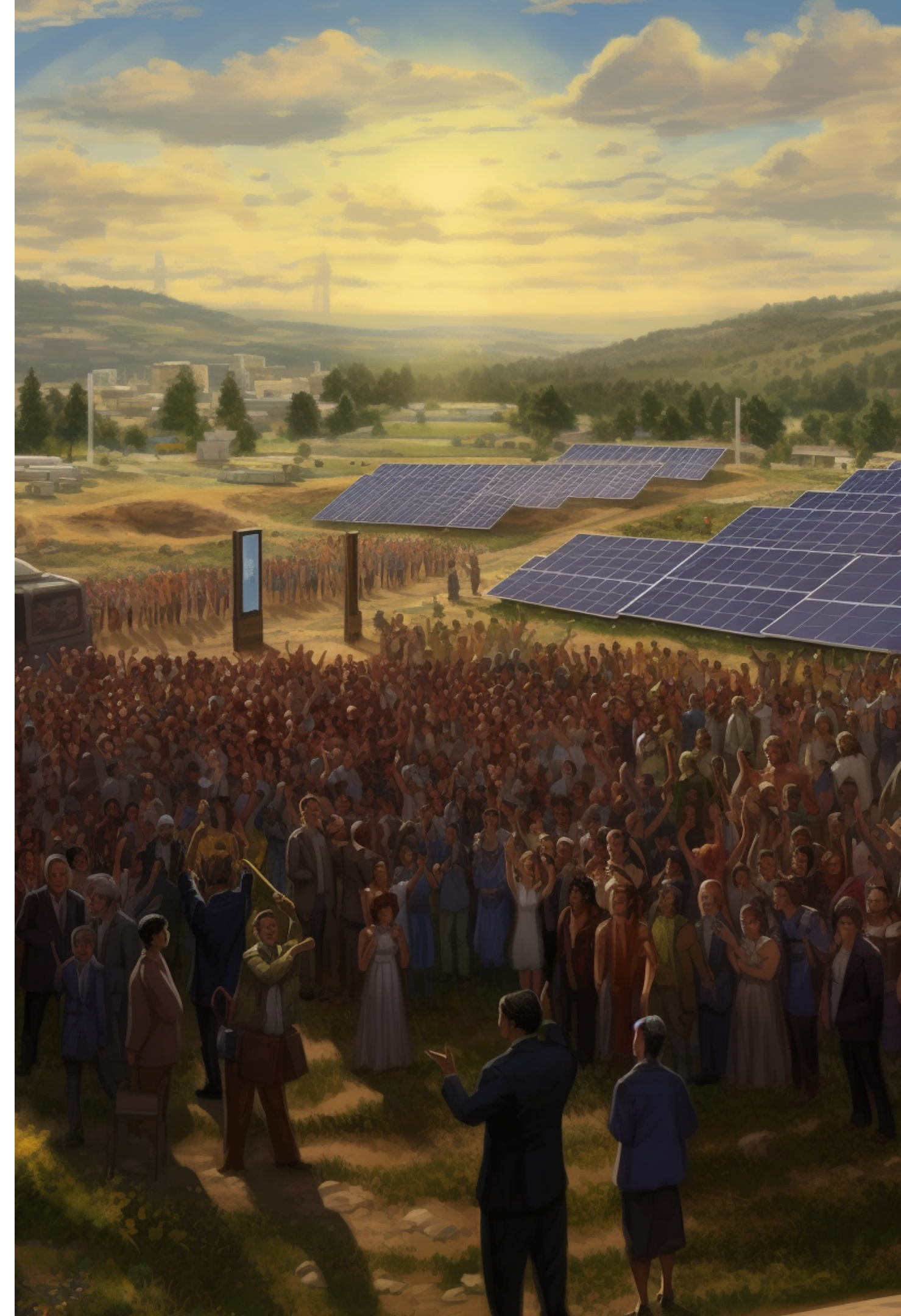
**Rural Power Project**

# **Reforming Rural Electric Cooperatives**

A PATH TO CLIMATE JUSTICE

**Wade Rathke**

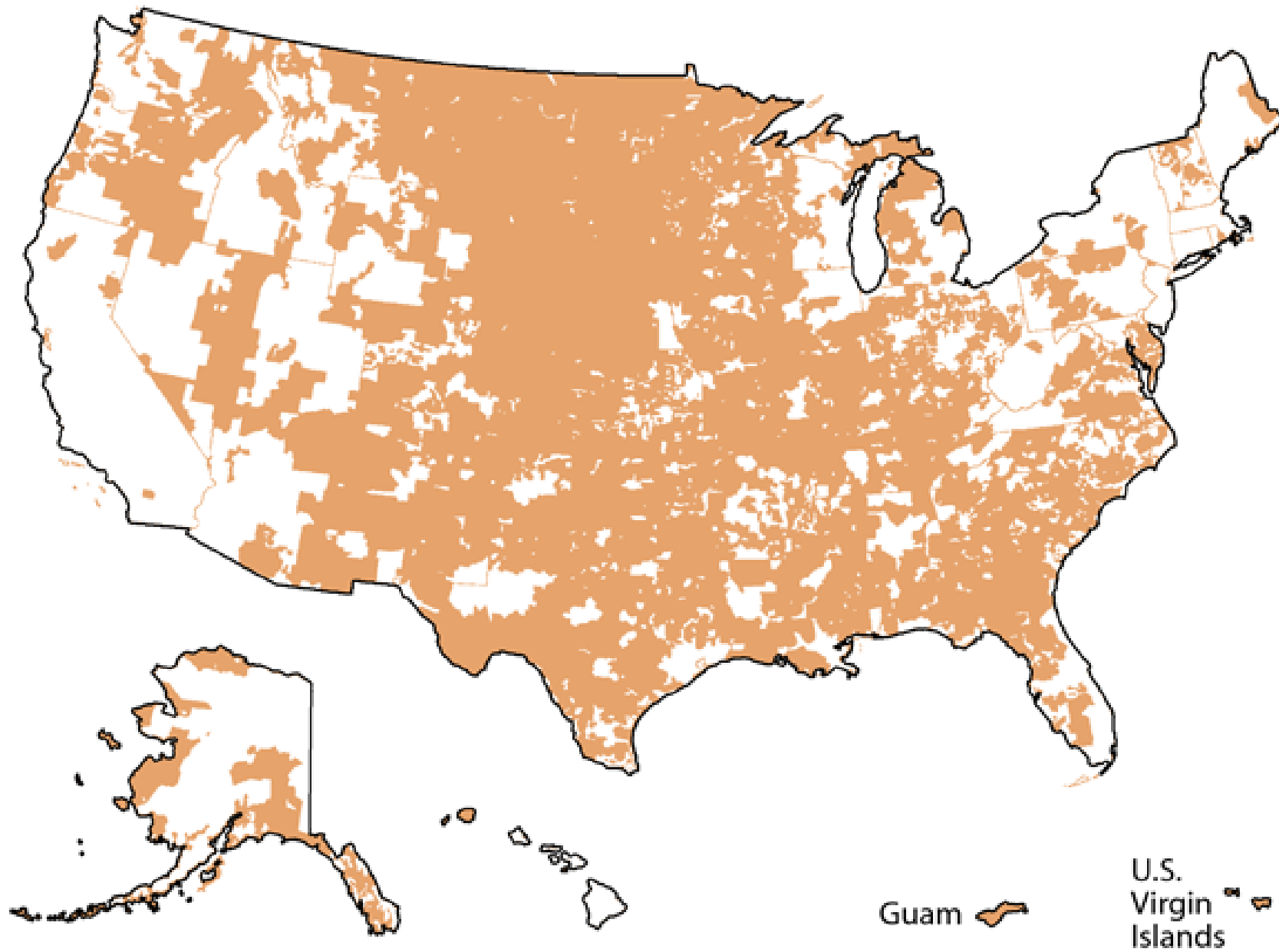
June 20, 2023



## Co-op Power Dominates the U.S. Landscape

Cooperatives power 56 percent of the nation's landmass, including Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. They serve 20 million businesses, homes and schools — 42 million people — across more than 2,500 counties.

CO-OP POWER COVERAGE



SOURCE: NRECA

PAUL HORN / Inside Climate News

# We can't save the climate without rural electric co-ops on board.

### Land is Power

The unique features of America's political system mean that people living in sparsely populated areas have disproportionate power. They must be systematically engaged and made partners in transitioning to a fossil-free economy, or they will continue to use their power to resist change.



REC leadership is actively resisting climate solutions...

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

BUSINESS

## Renewables Are Fast Replacing Coal, Except in Rural America

Electric cooperatives in less-populous areas have lagged behind, but some of their members are agitating for a quicker transition

Rural electric co-ops warn Congress a 2035 100% clean electricity target is 'overly ambitious'

