

Youth to Washington trip may provide answers for your future

OK. So you aren't really into politics. As a junior in high school, you're thinking about college and where you're going to come up with more than \$100,000 to pay for higher education. You're also trying to decide what you want to work at the rest of your life to make that college experience pay off.

Oddly enough, the very people who may have answers to those questions are wearing the title of state legislator or seated in chambers of the U.S. Congress in Washington D.C.

Before you know it, you will be voting in your first election and the weight of the country's decisions will partially belong to you. Will you support a Congressman who wants to pass Cap & Trade? Will you be in favor of farm subsidies? As you approach what was once "draft-age," do you think we should send more troops to Iraq and Afghanistan or should the military be strengthening our borders? Oh, and when you get the opportunity to meet your Congressman, in addition to these questions will you ask: What has Congress done to make higher education more affordable and will I be able to find a job when I graduate?

Electric and telephone cooperatives in 44 states believe that young people deserve a first-class opportunity to educate themselves in the government process. Each year, the cooperatives across the nation sponsor more than 1,500 high school students to make the trek to Washington to get that personal initiation, and they have a lot of fun in the process.

It all begins in Springfield on **April 6, 2011** during the **Illinois Electric and Telephone Cooperative Youth Day** where nearly 300 students will visit the State Capitol and spend much of the morning meeting with legislators. You will tour the Supreme Court and spend the afternoon touring local sites.

This year marks the 52nd trip to the nation's capital and promises to be as exciting as ever. Students learn the principles required to keep cooperative members working together for the cooperative's success by establishing their own "chip and pop" cooperative while on the bus trip.

While in Washington during the week of **June 10-17 (Youth to Washington Tour)**, in addition to meeting with Congressmen from Illinois, students are treated to tours of historic sites, given the opportunity to make life-long friends and receive information to help determine career paths.

The future of the country depends on the youth of today getting involved.

If you are a junior in high school and want to learn more about this opportunity, contact your guidance counselor or Jerri Schaefer at Southern Illinois Electric Cooperative by calling 1-800-762-1400. You may also check out the Youth Tour through the Association Of Illinois Electric Cooperatives (AIEC) at www.aiec.coop for additional details.