



COASTAL ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE NEWSLETTER

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UNDERSTANDING FACTORS THAT IMPACT YOUR ENERGY BILLS

BY: MARK WALLING, CEO

February brought some of the coldest weather of the year, and as our home heating systems work harder and longer to keep us warm, we typically see higher energy bills.

There are a few key factors that affect electricity prices, as well as a few ways you can make a meaningful impact on home energy savings.

When you receive your monthly bill from Coastal Electric Cooperative, you're provided with a summary of how much electricity you used during the billing cycle. You can even see how electricity use may have spiked on days when you used more electricity, such as a particularly chilly day or when relatives were staying with you.

But you might be surprised to learn that

beyond your monthly energy consumption, there are external factors that can impact the cost of electricity.

Fuel Prices

Coastal Electric does not generate the power that our members consume. We purchase it from multiple power generators, through our cooperative owned Central Electric Power Cooperative, and then distribute it to our member's homes and businesses. The cost of generating and transmitting electricity from our generation partner accounts for a significant portion of the cost to provide electric service to local homes and businesses--and the cost of fuels that are used to generate that electricity, such as natural gas and coal, fluctuates based on supply and demand. While these fluctuations can impact the cost of electricity, we work closely with our to plan ahead and help stabilize electricity prices for our members.

Extreme Weather

While we can't control the weather, we can review weather patterns and forecasts to prepare for times of extreme cold or heat, when we know the demand for electricity will increase. But when temperatures become extremely cold and the demand for electricity spikes, the price of electricity can also increase.

Infrastructure and Equipment

To cover the costs associated with providing electricity to your home or business, CEC members pay a monthly facility charge. This flat monthly fee ensures the cost of equipment, materials, labor, and daily operations are covered for all members in CEC's service territory. To ensure the reliable service you expect and deserve, we must maintain the local grid, including power lines, substations, and other essential equipment.

Energy Policy and Regulations

Federal energy policies and regulations

can have a profound impact on electricity costs. As energy generation shifts to the use of more renewable sources and stricter regulations for traditional, always-available fuel sources, such as natural gas and coal plants, costly upgrades and technologies must be constructed and deployed. These additional costs are ultimately passed to consumers.

U.S. power consumption is expected to double by 2050. Across the country, electric cooperatives are working with members of Congress to advocate for smart energy policies that reliably power our local communities.

You Have Control

While many of these external factors that impact electricity costs are out of our control, we all have the power to manage our energy use at home. The most effective way to lower use is thermostat management. Since heating and cooling account for a major portion of home energy use, adjusting the thermostat to the lowest comfortable setting can help you save energy and money. Remember to service your heating and cooling system annually and replace dirty filters as needed.

You can also reduce energy use by taking advantage of off-peak periods, when the demand for electricity is lower. Reserve energy-intensive chores for off-peak times, such as early in the morning or later in the evening, to save energy. Be sure to seal air leaks around windows, doors and other areas where gaps are possible. This will help your heating and cooling system work less and improve the overall comfort of your home.

Coastal Electric Cooperative is your local energy partner, and we're here to help. Visit www.coastal.coop to learn about our efficiency programs designed to help you save. As always, we will continue working diligently to provide you with reliable power at an affordable cost.

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DISTRICT 8**CLYBURN EARNS SC CO-OPS'
HIGHEST HONOR**

BY: AVERY WILKS, SOUTH CAROLINA LIVING MAGAZINE

**One of Jim Clyburn's earliest lessons in politics came at church.**

As a teenager, the future congressman watched his father, a minister, face a challenger to his reelection as president of the church's board of elders. The room was split, and a tie vote sparked confusion.

When Clyburn's father rose to remind the elders that he held the tie breaking vote as president, the matter seemed settled.

Then the elder Clyburn did something no one expected: He cast the deciding vote for his opponent.

On the drive home, the younger Clyburn was devastated and perplexed. His father explained himself.

"When things are this divided," the elder Clyburn said, "nobody can lead."

Over the following year, Clyburn's father regained the church elders' support. He won the next election and every other after that until he retired.