Published April 20, 2021

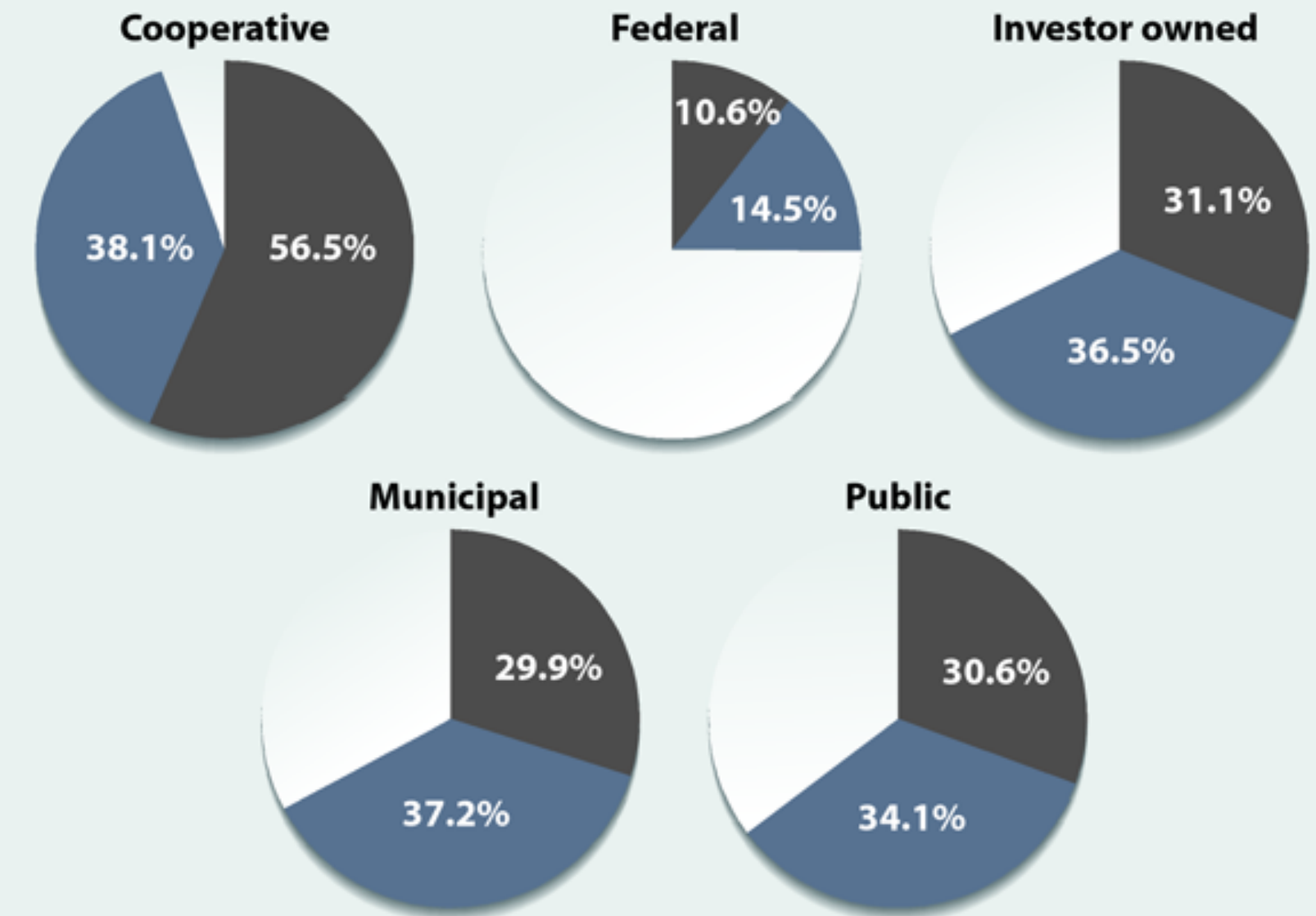
## Power Plant Energy Mix

The federal government tracks the generation of electricity by fuel type and utility type. As a percentage of the power they generate, cooperatives are more heavily tilted toward fossil fuels than other ownership types.

### FOSSIL FUEL GENERATION OF POWER

By ownership type, as a percentage of total production, 2019

● COAL ● NATURAL GAS ● OTHER



SOURCE: U.S. Energy Information Agency

PAUL HORN / Inside Climate News



...because REC leadership is neither accountable to nor representative of their memberships.

### STATES WITH ALL WHITE REC BOARDS

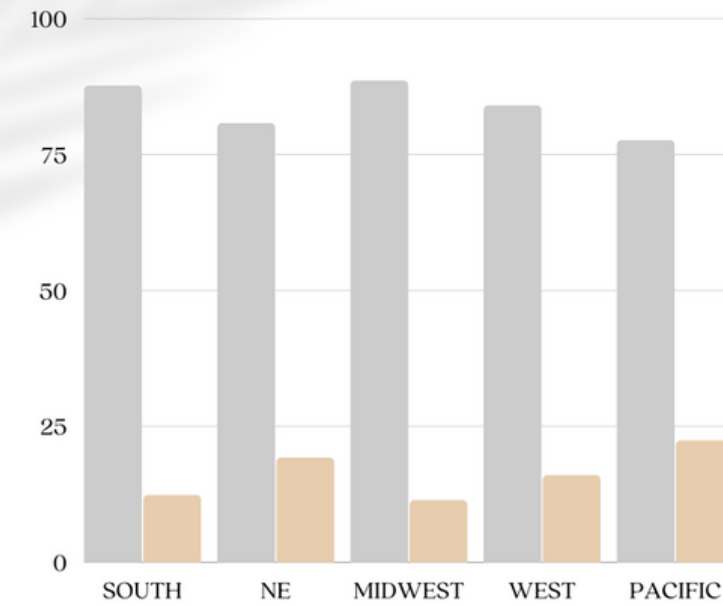
<b>ARKANSAS (23%)</b>	NEW HAMPSHIRE
<b>CALIFORNIA (30%)</b>	NEW JERSEY
IDAHO	NEW YORK
INDIANA	<b>NORTH DAKOTA (20%)</b>
KANSAS	OHIO
MAINE	<b>OKLAHOMA (35%)</b>
MINNESOTA	PENNSYLVANIA
<b>NEVADA (26%)</b>	VERMONT
NEBRASKA	WISCONSIN
	WYOMING

