

FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Larry Butel
Overbrook

Bill Conley
Delia

Karol Lohman
Leavenworth

Don Montgomery
Burlingame

Jeanine Murphy
Leavenworth

Ralph Phillips
Mayetta

Rob Sage
Maple Hill

Matthew Turecek
Valley Falls

Mark Wulfkuhle
Lawrence

STAFF

Christopher Parr
CEO

DISTRICT OFFICES

MCLOUTH OFFICE

P.O. Box 70
McLouth, KS 66054-0070

TOPEKA OFFICE

1100 SW Auburn Road
Topeka, KS 66615

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday
7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

OFFICE CLOSING

Happy New Year! FreeState offices will be closed New Year's Day, Jan. 1. We look forward to serving you in 2024!

FROM THE CEO

Leadership Matters

Leadership, like your membership, matters because it is one of the most identifying aspects of the cooperative difference.

Electric cooperatives are led by members, elected by members. Each April the membership votes on their own representation, electing trustees that provide democratic governance. As we begin to open our trustee election process for the year, I wanted to take the opportunity to provide an overview of leadership at the trustee level.

As the governing body, trustees adopt policies and oversee business performance, plans and strategy, including allocation of the cooperative's budget and assisting the CEO in developing and evaluating strategic plans.

TRUSTEES ARE EXPECTED TO:

- ▶ Understand and fulfill fiduciary duties of a board member.
- ▶ Act and respond to cooperative policies and procedures.
- ▶ Approach each board decision and vote with the best interest of the entire cooperative in mind.
- ▶ Demonstrate behaviors that support inclusive and equitable treatment of all.
- ▶ Advocate on behalf of cooperative members.
- ▶ Serve as a cooperative ambassador within the communities served.
- ▶ Understand and be informed about board matters.

- ▶ Be a conduit for information about members' interests.
- ▶ Attend board meetings and other events on behalf of the cooperative.
- ▶ Think systematically, conceptually and analytically to determine effective solutions.
- ▶ Participate in training and education to expand knowledge and understanding of industry issues.
- ▶ Build working relationships with other trustees and cooperative staff.
- ▶ Be able to utilize basic technology, an iPad, email and other applications to communicate and conduct business.

As a trustee, you also have the opportunity to learn. Our statewide and national organizations offer educational classes to help trustees fulfill the above duties. FreeState's trustees are dedicated to members and furthering the mission, vision and values of the cooperative.

Do you want to challenge yourself and become more involved or know someone that might be up to the task? Trustee applications are open until Feb. 1, 2024, and can be found at www.freestate.coop/annualmeeting.



Chris Parr

“Electric cooperatives are led by members, elected by members.”

Serving Your COOPERATIVE

The new year brings a refreshed sense of inspiration and new opportunities on the horizon

This is the time of year to take a step outside your comfort zone and get involved in a new capacity. Being a trustee is a great way to serve your local cooperative. Trustees play an important, critical role that takes consistent effort and dedication to the cooperative and the members we serve.

The board of trustees is made up of nine elected trustees who make decisions that represent every single member, including themselves. Each trustee is a member-owner of FreeState Electric Cooperative who works together with other trustees to ensure the stability and sustainability of the cooperative for future generations. Trustees are integral to FreeState as they have a fiduciary duty to every member.

The board has a sincere interest in preserving the strength of FreeState's operations and maintaining productive relationships with members. Trustees keep open lines of communication with the members they serve and work together to ensure equal treatment for all members of the system. Each trustee strives to be knowledgeable about trends and circumstances that may affect the members and rural areas and communities that FreeState serves.

RUNNING FOR A TRUSTEE POSITION IS A:

- ▶ Potential three-year term.
- ▶ Commitment to learning.
- ▶ Commitment to every member of the cooperative.

Each April, members elect their representatives in the board room. Members who meet the qualifications to be a trustee can apply online before Feb. 1. The nominating committee then reviews applications and presents qualified nominees to the membership. Elected trustees serve for three years before their position is up for reelection.

WAYS TRUSTEES SERVE MEMBERS:

- ▶ One monthly meeting, typically held on the fourth Wednesday of each month.
- ▶ Participate in the annual meeting.
- ▶ Serve as a cooperative ambassador.

GENERAL TRUSTEE QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ Be an individual.
- ▶ Have the capacity to enter legally binding contracts.
- ▶ Not have been previously removed or disqualified as a trustee.
- ▶ While a trustee, not be convicted of, or plead guilty to, a felony.
- ▶ Earn the credentialed cooperative trustee designation, trustee's certificate, or similar designation of certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association within three years of becoming a trustee.
- ▶ Comply with any other reasonable qualifications determined by the board.

BOARD APPLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE AT WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/ANNUALMEETING AND DUE BY THURSDAY, FEB. 1, AT 5:30 P.M.





- Represent cooperative members at statewide, regional and national levels.

WEST DISTRICT

Members include those previously served by Kaw Valley Electric Cooperative Inc., include members located in Shawnee, Douglas, Jackson, Osage, Wabaunsee and Pottawattamie counties and addition to said counties after Jan. 1, 2017.