The episode taught Clyburn the value of pragmatism and persistence, traits that would define his storied six-decade career in politics and public service.

The lesson stuck, fueling Clyburn's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, his continued runs for elected office even after three early defeats, his eventual election as South Carolina's first Black congressman in almost a century, and his rise to the third-highest position in the U.S. House of Representatives.

It helps explain how Clyburn, 84, has become a political bellwether, an adviser to presidents, and a Capitol Hill power broker with a knack for securing the federal support necessary to bring South Carolina projects to life—often in the rural areas that electric cooperatives serve.

In a tribute to Clyburn's legendary effectiveness and service to rural South Carolina, the state's electric cooperatives recently voted to honor him with their highest honor, the Electric Cooperative Outstanding Public Service Award.

"For over 50 years, this guy has had our back," says Mike Couick, CEO of The Electric Cooperatives of South Carolina. "He's always been there for rural people."

Dreamer to leader

To better understand what drives Clyburn's service, start at the beginning.

Clyburn grew up in segregated Sumter, South Carolina, born in 1940 to parents who grounded him in faith and civic engagement. Clyburn and his siblings were required to recite a new Bible verse at breakfast every morning. At night, after finishing their homework, they had to share a current event they had read about in the newspaper.

His parents, Enos and Almeta Clyburn, filled him with hope for a future with opportunities they never had. Clyburn grew up hearing his father pray for the petitioners in *Briggs v. Elliott*, a 1952 Supreme Court case that challenged school segregation in Summerton, just a county over. They posted messages about voter registration on their front door and made sure visitors left with plans to participate at the ballot box.

Once, a family friend discouraged Clyburn from telling anyone about his dreams of working in politics and government, saying it wasn't safe for a Black child to voice such aspirations. That evening, Clyburn's mother pulled him aside and urged him not to listen.

"Things are going to change," Clyburn recalls her saying, "and you're going to be able to live your dreams."

Of course, Clyburn's parents also equipped him with the skills he would need. Clyburn's father taught him Robert's Rules of Order and the art of public speaking. On Sunday mornings, Clyburn studied the congregation's faces as his father delivered the sermon. He noted which stories moved the audience and how his father stirred their emotions with the rise and fall of his baritone.

Activism came naturally to Clyburn. At 12, he was elected president of the NAACP's Sumter youth chapter. At South Carolina State College, his classmates relied on him to organize nonviolent civil rights demonstrations that often landed him in jail. (In fact, jail is where Clyburn met his future wife, Emily, a fellow South Carolina State student who brought Clyburn a hamburger and shared it with him.)

"He was serious about doing what was right," says Willie Jeffries, a Tri-County Electric Cooperative trustee and Clyburn's college classmate.

After school, Clyburn remained rooted in politics and service. He moved to Charleston and taught high school history, worked as an employment counselor, directed two youth and community development programs and led a program for migrant and seasonal farm workers. He ran for the state House of Representatives in 1970, losing narrowly but impressing newly elected South Carolina Gov. John West in the process.

West hired Clyburn as an aide and took him under his wing. They shared an interest in improving life in South Carolina's rural communities and partnered with the state's electric cooperatives to create a program—colloquially known as "John's Johns"—that installed prefabricated snap-on bathrooms in homes without indoor plumbing.

Later, West appointed Clyburn as the state's Human Affairs Commissioner, leading a state agency that investigated cases of employment discrimination.

Clyburn held the post for 18 years. Over that span, he ran twice for statewide office, losing both times but gaining valuable experience. When a new, mostly Democratic congressional district was created ahead of the 1992 election, Clyburn was ready.

It took 52 years, but Clyburn fulfilled the lifelong dream his mother had encouraged him to pursue—winning election to Congress.

'Always be a workhorse'

A few years after Clyburn arrived in Washington, D.C., House Democrats were in a bind. A Republican congressman who switched parties and became a Democrat had negotiated a deal with Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt to stay on the House Appropriations Committee. But no seat was available.

Like his father so many years before, Clyburn made a surprising move. He offered to give up his seat. All his Democratic colleagues had to do in return was fulfill his long list of priorities and budget requests for his constituents in South Carolina.

