



Congress should consider costs of energy plan

Drastic changes are being proposed for the electric industry. Congressional leaders and the Obama administration have been making a hard push to quickly pass energy, climate change and appropriations bills—all aimed at creating a new “green economy.”

The President told Congress in his February address that “cap-and-trade” legislation will be a key element to transforming the nation’s energy and electricity systems and consumers’ energy habits.

In reality, a cap and trade system will be the same as a tax on carbon, designed to reduce the use of fossil fuels like coal and natural gas. Even though such a plan has not yet been formally adopted, the administration’s proposed 2010 budget includes revenues from such a

program—\$80 billion a year beginning in 2012 that will come straight out of electric customers’ pockets. And the cost could conceivably be much higher.

Any legislation based on such proposals will have significant effects for us in the Southeast, because our region primarily uses fossil fuels to generate electricity. Our electric costs are lower than most of the country, which is good because we consume more kilowatts throughout the year because of our climate. If these plans go through, consumers in other areas of the country, such as California, the Northwest and the Northeast, will feel much smaller overall cost impacts.

Congress has also announced plans that call for mandatory development of

renewable resources nationwide. While that is a worthy pursuit in general, large scale use of renewables in our part of the country is not realistic. We simply do not have the levels of wind and sun necessary to meet the needs of hundreds of thousands of consumers. In order to maintain reliable and economical electric service for our members, we must have a diversified mix of fuels that includes coal and nuclear. It does not make sense to artificially add costs to our current generating resources to make renewables more cost competitive.

We strongly believe that it is our

responsibility to be advocates for our members and keep your electric costs as low as possible. Energy policies that result in higher costs for our region will damage economic development in our state and lead to higher prices for other products and services.

We have asked our leaders in Washington to speak up for Mississippi’s consumers and help craft a wide-ranging,

sensible energy plan that protects the environment as well as our economy.

We will continue to update you as this process moves forward.

For additional information, log on to www.findabalancedsolution.com.



By Don Jordan
General Manager

Jazz in the Grove set for April 25

Notable jazz musicians will turn up the heat in Bay Springs Saturday, April 25, for Jazz in the Grove.

The event, now in its 13th year, will feature University of Southern Mississippi talent and Associate Professor of Philosophy Sam Bruton, with Karen Greene, Danny Infante and Jeff Mills; keyboardist and recording artist Lao Tizer and his band with American violinist Karen Briggs; Brasilliance!, featuring Robertinho Silva on percussion; and the Jackson State University Jazz Ensemble, featuring Donald Harrison.

Opening ceremonies begin at 10:30 a.m. in the downtown grove. Musicians will perform from 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. Admission is free.

THE ENERGY EXPERT

Our Web site offers money-saving resources

Southern Pine Electric Power Association encourages its customers to discover ways to reduce power costs. One of the tools Southern Pine puts at your disposal is our Internet Web site: www.spepa.com.

Here, you can learn interesting things about *your* electric power cooperative and submit questions that aren’t addressed on our FAQs page. Click on “About Your Bill” under the Residential/Payments & Billing tab for an explanation of the charges you see on your bill.

The “Resources” page is filled with helpful links.



By Joan Parker
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Our “Storm Center” keeps you up to date when major power outages occur in the Southern Pine service area.

In addition to providing fun links for kids,

“Educational Links” also offers items of interest to older youth and adults.

“Energy Efficiency” links are just a click away on the “Resources” tab, or by clicking on the purple “Energy Saving Tips” navigation tab.

Perhaps the most impressive tools available to help you see how your energy dollars are spent are the “Home Energy Calculator” and “Home Energy Library,” which are easily accessed from any page within the site.



Hammons, Harper represent Southern Pine at the Youth Leadership Workshop



Maggie Harper and Amber Hammons pose with their state legislators and Southern Pine General Manager Don Jordan during a breakfast at the workshop. From left are Rep. Ray Rogers, Sen. Dean Kirby, Harper, Hammons, Jordan and Rep. Mark Baker.

Two high school juniors represented Southern Pine Electric Power Association at the Electric Power Associations of Mississippi Youth Leadership Workshop.

Amber Hammons, of Brandon, and Maggie Harper, of Pearl, joined 61 other juniors from across the state at the three-day workshop, held March 4-6 in Jackson. The trip to the workshop was their prize for writing the winning entries in Southern Pine’s essay contest.

The students took part in activities designed to help motivate and prepare them for leadership roles in their schools, church and community. The workshop provided opportunities to watch the House and Senate in action at the state Capitol and to meet legislators at a breakfast.

Lt. Gov. Phil Bryant was the keynote speaker at the workshop.

Amber, the daughter of Sha and Steve Hammons, was awarded the South Mississippi Electric Power Association leadership award during the workshop.

She attends Brandon High School, where she is the mascot, president of the

FFA chapter and has served as vice president of her class for the past two years. She is active in the Crossgates Baptist Church youth group Refuge and is an instructor at Riverview Camp for Girls, in Mentone, Ala.

She plans to study psychology and political science at Mississippi State University.

“I plan to be a counselor at a high school until I can earn my Ph.D. in psychology and possibly open a private practice,” she said.

Amber is also interested in a political career.

Maggie is the daughter of Gregg and Sidney Harper. She attends Pearl High School, where she has been elected to Student Council every year since the seventh grade. She has been a class representative each year since serving as vice president of her eighth-grade class. She was named a Super Scholar in her freshman year.

Maggie is a member of her school’s tennis team, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Pearl High School Chamber Singers and Pearl Singers.



Essay excerpts

Amber Hammons and Maggie Harper earned their participation in the Youth Leadership Workshop by writing the winning entries in Southern Pine Electric Power Association’s essay contest on energy efficiency. Here are a few excerpts:

One of the largest problems with consumption of electricity is teenagers. Most of us tend to be very self-involved, almost to the point where matters such as electricity costs seem nothing more than trivial.... This is why I have decided to take a stand and be more informed and energy efficient, unlike the majority of my peers.... There is such an abundance of obvious and hassle-free alternatives to wasting energy, such as the Energy Star bulb. It is not that energy-reducing solutions aren’t available, it’s just that not many people want to take the time to incorporate these methods into their everyday lives....

— Amber Hammons, Brandon

It is important that our country become energy independent and end its reliance on foreign sources of oil. We must utilize our own natural resources, including clean coal technology, and expand safe nuclear power. As we work as a nation to reach this goal, energy conservation can help us bridge the gap while drilling for oil in ANWR and offshore and developing alternative forms of energy.... Lowering consumer usage [of electricity] should always be a voluntary concept that should be encouraged but should never be a government mandated policy....

— Maggie Harper, Pearl

She plans to become an elementary special education teacher. “Having grown up with a brother who has special needs has given me a desire to help children with disabilities,” she said.

Other students who competed in Southern Pine’s essay contest are Ajazmin Barnes, Collins High School; Amber Robinson, Simpson County

Academy; Katie Caraway, Florence High School; Tyler Rhodes, East Rankin Academy; Lillian Ashley Hoffer, McLaurin High School; Jelisa Payron, Bay Springs High School; Haleigh Johnson, Salem Christian School; and Keri Byrd, Mize Attendance Center.