

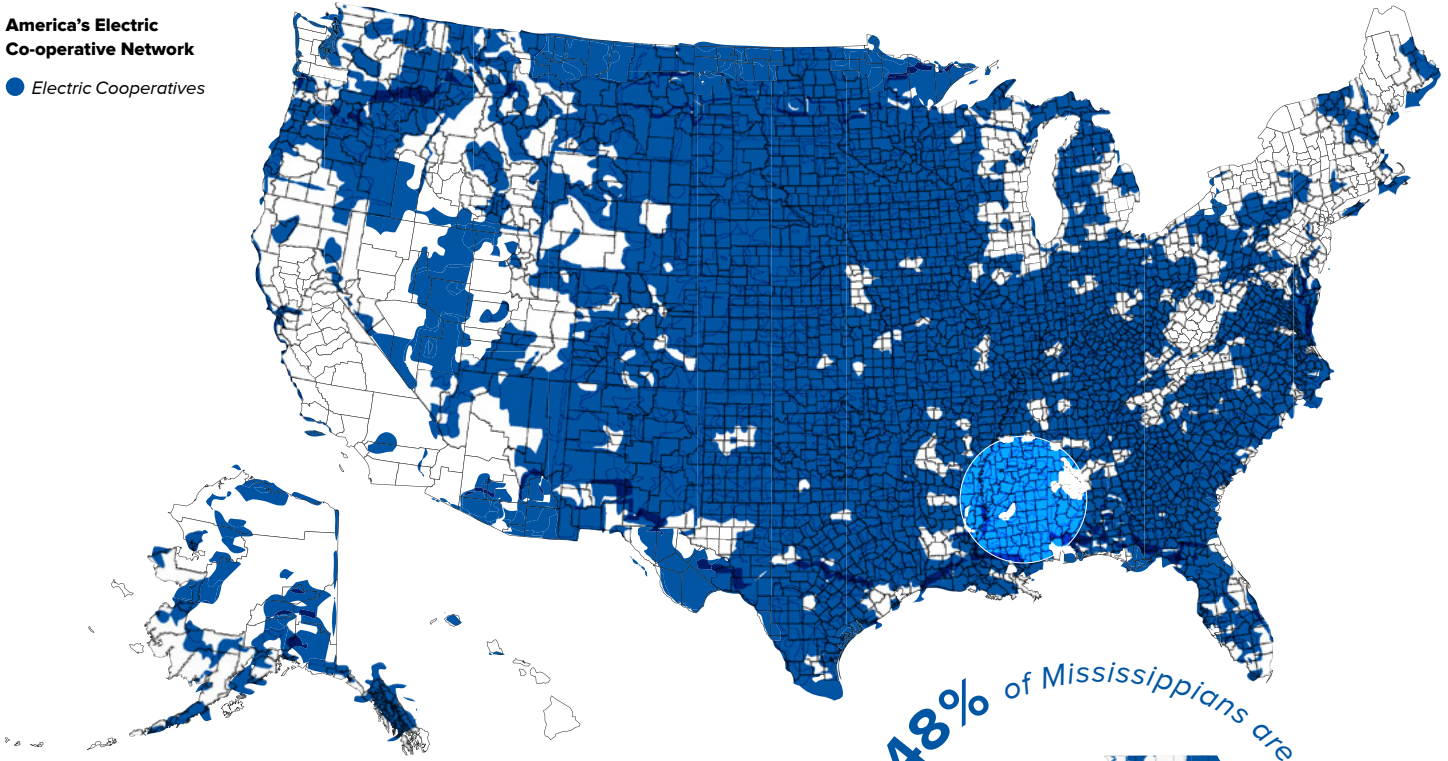
CAMPAIGN FOR ENERGY DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

ELECTRIC CO-OPERATIVES IN RURAL MISSISSIPPI



**America's Electric
Co-operative Network**

● Electric Cooperatives



ILLUMINATING RURAL AMERICA

In 1934, in the back of a furniture store in Alcorn County, Mississippi, the first electric co-operative in the country was born. At that time, nine out of ten farmers and rural Americans lacked electricity in their homes. By executive order, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, as part of the New Deal, created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), which has since been reorganized as the Rural Utilities Services (RUS).

