



**FREESTATE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.**

# The Outlet

## FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

### Board of Trustees

**Larry Butel**  
Overbrook

**Ralph Phillips**  
Mayetta

**Bill Conley**  
Delia

**Rob Sage**  
Maple Hill

**Karol Lohman**  
Leavenworth

**Matthew Turecek**  
Valley Falls

**Don Montgomery**  
Burlingame

**Mark Wulfkuhle**  
Lawrence

**Jeanine Murphy**  
Leavenworth

### Staff

**Christopher Parr**  
Chief Executive Officer

### District Offices

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

**Topeka Office**  
1100 SW Auburn Rd.  
Topeka, KS 66615

**Office Hours:**  
Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

## NOTICE

**REMINDER:** Do you know a charitable organization that needs additional funding to achieve its mission? FreeState's Sharing Success grant applications are due **APRIL 1**. Find out more at [WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/COBANK](http://WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/COBANK).

## FROM THE CEO

# Attend YOUR Annual Meeting

We're in the swing of the annual meeting season. That means we are preparing information, putting together our trustee election, and going through the processes that make being a cooperative member different. I've been asked, "Why should I go to another meeting?" The answer is simple. It is more than a meeting. It's an opportunity to engage with your cooperative because we work for each of YOU.

### YOU Elect Trustees

Each member has a vote. Trustees represent you around the board room table. They are members like you who take on the responsibility of the co-op's financial security. Trustees review and conduct due diligence on policies that will affect every FreeState member — including themselves. Trustees are not shareholders, rather they are members. While compensated for their time and expertise, they are fairly elected by the membership to serve three-year terms. While our trustee candidates for the 2023 election have already been slated, consider serving your cooperative in the future. If you have an interest in serving your co-op, let us know! We will make sure you get the information you need.

### YOU Are the Focus

When we plan annual meetings, we keep our members at the top of our

minds. We realize some of our members have never been to their co-op's offices, and we want to showcase the annual meeting as a place for members to get information about the co-op and its business. It is a place to celebrate milestones, discuss industry trends, and serve as a place of accountability. Each year FreeState provides an annual report available to each member and includes financial information and insight into the overall performance of the co-op. Annual meeting gives you an opportunity to ask questions and connect with FreeState trustees and staff. We encourage engagement and dialogue. We work for you, and we do our best to provide each member with an avenue to get the most out of your membership.

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR TUESDAY, APRIL 25.** Enjoy a free meal and gift while supplies last. We'll see you next month in McLouth!



Chris Parr

**It's more than a meeting. It's an opportunity to engage with your cooperative because we work for each of YOU.**

2023 ANNUAL MEETING

# Voting Information

Trustee candidate profiles and how to cast your vote starting April 4

**LEARN MORE:**  
Video bios of each candidate can be viewed at [www.freestate.coop/candidate](http://www.freestate.coop/candidate)

## WEST DISTRICT

**LARRY BUTEL (INCUMBENT)**

Larry Butel, Overbrook, has been a cooperative member since 1989. He has served on the cooperative board since 2004, serving as treasurer of the FreeState board for the past five years.



Butel is a farmer and rancher, raising cattle, row crops, wheat and hay under Butel Farm, Inc.

He believes representing friends and neighbors in making decisions that guide the direction of the cooperative is important, specifically, to continue to provide reliable electric power, while maintaining safety standards, watching for ways to keep the costs as low as possible and being a good employer and business community member.

“I value the cooperative business model and want to continue to serve our members, helping to manage the co-op for their best interest,” he said.

Advocating and educating on behalf of the cooperative, being visible and active in his community, and being available and willing to talk about cooperative topics as they come up is vital to representing members in the boardroom.

Butel is involved in his community as a member of the Overbrook Rotary Club, Cornerstone Family School’s track and field coordinator, Gideons International Osage County Camp member and is a graduate of Osage County Leadership. In the past, he has sponsored the high school youth group and served as Sunday school teacher for Overbrook and Worden United Methodist Church.

He has served in leadership roles for the Kansas State Bank of Overbrook Board of Directors, Cornerstone Family Schools, Wakarusa Watershed Joint No. 35, Gideons International Osage County, Farmer’s Cooperative Association, Osage County Farm Service Agency, Osage County Extension Council, Overbrook United Methodist Church, Overbrook Rotary Club, Osage County Livestock Association, Wilshire Investment Club, Kansas Livestock Association and County Director.