STATES IN RED HAVE ABOVE 20% NONWHITE RURAL POPULATION. % NOTED

Source: Rural Power Project Analysis of 2020 Census Data, Public REC Information



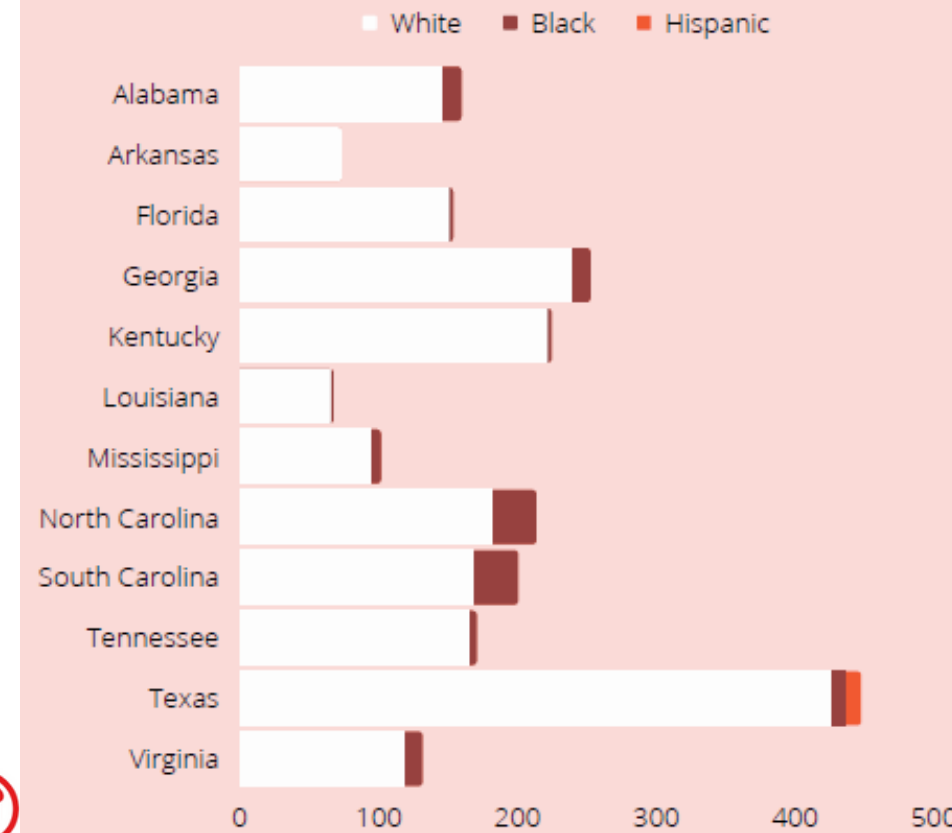
### PERCENTAGE MEN VS. WOMEN ON REC BOARDS, BY REGION



Source: Rural Power Project Analysis of 2020 Census Data, Public REC Information



### Demographics of Boards by State



## Clark Energy



## Mitchell





## Louisiana, 2019

policies. We're an "oil state," the pols want us to remember. So, the idea of a Louisiana resident making renewable energy and energy efficiency the center of a campaign for local elective office is about as common here as cool weather in August.

But that is exactly what happened this spring when Dr. Michele Johnson, an internist who lives in Slidell, campaigned for a seat on the nine-member board of the Washington-St. Tammany (WST) rural electric cooperative. Leading a classic grassroots campaign, Johnson garnered over 2,000 votes. Her narrow loss – another 70 votes would have put her over the top – was a wake-up call about public support for renewable energy in Louisiana.

Local reform efforts come up short because there is no national coordination.

Each individual campaign for a board seat has to reinvent the wheel.

## Georgia, 2023

### Director Election in 2023

SECTION 3.08. Notice of Nominees. The Secretary shall be responsible for posting at the Cooper the election, and if received on or before the fourth Friday in May, shall include same in the notice to be held.

District 1	Ed Crowell (Incumbent)
District 6	David Tennant (Incumbent) Barbara Collier

## Virginia, 2021

### 'We've exposed a deeply undemocratic election practice'

Three incumbent REC Board of Directors being challenged by reform candidates supported by the grassroots coalition Repower REC have been reelected to three year terms.

Almost half of the votes for the incumbents were cast by the REC board through "non-designated" proxy ballots left blank by REC members.

"We have made no progress [from 2008 to 2021] in protecting consumers because co-ops have such strong political power.

These were the most proconsumer organizations in America and now they have turned mostly anticonsumer."  
-U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper, Nashville, 2021



Many believe a nationwide, systematic effort to reform REC boards isn't feasible because of....

### The Number of RECS

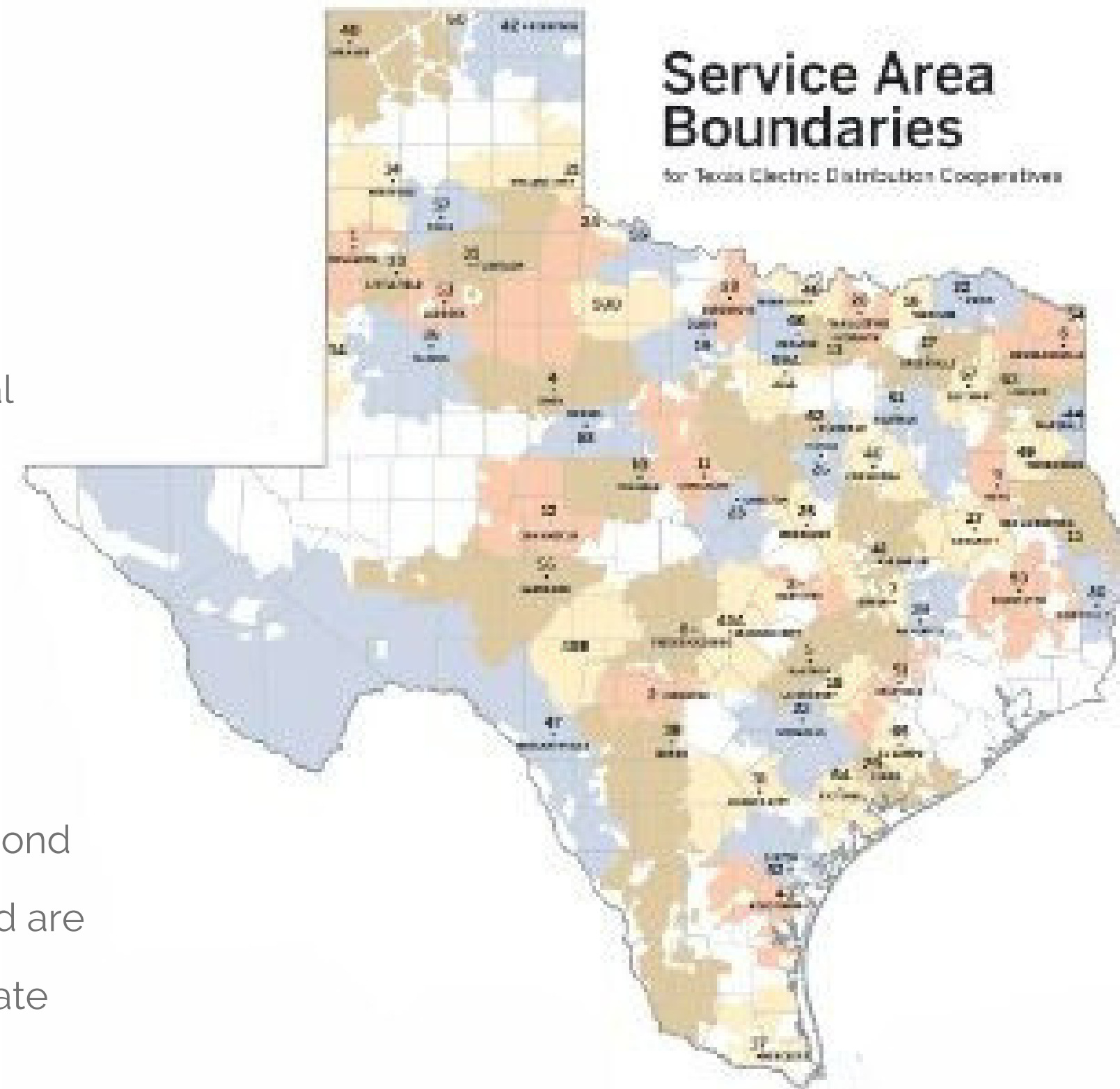
There are 895 rural electric cooperatives, each with its own 7-9 seat board.

