



# History of the Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour to Washington, D.C. & What Youth Tour Delegates Can Expect

What makes electric cooperatives different from other utilities is that “giving something back to the community” is part of their business plan. Why do electric cooperatives bring high school students to Washington? Because it is important to learn about the political process to interact with your government.

The Rural Electric Cooperative Youth Tour has brought high school students to Washington, D.C., every June since the late 1950s. Senator Lyndon Baines Johnson inspired the Youth Tour when he addressed the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) Annual Meeting in Chicago in 1957. The Senator and future president declared, "If one thing goes out of this meeting, it will be sending youngsters to the national capital where they can actually see what the flag stands for and represents."

Consequently, some Texas electric cooperatives sent groups of young people to Washington to work during the summer in Senator Johnson's office. In 1958, a rural electric cooperative in Iowa sponsored the first group of 34 young people on a week-long study tour of the nation's capital. Later that same year, another bus load came to Washington from Illinois. The idea grew and other states sent bus loads of young people throughout the summer. By 1959, the "Youth Tour" had grown to 130 youths.

In 1964, NRECA began to coordinate joint activities among the state delegations and suggested that co-op representatives from each state arrange to be in Washington, D.C., during Youth Tour week. The first year of the coordinated Tour included approximately 400 young people from 12 states. Word of the program has continued to spread, and today more than 1,500

young people and their chaperones participate in the Youth Tour every year. The NRECA is the national service organization dedicated to representing the national interests of cooperative electric utilities and the consumers they serve. NRECA's more than 900 member cooperatives serve 42 million people in 47 states.

Four lucky students will get the opportunity to become better leaders and gain the sense that they can make a difference by representing Boone Electric Cooperative at the 2017 Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington D.C., June 9-15. This is the 37th year Boone Electric has participated in the Youth Tour contest.

Youth Tour delegates will have the opportunity to meet and question their legislators and get a better understanding of how our government works. All of this will be balanced with a lot of fun, which will make for a trip of a lifetime.

## **Some of the places Youth Tour delegates will visit:**

- Lincoln and Jefferson memorials
- JFK and FDR memorials
- Washington Monument
- Arlington National Cemetery
- Vietnam War Memorial
- U.S. Capitol and Congress Chambers
- Supreme Court
- Library of Congress
- Mount Vernon
- Smithsonian Institute
- Ford's Theatre