"I got everything funded on that list and never had to go to a single meeting," Clyburn recalls now with a grin.

It's one of countless examples where Clyburn has proved a savvy operator in the nation's capital, a master tactician who knows how to pass legislation and secure funding for important South Carolina projects.

Former Clyburn aides say the congressman makes an extraordinary effort to get to know his colleagues in the House of Representatives, their districts and the congressional staffers who support them.

When Clyburn needs to build support for his proposals, he can explain exactly how his idea will benefit a colleague's district, says Jaime Harrison, a former Clyburn aide who served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee for the past four years. Then he allows them to share the credit for his work, Harrison says.

"In Washington, D.C., there are showhorses and workhorses," Harrison recalls Clyburn advising him. "Always be a workhorse."

Slow and steady

In the late 2000s, when South Carolina's electric cooperatives were looking for a way to shrink low-income members' power bills and reduce systemwide energy consumption, they found an enthusiastic partner in Clyburn.

Together, they developed the Rural Energy Savings Program, providing no-interest loans to transform leaky, power-guzzling old houses into energy-efficient homes.

The program started as a small pilot with a few South Carolina cooperatives, but Clyburn pushed for its funding and expansion. He testified before Congress, sharing testimonials of co-op members who had saved hundreds of dollars a month with energy efficiency upgrades.

It took half a decade, but he ultimately succeeded, getting the program funded through the 2014 Farm Bill and paving the way for improvements to thousands of rural homes across South Carolina and the country.

"Congressman Clyburn, just through his sheer force of will and determination, took that idea that was

homegrown in South Carolina and turned it into a national law," former aide Mike Hacker recalls.

The Rural Energy Savings Program remains one of Clyburn's favorite legislative accomplishments, a testament to the persistence that has become his superpower on Capitol Hill.

Major breakthroughs rarely occur overnight in Congress. Rather, they often take years of pushing and prodding, of incremental gains and disappointing setbacks.

It's no wonder Clyburn draws inspiration from the fable of the tortoise and the hare. He even collects figurines of turtles, his favorite animal, and displays them throughout his congressional office.

Clyburn had to embrace the slow-but-steady approach with another of his major accomplishments, the development of the Lake Marion Regional Water Agency.

Not long after joining Congress, Clyburn realized the state's Interstate 95 corridor needed a clean water supply to improve health outcomes and attract economic development.

He has spent the past two decades spearheading the water system's development and nurturing its growth. It's making a huge difference in rural communities that historically were left behind, former state Sen. John Matthews says.

He added that without Clyburn and the hundreds of millions of federal dollars he secured, the project would have gone nowhere.

"We only had a vision and no money," Matthews says. "He put the money behind the vision, and that made it a reality."

Making it happen

Perhaps Clyburn's greatest impact on the day-to-day lives of rural South Carolinians has been his work on expanding broadband internet access.

Nearly a decade ago, when Mid-Carolina Electric Cooperative in Lexington began exploring the possibility of providing high-speed internet service, Clyburn offered his support.

"When everybody else was saying 'no,' he recognized there was a need, and a need for funding," the co-op's CEO, Bob Paulling, remembers.

Long before COVID-19 laid bare the scarcity of high-speed internet access in rural areas, Clyburn instructed his staff to study the issue. He worked with state officials to explore funding opportunities. He also met with electric co-op leaders, pressing them to deploy internet fiber across their existing power poles.

Clyburn bent the ears of congressional leaders and even President Joe Biden, telling them of a town in his district where high schoolers gathered at McDonald's to do their homework because

nowhere else had service. He worked with Republican Gov. Henry McMaster to ensure the state was ready when federal money for rural broadband expansion began flowing.

When the moment came, South Carolina was off to a significant head start.

Over the past four years, providers have connected more than 300,000 homes and businesses to high-speed internet, turning the Palmetto State into a national model for deploying broadband. In fact according to internet speed-test firm Ookla, South Carolina recently became the country's first and only state with a negative digital divide—meaning rural communities have better access to high-speed internet than urban areas.