### 1000 Election Rules

Each co-op has its own annual meeting, rules for how to qualify as a candidate, sub-districts, etc.

### Varied Service Areas

REC boundaries don't correspond to any political boundaries and are constantly shifting, and accurate member lists are closely held information



# Rural Power Project has solutions to each problem.

## Comprehensive Board Database

We have the only non-industry database of every REC in the country, plus the demographics of nearly all 3200 REC board members.

## Election and Governance Database

We've uncovered bylaw patterns, built a system to identify RECs where our chances are best, common legal red flags, and how to get past common parliamentary tricks boards use to squelch reform efforts.

## Custom REC Map to REC List Software

We've developed software that takes the most up to date industry maps of REC service areas and pairs the geographical information with state voter files organized by our Voter Purge Project to build accurate member approximations.

**OFFICIAL NOTICE**

Rural Electric Convenience Cooperative's 85th Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, June 9, 2022 at Knight Drive In, located at 1700 Recreation Drive, Mokena, IL 60448.

Registration – 5:30 p.m. Business Meeting – 7:00 p.m.

\$20 bill credit

**RECC**

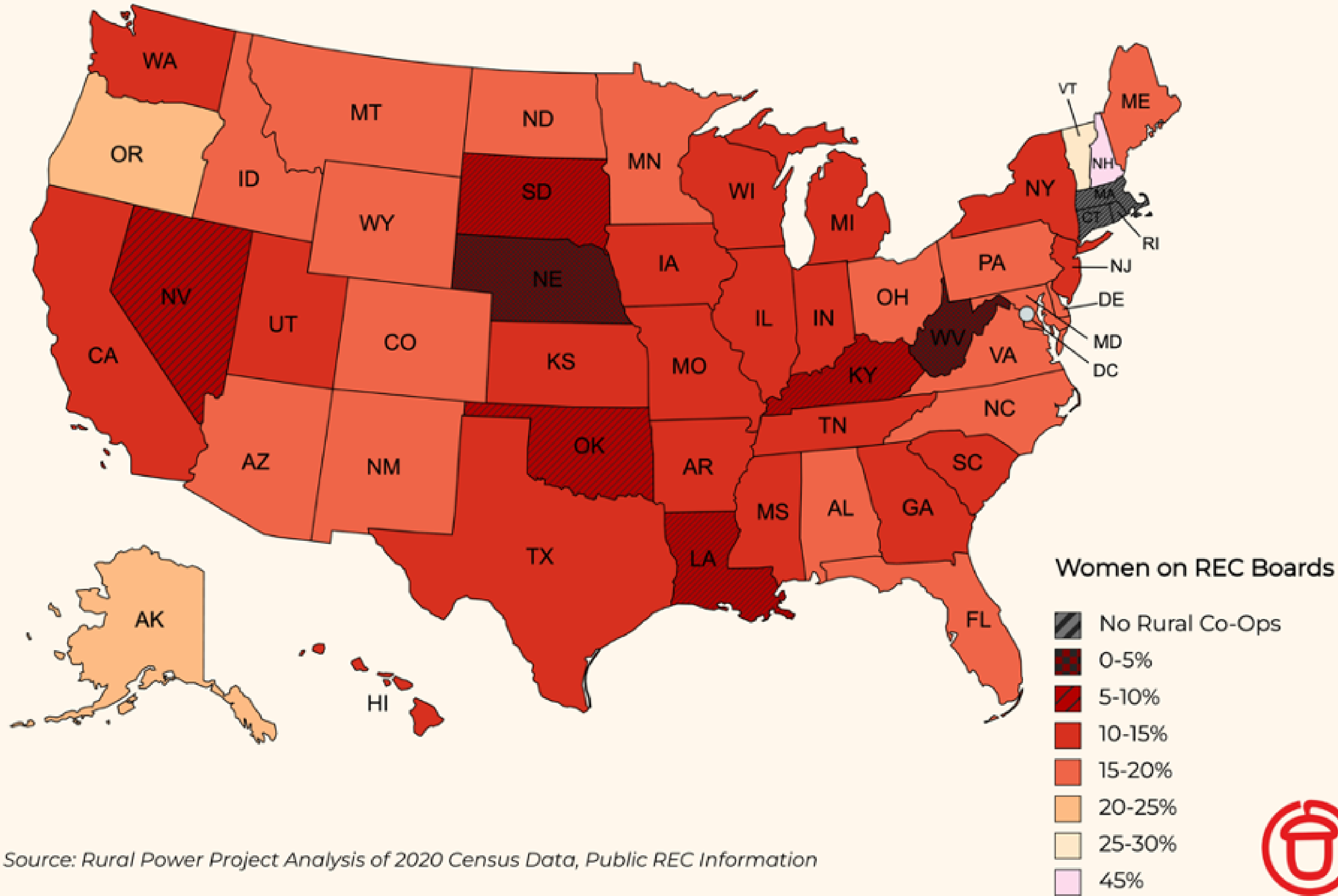
**ROUTE 66 DRIVE-IN**

**ANNUAL MEETING**

6 ILLINOIS COUNTRY LIVING • WWW.ICL.COOP



# Nationwide REC Board Database and Analysis



## RECs Excluding People of Color

	Non-white Rural Population	Non-white REC Board Members	Additional Seats Required for Representation
Arizona	64%	10%	34
New Mexico	70%	19%	87
Oklahoma	35%	0%	72
Mississippi	41%	8%	33
Louisiana	35%	3%	21
Texas	35%	5%	134
California	30%	0%	6
South Carolina	44%	16%	56
Florida	29%	2%	42
South Dakota	28%	2%	53
Nevada	26%	0%	6
Georgia	31%	6%	64
Arkansas	23%	0%	17
North Dakota	20%	0%	33
North Carolina	32%	12%	42

Source: Rural Power Project Analysis of 2020 Census Data, Public REC Information



## The 10 Worst for Women

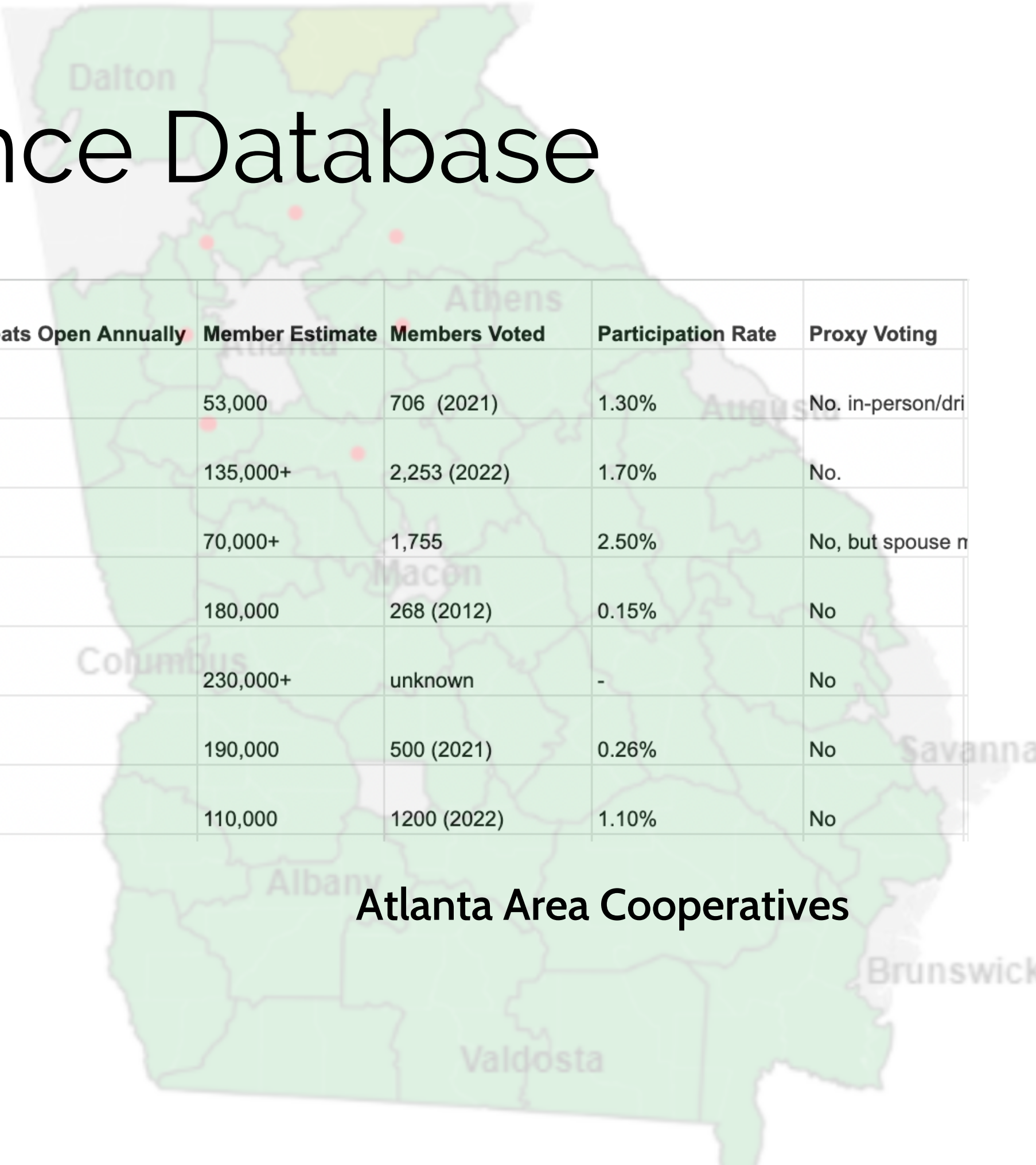
State	% of Women on Boards	Women on Boards	Total Board Members
Nebraska	4.8%	12	248
South Dakota	7.2%	18	263
Louisiana	8.7%	8	92
Nevada	9.1%	5	55
Oklahoma	9.1%	21	231
Kentucky	9.2%	25	271
California	9.5%	2	21
Indiana	9.9%	34	343
Tennessee	10.1%	23	228
Missouri	10.3%	46	446

Women in elected board positions in their state's rural electric cooperatives.



