

# NATHAN SCHNEIDER

## CANDIDATE STATEMENT

For the past decade, I have been working to bring the cooperative movement more fully into the digital economy. I have organized conferences, written and edited books, co-founded organizations, and met with countless co-op founders. Sectors like social media, gig economy platforms, and artificial intelligence have profound accountability problems, and they need the kinds of democracy that the co-op legacy offers. But over and over, I have seen that the policy environment is keeping cooperatives out. I have seen many brilliant, talented founders run up against the walls of the status quo, while investor-owned startups prevailed.

It doesn't have to be this way. Studying the history of the co-op movement has shown me that, when appropriate policy is in place, cooperatives can empower communities and co-op capital can be deployed at large scales. I live less than an hour away from CoBank, a massive cooperative bank that is a product of the Farm Credit System. My grandfather grew up on a farm in Colorado with no electricity until the Rural Electrification Act enabled a revenue-positive public credit system for rural electrification. My home loan is from a credit union that is the largest mortgage lender in our region, thanks to federal policy that makes community finance feasible. We can be just as ambitious as our predecessors were—enabling cooperatives to confront our most pressing challenges, whether in tech, care work, clean energy, and beyond.

We are hindered today by past compromises, which forced us to develop co-op policy in silos. We continue to do so. This means that the farmers, the rural electrics, the credit unions, and the worker co-ops operate on separate policy frameworks. Our movement's strengths don't align. And in the context of the digital economy, where stakeholder groups often blend and mix, the siloed models don't work. This is why I believe NCBA CLUSA, as the national apex association, is a crucial catalyst. Without diminishing the importance of sector-specific associations, only NCBA CLUSA can align the movement's full capacities.

I believe that I have a rare combination of experience to offer. I am a scholar who has carefully studied cooperative history and a practitioner who has gotten to know a wide variety of co-op entrepreneurs trying to make it under current conditions. I also have deep roots in the Colorado cooperative community, where I have worked to support some of our most marginalized neighbors to solve their problems in their own ways.

NCBA CLUSA is in a difficult moment due to the current political climate and its legacy of work around international aid. I confess to seeing that crisis as an opportunity. I feel a calling to be part of stewarding this vital organization through a difficult time and toward a new sense of its promise. I ask for the membership to give me a chance to contribute to the

movement I have come to love, and to help realize the tremendous potential I see in it.  
Thank you for this chance to earn your trust and your vote.