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7 MR. ED CLAIRMONT: I think my voice is loud  
8 enough from addressing our council yesterday. My name is  
9 Ed Clairmont, C-l-a-i-r-m-o-n-t. I am the President of  
10 the Rosebud Sioux Tribe's Utility Commission. I also  
11 have brought with me Mr. Ronald Neiss -- he is the  
12 Secretary of our Commission -- as well as Tony Rogers  
13 sitting back there, our Executive Director.

14 We received a copy of the notice on the rate  
15 increase several weeks ago. And from our experience of  
16 Cherry-Todd Co-Op, our local co-op that services the  
17 majority of our members, with a rate increase of 22  
18 percent last year, it became very -- I became very  
19 interested in what Western was going to increase their  
20 rate in 2010. Now that I found this out this morning,  
21 it's going to have a big impact on our tribal members  
22 within those co-ops on our land.

23 I have a position paper to present to Western  
24 along with a resolution passed by our tribal council  
25 supporting that position. And the position is not to

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PAMELA M. SCHEID

Registered Professional Reporter

605-339-6603

1 endorse the rate increase. We're opposed to it primarily  
2 because of the rate increase of our co-ops last year, our  
3 85 to 90 percent unemployment rate on the Rosebud Sioux  
4 tribal lands, and we're one of the 10 poorest counties  
5 within the United States. This is the main reason why  
6 any increases that come down from Western to Basin to our  
7 local co-ops have a big impact on our tribal members as  
8 well as the rural counties. I may address that because  
9 they're within our lands also. You may also, you know,  
10 let your people or your cooperative members know that the  
11 increase is going to have a big impact the way the  
12 economy is today.

13 Right now I would like to thank Western for  
14 letting me make these short comments and to make these  
15 papers or documents -- present 'em to you today. And I  
16 thank you.

17 MR. HOFFMAN: Do you have some of those papers  
18 that we --

19 MR. ED CLAIRMONT: Yes. I've got the original  
20 copies. I'll present 'em to you.

21 MR. HOFFMAN: And this is both the position  
22 paper --

23 MR. ED CLAIRMONT: The position paper's in the  
24 back and the resolution number is here. Thank you. The  
25 resolution number is 2009-257. It's up here.

1 (Exhibits 1 - 2 marked for identification.)

2 MR. HOFFMAN: Thank you, Mr. Clairmont. The  
3 purpose is to receive comments, and so we appreciate your  
4 attending and participating.

5 Do we have other individuals that wish to  
6 present a comment? make a presentation? We have  
7 reserved from 11:00 o'clock until no later than noon to  
8 do this. I don't want to cut anybody off. Do we have  
9 someone else? Yes, please. Again, if you could identify  
10 yourself for the court reporter.

11 MR. RONALD L. NEISS: (Greeting speaking in  
12 Lakota.) My name is Ronald Neiss. What I've said in my  
13 language was I wish to you, you my relatives, all a good  
14 morning. I extend a sincere handshake to you in  
15 friendship. My elders have taught me, you know, that we  
16 are related.

17 Also, Tony Rogers is here, our Utilities  
18 Commission Director. And I've been with the Rosebud  
19 Sioux Tribe Utilities Commission since 1994 when we  
20 started. The Rosebud Sioux Tribe Utilities Commission  
21 does have the regulatory and adjudicatory authority over  
22 tribal homelands. Cicangumakoce for the record. That's  
23 Rosebud Sioux Tribal homelands. I served as the  
24 president at various times too. Now Edward Clairmont has  
25 served as the president.

1 I've seen ups and downs over the years of the  
2 prices of the energy costs. Our LIEAP program has, you  
3 know, fluctuated, you know, up and down. We have an  
4 unemployment rate of over 80 percent. And as has been  
5 indicated by Commissioner Clairmont that we're one of the  
6 fourth largest -- tenth largest -- or, excuse me --  
7 poorest counties. We're actually the -- and Pine Ridge  
8 is sometimes the poorest county. Sometimes we're the  
9 second. Seems like it's a race between us. Hey, we're  
10 the poorest county this time. The next time it would be  
11 Rosebud; Pine Ridge. We have to kind of joke about the  
12 bleakness of life on the reservation.