# Election and Governance Database

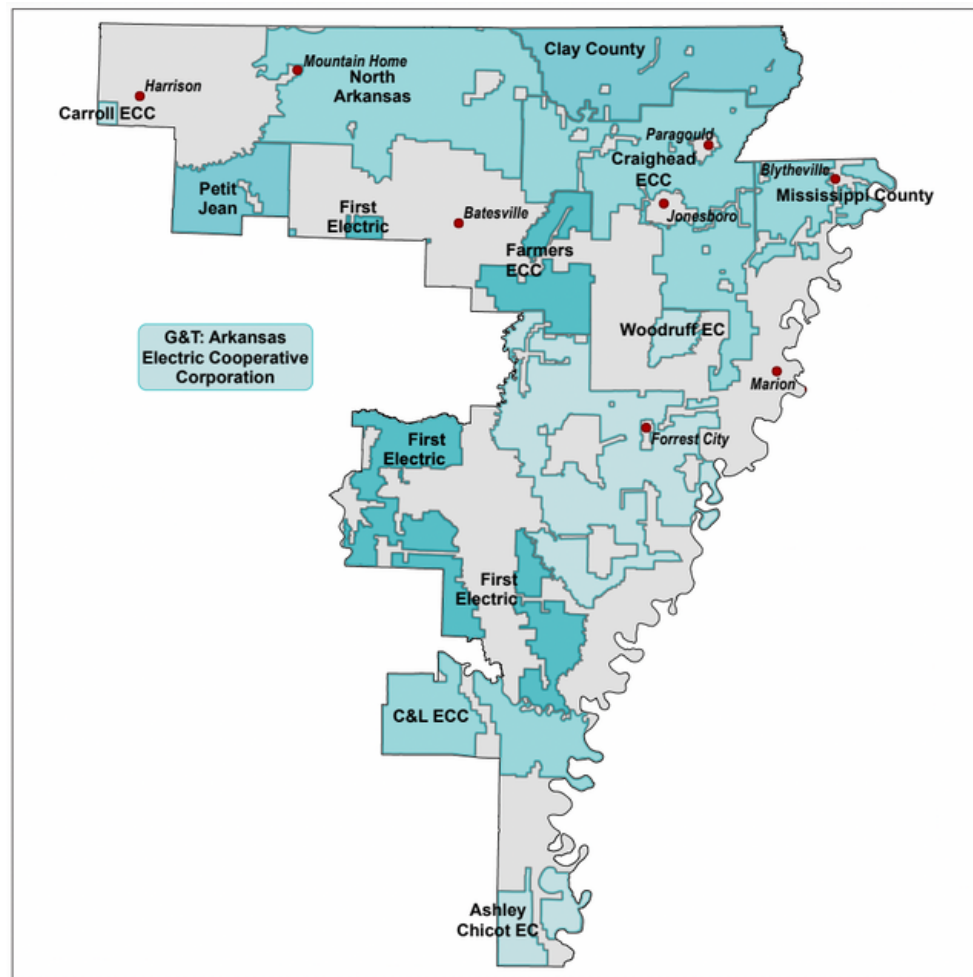
Atlanta Area Co-Op	2023 Election Date	Candidate Petition Filing Due	Board Seats Open Annually	Member Estimate	Members Voted	Participation Rate	Proxy Voting
Central GA EMC	August 2	June 18	2-3 of 8	53,000	706 (2021)	1.30%	No. in-person/dri
Walton Electrical Member Corp	June 17	April 8 (70 days prior)	3 of 9	135,000+	2,253 (2022)	1.70%	No.
Coweta-Fayette EMC	October 1-10 (not yet set)	August 17-27 (not yet set)	3 of 9	70,000+	1,755	2.50%	No, but spouse n
Cobb EMC	September 16	May 26 (4th Friday in May)	3 of 9	180,000	268 (2012)	0.15%	No
Jackson EMC	September 21	March 5- April 24 (150 days prior)	3 of 9	230,000+	unknown	-	No
Sawnee EMC	September 5, 6, and 7	August 1, 2, and 3	3 of 9	190,000	500 (2021)	0.26%	No
Greystone Power	October 14	July 6	3 of 9	110,000	1200 (2022)	1.10%	No



Atlanta Area Cooperatives

# Using NRECA's Maps to Create Voter Lists

State regulatory agencies are not maintaining accurate service area maps, leaving the work to co-ops and investor owned utilities to fight over boundary customers/loads. The NRECA, co-ops' trade association, keeps the most accurate and up-to-date maps available. Our software extracts data from NRECA's maps and lines up their service areas to maps we can use. We pair that data with our Voter Purge Project state voter lists where we've geolocated voters by address, and extract a list that matches the co-op's service area.