EAST DISTRICT

Members include those previously served by Leavenworth- Jefferson Electric Cooperative Inc., including members located in Leavenworth, Jefferson, Atchison, Douglas and Jackson counties in addition to said counties after Jan. 1, 2017.

FreeState members interested in serving on the board of trustees can submit their names to be nominated for the election process. We encourage any member who has an interest in serving the cooperative, and is eligible, to apply online.

Do you have a neighbor or friend that you think would be a valuable member of the board of trustees? Encourage them to apply, or serve your cooperative in another capacity.

Board applications are available at www.freestate.coop/annualmeeting. For more information, call during office hours at 800-794-1989 and press zero to speak to a representative.

Other Ways to Serve Your Cooperative

Looking to serve your cooperative and local community, but in a different capacity? Consider joining the Nominating Committee or the Volunteer Member Committee.

Cooperatives are built upon the foundation of Seven Cooperative Principles. One principle that is ever so important to FreeState is co-op principle No. 7: Concern for Community.

THE VOLUNTEER MEMBER COMMITTEE oversees Operation Round-Up, the cooperative's charitable giving program. One of the most vital and well-recognized cooperative principles among members is Concern for Community. FreeState is dedicated to upholding these principles and one example is this community-focused program.

VOLUNTEER MEMBER COMMITTEE QUALIFICATIONS

- Attend quarterly meetings (virtual options).
- Discuss and allocate grant funding on the program's behalf.
- Review and provide input on applications for funding.
- Serve as a positive influence for the participating members.
- Assist local communities and organizations by providing critical funding to improve lives in the FreeState service territory.

The committee allocations are made possible by the generosity of members participating in the program. **THE PROGRAM SEEKS ONE TO TWO INDIVIDUALS** interested in joining the committee and learning more about the cooperative difference.

This type of service may be perfect for someone who is passionate about lending a helping hand to the community and understands that even small change can lead to big impact. Interested in joining? Call our office or email customerservice@freestate.coop.

THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE, made up of members appointed by each trustee, engages in the cooperative through recruiting and voting on a general election slate of trustee nominees in early February.

The slate is then presented to the membership at the FreeState Annual Meeting.

While the 2024 Nominating Committee is set, we are always looking for members interested in serving their cooperative. If you want to be considered for the Nominating Committee in 2025, contact our office or a FreeState trustee.

Powerful Connections Hit Home for Clarks

Each day, we enter our homes, casually flip on the light switch, and plug in our most-used electronic devices and appliances into power outlets without a second thought. For many of us, the convenience of electricity is so ingrained in our lives that we may often take it for granted. However, for **JACK AND RAMONA CLARK**, who have spent their lives just outside of Silver Lake, the power lines symbolize a new way of life.

The Clarks recall the glorious day the power poles went up and the lights came on. Jack and Ramona's journey is a true testament to the transformative power of electric cooperatives.

"Electricity was one of the most wonderful things there ever was for rural people," Jack reflects. "It just solved a lot of hard work and solved a lot of problems."

Although the Kansas Power and Light Company brought electricity to the city of Topeka in 1924, the electricity of towns and cities did not stretch beyond their boundaries to rural communities, farms, homes and businesses.

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Rural Electrification Act and Brown County became the first county in Kansas to receive service in 1938.

However, it took nearly a decade before Ramona first received power to her childhood home in 1947 and Jack's family powered up their home two years later in 1949.

"The first thing most families wanted was a porch light," Ramona said. "And you really only had one light inside that was above the dining table."

The arrival of power not only brightened their lives, but also made daily tasks significantly easier by electrifying household appliances and bringing indoor plumbing, which freed up countless hours of labor once required for routine chores.



Jack and Ramona Clark of Silver Lake recall the glorious day the power poles went up and the lights came on.

"We carried water up from the spring," Jack said. "My dad had a cistern water system, but if it didn't rain you had to bring water up to the house."

Families were quick to replace outdated household items like gas irons and refrigerators. Jack specifically recalls attending a Kaw Valley Electric Cooperative (now FreeState's West District) Annual Meeting in Topeka, where members could purchase an array of electric appliances and tools.

To experience life without indoor plumbing, air conditioning or even an electric iron seems nearly unimaginable.

As you take down the lights strung around your Christmas tree or settle in to watch your favorite show at the end of the day, take a moment to reflect on the powerful journey that electricity has made to make our lives more comfortable.

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YOUTH TOUR APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

FreeState Electric Cooperative invests in our youth through opportunities designed to provide dynamic, personal interactions with fellow youth, cooperative employees and legislators.

These experiences guide students to develop leadership and communication skills important to becoming employable adults. Youth programs are all-expenses-paid trips that are truly experiences of a lifetime for area youth.

One student will have an opportunity to visit Washington, D.C., for the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour in June, and one student will experience Steamboat Springs, Colorado, during the Cooperative Youth Leadership Camp in July. The two selected high school students will also receive a \$1,000 scholarship.

Any high school junior living in the FreeState Electric Cooperative territory whose parent or guardian is a FreeState member is eligible.

FIND OUT MORE AND APPLY AT WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/YOUTH BY FEB. 15, 2024.