13 We are a proud -- I'm very proud of our culture  
14 and our children, our elders. The beauty of our culture  
15 sustains us and the bleakness that we're forced to live  
16 with. Ever since -- and also that includes the  
17 electrical rates, of course. And since the advent of the  
18 REA and then you have the cooperatives within, you know,  
19 tribal homelands -- in Rosebud, South Dakota, in our  
20 tribal homelands, it's Cherry-Todd Electric Cooperative.

21 Kind of a little side note, in their history,  
22 in their 70-some odd history -- the membership's 80  
23 percent tribal members -- there has never been a Native  
24 American on the board of directors. Never. Our  
25 continuous efforts to get them on board, we -- history

1 has been created because this year there are two Native  
2 Americans on board. By acclamation on September 12  
3 they'll be placed on board, you know, because they're the  
4 only ones that applied. You know, that's history making.  
5 So I'm very happy about that.

6 Cherry-Todd Electric raised their rates 22  
7 percent several months back. We had a public hearing;  
8 "we" being the Rosebud Sioux Tribal Utilities Commission.  
9 People were outraged. People were disheartened.  
10 Cherry-Todd Electric -- they cut off our tribal members.  
11 Anyone within Todd County or Cherry-Todd, they'll  
12 disconnect their electricity in winter months. So  
13 there's life-threatening situations. This past winter  
14 there were more people with their electricity  
15 disconnected. Again, when you have -- and a lot of  
16 people -- most of their income is going to pay their  
17 electrical bills.

18 And our LIEAP program just cannot sustain  
19 itself, you know, because we -- the tribe, through its  
20 casino funds and other funds, you know, we supplement  
21 that income from LIEAP. With a 22 percent increase,  
22 that's 22 percent less that are able to help tribal  
23 members. Again, you have over an 80 percent unemployment  
24 rate. Any additional increase -- I feel that my words  
25 won't really go nowhere. I hope this is just a token

1 effort -- I hope it's not a token effort; that you hear  
2 my words. And if you were to come out to Rosebud -- and  
3 some you have. Greg has been out there -- has been out  
4 here.

5 We appreciate the efforts of WAPA, the Western  
6 Area Power Administration. You know, when people tell me  
7 -- and we understand that Cherry-Todd -- they have to --  
8 you know, whatever comes their way as far as rate  
9 increases, they're going to have to pass it on. I tell  
10 people about the energy food chains; the cooperatives.  
11 There's not much IOUs in our territory. And then it's  
12 Rushmore Electric, then it's Basin, then it's WAPA, and  
13 then it's actually the Department of Energy. And so you  
14 try to explain these things to people at home. They  
15 really don't understand it. Alls they understand is they  
16 cannot afford another rate increase that's going to hit  
17 the Rosebud Sioux Tribe Reservation very hard.

18 One other thing. This probably isn't a -- it's  
19 not really for here for today, but I just wanted to say  
20 that, you know, Western Area Power Administration is  
21 working with like Basin Electric on an interconnection  
22 agreement for over a 100-megawatt wind farm at Wessington  
23 Springs or Winner. You know, I hope that, you know, when  
24 Western looks at the capacity of transmission that they  
25 look at tribal -- the tribe is, you know, proposing wind

1 farms also.

2 The Rosebud Sioux Tribe was a recipient a \$1.5  
3 million grant from the Department of Energy for  
4 renewables on tribal homelands. So I hope that in this  
5 spirit that WAPA -- we'll support the economic efforts.  
6 We've been called the socially economic disadvantaged.  
7 Again, I thank you. I've taken up much of your time and  
8 I thank you.

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