Electric co-operatives and the REA illuminated the homes of rural Mississippi and rural America, but who knew the co-operative model would brighten the spirit of community? Not only were the residents being provided with low-cost electricity, they were also part owners of the co-operative. As time progressed and rural areas became electricity-dependent, many electric co-operatives began to behave more like impersonal, corporate machines and less like the community empowerment vehicles they were designed to be.

Mississippi has 25 distribution co-operatives and one Generation & Transmission co-operative.

The Need for Change

Non-democratic participation has resulted in communities plagued by surging electricity bills, declining job opportunities, languishing wages, and crumbling infrastructure. Co-ops were created to encourage and promote rural economic and community development, but many discourage organizational transparency and democratic participation.

93% of the **353**
persistent poverty counties in the U.S.
are serviced by electric co-operatives
(National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

*Mississippi has the highest
concentration of persistent poverty
counties in the nation and the average
income of a Mississippian is **28%**
lower than the national average.*

*Many co-operative members in
Mississippi spend upwards of **42%**
of their income on electricity.*

48% of Mississippians are serviced by Electric Co-operatives.



FIGHTING FOR ENERGY DEMOCRACY

Energy Democracy

Imagine a rural Mississippi that explores renewable and solar sources, a rural Mississippi where the community is the decision maker. This governing model is called Energy Democracy.

Electric Co-operative Campaign

Phase 1: Community Listening Tours and Education

The listening tours are an ongoing educational effort in which the members of the targeted co-operatives have expressed concerns about lack of transparency and questionable practices within their co-operatives. Members leave with a greater sense of empowerment after receiving education on their dual roles as member-owners.

Phase 2: Building Local Leadership and Strategic Planning

Driven by the findings of the listening tours, a broad community education program and intensive leadership series, The Electric Co-operative Leadership Institute (ECLI), has been developed to assist members in creating service-area-specific campaigns for community education and best practice models.

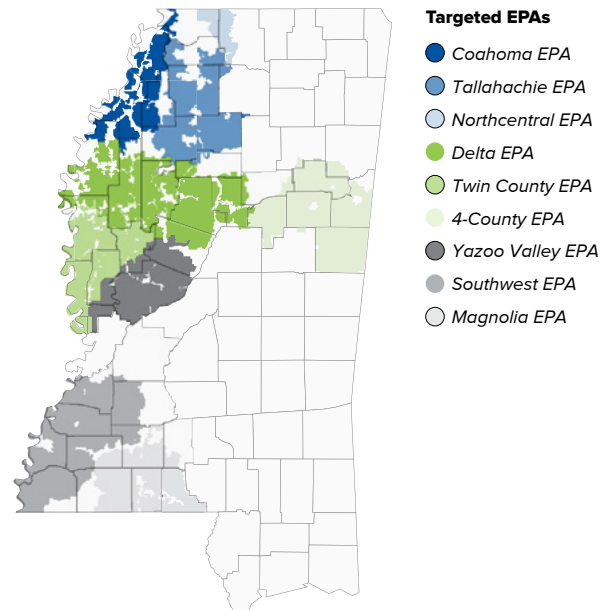
The 3 Components of Electric Co-operative Leadership Institute

- Member Education
- Local Partner Engagement
- Data Collection

Participants will collaborate on strategies to best educate their entire membership and research innovative ways other electric co-operatives are providing economic opportunity to their members.

Phase 3: Direct Engagement to Increase Board Diversity

The outcome of the previous phases will increase member participation, leading to board leadership that will more accurately reflect the demographics of the service areas. Once successful, with continued education and technical assistance, the ultimate vision is to create a space to explore and eventually implement renewable energy alternatives.



The State is **37%** African American and **52%** female.

However, Mississippi's electric co-operative boards are only **6.6%** African American and **4%** female.

African Americans make up
 ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
 less than **9%** of the Board of Directors of
 targeted co-operatives.

(○ = 10, ● = African American participation)

BORN OUT OF NEED



One Voice grew out of the work undertaken by the Mississippi State Conference NAACP in response to housing, education, civil rights, and other related policy advocacy needs facing historically disadvantaged communities in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Through collaborative efforts with traditional and non-traditional allies, One Voice has played a pivotal role in building alliances that transcend organizational, geographical and racial boundaries.

One Voice is a regional organization with offices in Louisiana and Mississippi. Together, the offices work toward achieving a progressive civic infrastructure in the American South by supporting local and state policy development through training and collaboration across issue areas and geography.



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