

Co-ops exist because people in rural areas worked together to form non-profit organizations to serve rural Minnesotans. Now, third party companies have become more active in trying to operate within cooperative territories. These third party companies are looking to take the most profitable customers and leave the cost of maintaining the grid in the rural areas of Minnesota to fewer and fewer rural residents. How do you believe situations with third party companies should be handled?

Gruenhagen: I would opposed third-party companies coming in to be profitable and leave the cost of maintaining the grid to the rural areas of Minnesota. Again, this is another transfer of wealth to the haves from the have-nots. I would ban third-party companies from competing unless they were required to pick up the cost of maintaining the grid in the rural areas of Minnesota.

Lipke: To begin with I believe it is incumbent on the specific cooperatives to build a competitive program serving the varied needs of the customers within their territories just like any other small business person in a competitive business. This would eliminate much of the exiting. By in large I think most cooperatives do a good job on this aspect. I am a rural cooperative member and I have not had major differences with my cooperative management. If elected, and you have specific concerns as a cooperative my door would always be open to address your specific needs. I come from a long family line of cooperative supporters. My grandfather went door to door in rural McLeod and Sibley Counties selling his neighbors on the necessity and viability of cooperative power.