"We're making great progress, and it would not have happened without Jim Clyburn," says McMaster, who enjoys collaborating with the congressman despite their partisan differences.

Clyburn describes his work with South Carolina's electric cooperatives on broadband, energy efficiency and other issues over the years as "one of the best partnerships I've ever had."

Cooperative leaders couldn't agree more.

When federal funding magically falls into place or government roadblocks mysteriously resolve, Tri-County Electric Cooperative CEO Chad Lowder says it's usually safe to assume Clyburn has been at work behind the scenes.

"For as much stuff that gets done, I know that he's made a phone call to help it," Lowder says.

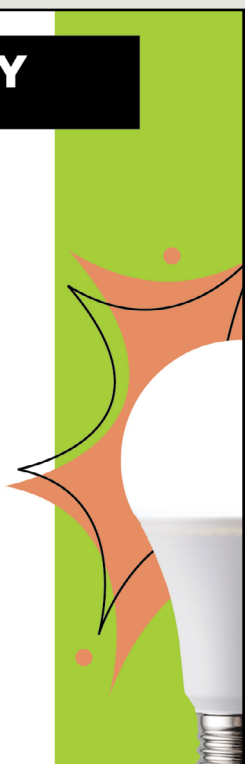
Employing the strategic wit and resolve he observed in his father so many decades before, Clyburn has ascended into the country's highest echelons of power and leveraged his influence to improve life in rural South Carolina. Over 31 years in Congress, Clyburn has cemented himself as one of the most effective statesmen in South Carolina's history—someone who again and again delivers what's needed to transform lofty ideas into reality.

"When he was involved," McMaster says of Clyburn, "I knew it was going to happen."

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

TIP OF THE MONTH

March is an ideal time to service your home cooling system, ensuring it runs efficiently when the heat of summer arrives. Routine maintenance, like cleaning or replacing filters, checking refrigerant levels and inspecting parts, can improve your system's energy efficiency and lower your energy bills. By addressing potential issues early, you can avoid costly emergency repairs and extend the lifespan of your unit. Scheduling service in the spring helps you beat the peak-season rush, giving you faster access to qualified technicians. A well-maintained cooling system can save energy and keep your home comfortable all summer long.





SPRING EFFICIENCY WORD SEARCH

Did you know there are several ways to save energy during spring months? Read the energy-saving tips below to learn more, then find the bolded words in the puzzle below.



- Use **LED lights** around your home. LEDs use 75% less energy than traditional incandescent light bulbs.
- Plant **shade trees** around your home to block unwanted heat from the sun.
- Unplug devices and electronics that consume energy when they're not in use, like phone **chargers**.
- Seal air leaks around exterior doors and **windows** to save energy and keep your home comfortable.
- Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. To save **energy**, turn them off when you leave the room.



CONGRATULATIONS!!! TO BRISTOL CANADY OF COTTAGEVILLE ELEMENTARY



BRISTOL'S BOOK WAS CHOSEN AS OUR CEC WINNER FOR THE "STAYING SAFE AROUND ELECTRICITY" THEMED CHILDREN'S BOOK CHALLENGE.

HER BOOK WILL NOW BE ENTERED INTO A STATEWIDE COMPETITION. IF CHOSEN, IT WILL BE PUBLISHED ACROSS THE STATE!

The Children's Book Challenge is held annually. Information on the 2026 competition will be released November 2025. For more information on our student programs visit our website www.coastal.coop

CEC LINEMEN AT THE STATE HOUSE



Lineman Jacob Polk (not pictured) and Glenn Tumbleston with Governor McMaster at "Co-op Day at the State House." As lawmakers consider our state's energy future, it is imperative cooperative voices are heard.



Lineman Tyler Pope with Governor McMaster at the State of the State Address recognizing Linemen throughout the state for their hard work during Hurricane Helene.

Ready for an experience you won't forget?

Your co-op has two amazing trips planned this summer. Juniors: Apply for the Washington Youth Tour. Sophomores: Apply for the Cooperative Youth Summit.



Washington Youth Tour: June 15-20, 2025 Cooperative Youth Summit: July 14-17, 2025
<https://coastal.coop/community/for-students/>