



Amanda Pankau, Prairie Rivers Network's Director of Energy and Community Resiliency, responds to [President Biden's historic New Empowering Rural America \(New ERA\) announcement](#).

"Yesterday, we launched our [Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative Scorecard](#), looking at decision making transparency and how rural electric cooperatives are working toward a clean energy future. The Illinois effort was part of a collaboration with two other states that now also have co-op scorecards for the first time, Wisconsin and North Dakota.

"We applaud President Biden and his administration for this historic investment in rural electrification through the New ERA program. This is a game-changing moment for rural communities across the nation.

"The \$573 million allocated to Dairyland Power Cooperative will directly impact its customers, including those in Illinois, by lowering energy costs and driving significant emissions reductions. Jo-Carroll Energy, Inc (JCE Co-op) is the only Illinois co-op that is a member of Dairyland Power. JCE Co-op serves 26,500 meters in Illinois and had the [highest score on our new Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative scorecard](#). Dairyland already provides more energy efficiency and clean energy programs to their customers than any other co-op in Illinois, and we are excited to see what the recent investment in Dairyland modernizing their energy systems and investing in clean energy.

"Twenty-four of Illinois' co-ops did not receive any funding from today's New ERA announcement. While disappointing, the opportunity for modernizing their energy systems and prioritizing clean energy projects doesn't stop here. Other federal investments from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Inflation Reduction Act, and Illinois' Climate and Equitable Jobs Act provide countless opportunities to update the power grid and build local clean energy generation in rural Illinois.

"For example, [another high-scoring co-op, Adams Electric](#), also recently received federal funding from the Department of Energy's (DOE) Energy Improvements in Rural and Remote Areas Program [to build wind and solar](#). In August 2024, [DOE announced plans](#) to fund an additional \$400 million in clean energy projects through the same program. Another exciting opportunity for clean energy for co-ops is the [direct pay option](#) that allows tax exempt entities to get federal tax credits (30-50%) for clean energy projects.

"It's no surprise that the two highest ranking co-ops on our scorecard are the first in line to take advantage of these new opportunities that will modernize their infrastructure and deliver clean, affordable energy to their customers. We hope other co-ops in Illinois will now also step up and take full advantage of these unprecedented opportunities. For too long, co-ops have lagged behind in the transition to clean energy. With falling renewable energy prices and state and federal funding, co-ops have the tools and resources in their hands to make the shift. Our message to co-op leaders: Don't miss out on this chance to secure a clean, affordable energy future for your member-owners.

"We also want to remind co-op member-owners that their voice matters. The new [Illinois Rural Electric Cooperative Scorecard](#) provides a clear picture of each co-op's strengths and identifies areas for growth. So it's more than just a report card – it's a roadmap for action. Co-op member-owners, the public, leaders, and policymakers are encouraged to visit the Scorecard to explore the results and learn how they can get involved. By harnessing the power of their collective voice, rural communities can ensure that their co-ops embrace a future powered by clean, renewable energy."