



March 13, 2025

TO: Chairman Mike Wobbema and N.D. Senate Workforce Development Committee
FROM: Cally Peterson, *North Dakota Living* editor
N.D. Association of Rural Electric Cooperatives
RE: **Support of HCR 3006**

Chairman Wobbema and members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee:

My name is Cally Peterson, and I am the editor of the state's largest-circulated publication and statewide electric cooperative magazine, *North Dakota Living*. Each month, we send *North Dakota Living* to more than 82,000 homes, farms and businesses. If you are a member of an electric cooperative in North Dakota, chances are you receive *North Dakota Living* in your mailbox each month. I am submitting testimony in a professional capacity representing North Dakota's electric cooperatives and their members in support of HCR 3006, and as someone who lives in rural North Dakota, I also understand how critically important mail is to rural people.

North Dakota's electric cooperatives utilize mail for many reasons, including sending essential member information, annual meeting and director election notices, electric bills and distributing its 70-year-old monthly statewide magazine, *North Dakota Living*. The magazine shares critical information with co-op members, including their cooperative's financial condition, how they can participate in director elections, board meeting minutes, annual meeting details and education on safe electric use, energy-management programs and money-saving electric tips.

A functioning rural mail service is a critical tool for electric cooperatives to communicate with their members.

In North Dakota, we have experienced a decline in rural mail service. It has been noticeably worse the past few years. Our magazines, which are mailed around the first day of the month, used to get to members' homes by about the fifth day of each month. Now, it's the 10th, 15th or even the 20th or later. This has happened to me personally, and I get calls often from members asking why they haven't received their magazine. Anecdotally, I also know people who have

canceled subscriptions to their local newspaper, because it's "old news" by the time the paper finally arrives in the mail.

Since being established in 1957, the *North Dakota Living* magazine has been distributed using the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). In Title 39 of U.S. Code, USPS is charged with providing "a maximum degree of effective and regular postal service to rural areas." Recent USPS plans to slow mail delivery and further consolidate processing and distribution centers will further erode the effectiveness and quality of rural mail service.

Electric cooperatives are also concerned with their members' quality of life, and rural people are major USPS customers. As cooperatives, we understand mail delivery is more than mail in rural America. It is a lifeline.

This is especially true in North Dakota, where two-thirds of our counties are considered "frontier," with six or less people per square mile. North Dakotans often travel many miles to access essential services, including grocery stores, hospitals and pharmacies. Effective rural mail service means your medications arrive before you run out, the tractor part came in the mail so the farmer can get a crop off, Grandma gets the handwritten letter from a loved one that lifts her spirits and co-op members receive their *North Dakota Living* magazine.

We urge a "DO PASS" recommendation on HCR 3006. Thank you for your time.