## WEST DISTRICT

**DON MONTGOMERY (INCUMBENT)**

Don Montgomery, Burlingame, has been a cooperative member for 33 years. He has served on the board since 2015, serving as secretary of the FreeState board for the past five years.



Montgomery is a retired vocational agriculture teacher, farmer and rancher north of Burlingame.

He has seen many changes in the cooperative and believes we are better and stronger than ever. His goal is to represent all cooperative members and will continue making himself available to members when any questions or concerns arise.

“To educate members, first, you must have the information to answer the questions. Attending board meetings, strategic planning sessions, and director education classes or industry meetings has allowed me to acquire the knowledge to be a source of information,” he said. “My priority is the cooperative members and getting them the information they need to answer their questions.”

Montgomery is involved in his community serving on the Southeast Kansas State Farm Management Association Board and is a member of the Burlingame Cemetery Board. In the past, he has served the Kansas State Extension State Advisory Board and was president of the Osage County Extension Board and served the Resource Center for Independent Living Board in Osage City. Montgomery has served on the Burlingame volunteer fire department and rescue squad for 12 years, and while in education was a member of the Kansas National Education Association.

His proudest association is with the Burlingame FFA Chapter that he sponsored for 28 years, giving him the opportunity to work with young people and supervise a catering business and the FFA Greenhouse.

He is currently a NRECA Credentialed Cooperative Director, holding Director Gold Certification and the Board Leadership Credential.

## Voting Guidelines

Members will vote for two trustees in the West District and one trustee in the East District. The candidates who receive the most votes in each district will serve three-year terms as member-elected cooperative trustees. We understand that not every member can attend the annual meeting, but we want to ensure you can participate in the election. Each FreeState member gets only one vote, and every member has three voting options available: vote by mail, vote by proxy or vote at the annual meeting.

## Submit Any Co-op Business in Advance

Members with cooperative business to bring to the board of trustees of FreeState Electric Cooperative are asked to fill out an online form found at [www.freestate.coop/coopbusiness](http://www.freestate.coop/coopbusiness) or call the office to file the business before the 2023 annual meeting. Submissions will be reviewed, and the member will be contacted on how to proceed. The deadline to submit business is Friday, April 21, 2023.

## EAST DISTRICT

**JEANINE MURPHY  
(INCUMBENT)**



Jeanine Murphy, Leavenworth, is a lifetime cooperative member. She has served on the board for the past 16 years, serving as the FreeState board president for the past five years.

She currently serves as the Director of Curriculum & Instruction for USD No. 449 Easton school district.

Murphy believes active listening and a commitment to learning are critical to serving in the role of trustee and being transparent and accessible to members.

“The electric industry is ever-evolving, and trustees must continue to educate themselves on current research and initiatives,” Murphy said. “I take every opportunity to attend classes to keep current as a FreeState trustee.”

She has completed the course to become Director Gold Certified by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the education requirements for Credentialed Cooperative Director, and Board Leadership Certification.

Murphy lives in rural Leavenworth, where she is active within her church and lends a helping hand to her grandchildren’s school and 4-H activities. Murphy says she is proud of the youth programs FreeState offers because she believes it will pay dividends in the future to help educate our youngest members.

“As a trustee, I represent my family, neighbors, and community to ensure affordable, safe and reliable electricity is available,” she said. “Equally important to me is FreeState’s concern for communities. As a trustee, I am very proud of what we have done to promote rural Kansas and the organizations that serve the area. I want to continue to support FreeState’s efforts in these areas as a trustee.”

## EAST DISTRICT

**JERAL G. COOPER**

Jeral Cooper, Tonganoxie, has been a cooperative member for 49 years. He is a self-employed electrician and farmer and served four years in the U.S. Air Force. Cooper has also been a federal government employee serving in various roles as a bank examiner with the F.D.I.C., an IRS revenue agent, and a supervisory auditor with the Department of Energy. Cooper is a certified appraiser, auctioneer, and commercial and real estate property inspector. Cooper also has real estate management, development and building experience and is a professional real estate investor and agent.

Cooper has been involved with the board of directors of the Basehor Historical Society, as treasurer of Basehor PRIDE, treasurer of Community Education, adjutant and quartermaster of Basehor V.F.W., and an elder of Edwardsville Christian Church.

Cooper is the owner-operator of Four J Enterprises, Inc. serving as president and CEO.