**Arkansas**  
**Congressional District 01**  
**Rick Crawford**

Co-ops by the numbers:  
People in the district 284,127  
People in the state 1,084,874  
Employees in the district 518

## Arkansas

Select State:

Select County:

**VPP Score: ★★**

**Cost ★★★**  
The state provides voter registration data for a free or low price. \$Free/yr

**Transparency ★★★**  
The state responds to FOIA requests. Yes  
The state provides birthdates and age data. Yes

**Voters Purged in Selected County**  
Select at county on the map

**Registered Voters in Arkansas**  
**1,766,208**

**Voters Purged (since last report)**  
**87,445 (4.93%)**



First Electric member-owners can come together to reduce electricity costs and get better co-op governance. Are you in? Text YES for more. -Rural Power Project

08:57AM

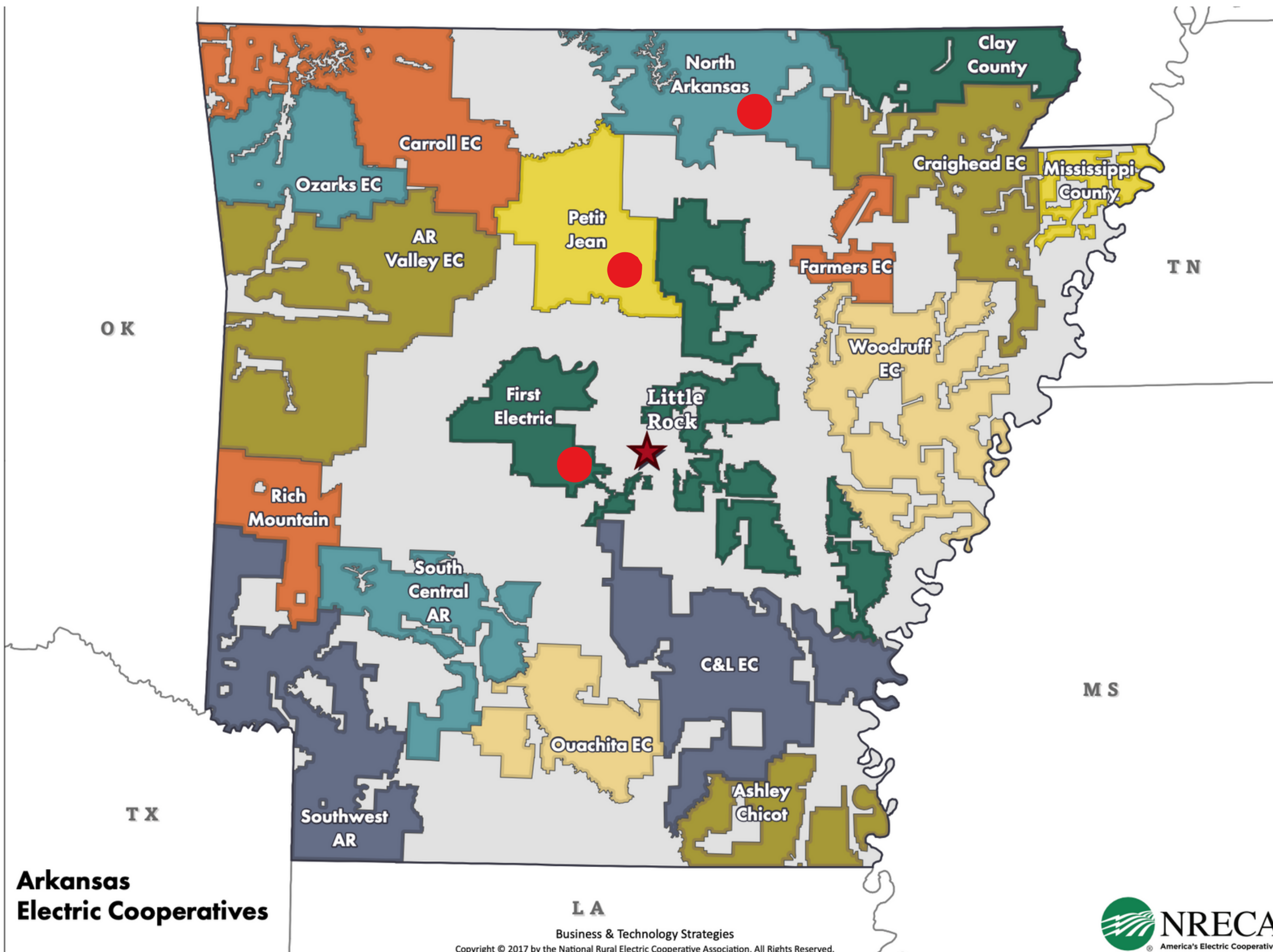
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Our test targeted 7876 registered voters for whom phone numbers were listed in the voter file--a minority of the voters, with many landlines mixed in with cell numbers.

Despite the limits and inaccuracies of the list, the response rates point to real potential for building committees of reform oriented co-op members by starting from a high quality phone match.

Petit Jean, North Arkansas, First Electric - 4.2% response rate to initial text outreach.

Member-owners of Petit Jean can come together to reduce electricity costs and get better co-op governance. Are you in? Text YES for more. - Rural Power Project.



Arkansas Electric Cooperatives

Business & Technology Strategies  
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Empowering Rural America's \$9.7 billion will go to boards committed to maintaining fossil fuel dependence.



*Patrick O'Loughlin, CEO of Buckeye Power and Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives, talks about the importance of reliable electricity at a roundtable discussion on energy security hosted by the House Energy and Commerce Committee's Republican members. (Photo By: Jerry Mosemak/NRECA)*

Federal energy policies that rush to replace fossil fuel power plants with renewable energy are threatening grid reliability at a time when people need dependable power more than ever to carry them through extreme weather events, the CEO of [Ohio Rural Electric Cooperatives](#) told House lawmakers Thursday.

One example: the East Kentucky Power Cooperative, which serves 16 owner-member electric cooperatives in 87 Kentucky counties. It has \$2.7 billion in long-term debt, according to its 2019 annual report posted on its website. The cooperative owns and operates two coal-fired plants, one with an anticipated lifespan into the 2030s, and the other into the 2050s, according to a cooperative spokesman. EKPC also operates gas burners it uses during peak demand.