“I believe I’d be a definite asset to the co-op as a cooperative board member,” Cooper said. “I’ll serve members by truthfully answering their questions one-on-one. I’ve got the time and savvy to work out problems or find the correct solutions to make everyone as happy as possible.”

## EAST DISTRICT

**JACOB THOMAS**



Jacob Thomas, Tonganoxie, has been a cooperative member for nine years. Thomas and his wife own and operate JET Produce and Meats, a direct-to-consumer farm located outside Leavenworth.

For the past six years, Thomas has served as president of the USDA County Committee for Jefferson, Leavenworth and Wyandotte counties and vice president of Kansas Specialty Crop Growers Association. He is the treasurer for the Leavenworth Farmers Market and serves as a board member on the State of Kansas Noxious Weed Advisory Committee and the Kansas City Food Hub Cooperative. Thomas previously was treasurer for Leavenworth Extension Council Board.

Owning a small business with high energy demands, Thomas sees firsthand how increasing rates affect a family budget. He wants to serve as a trustee to ensure pricing is fair and accurately charged and see FreeState succeed as a dependable electricity provider. Thomas also understands meeting members where they are in the community and having conversations about the challenges they face.

“Being self-employed gives me the flexibility to meet with my neighbors and fellow members at times convenient to them,” said Thomas. “I am always happy to share details about new programs or incentives available to folks in our area.”

Thomas is a member of Farm Bureau and, in 2021, was recognized as a “Kansas AG Hero” for service and dedication to the community during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

# Mark Your Calendar for Annual Meeting April 25

The FreeState Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting is **APRIL 25, 2023**, at the McLouth FreeState office (507 N. Union). Members attending will receive a \$10 bill credit and gift (while supplies last) and enjoy a complimentary dinner.

Registration opens and meal service begins at 5:30 p.m. The cooperative business meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. and will be streamed live on the cooperative's website.

## At-Large Trustee Election

On Feb. 7, 2023, members of the FreeState nominating committee, appointed by the board of trustees, met to present candidates for election to the FreeState board. The candidates listed will be presented to the membership for consideration at the upcoming meeting and three board members will be elected.

FreeState members will vote by an at-large system. Members can vote for any of the nominees in any district. The candidate receiving the most votes in the East District will be elected to a three-year term. The two candidates receiving the most votes in the West District will both be elected to three-year terms. The 2023 trustee positions up for election are as follows:

**West District** (*two receiving the most votes will serve as a trustee*)

- ▶ **LARRY BUTEL** (incumbent)
- ▶ **DON MONTGOMERY** (incumbent)

**East District** (*one receiving the most votes will serve as a trustee*)

- ▶ **JERAL G. COOPER**
- ▶ **JEANINE MURPHY** (incumbent)
- ▶ **JACOB THOMAS**

## How Can I Vote?

We understand that not every member can attend the annual meeting, but we want to ensure you can participate in the election. Each FreeState member

gets only one vote per member household or business, and every member has three voting options available. Your name should appear on the account to be eligible to vote.

### ▶ VOTE BY MAIL

Ballots will be mailed beginning April 4, 2023, and must be returned by April 21 to ensure they are counted. Complete the ballot using the instructions listed and return it as directed in the postage-paid envelope provided. Please return the ballot using the postage-paid envelope. Do not bring ballots to the office.

### ▶ VOTE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 25, 2023, at the McLouth FreeState office. Members will be issued a ballot when they register using their service address, if they have not voted by mail before the meeting.

### ▶ VOTE BY PROXY

If you cannot attend the annual meeting and forget to mail your ballot in time, you can vote by proxy. Complete the proxy form online at [www.freestate.coop/annualmeeting](http://www.freestate.coop/annualmeeting) and give it to another FreeState member or adult relative in the same home, and they can vote for you.

Candidate biographical information will be included with mailed ballots that arrive in your mailbox. Candidates have also provided a video about themselves and their desire to serve the cooperative. View the candidate videos at [www.freestate.coop/candidates](http://www.freestate.coop/candidates).

## If I Vote By Mail, Can I Still Attend the Meeting?

Yes. You will not receive another ballot, but you can attend the meeting.

If you have any other questions about the annual meeting, visit [WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/ANNUALMEETING](http://WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/ANNUALMEETING) or contact our office.

## Apply for a Powerful Gift

Driven by the cooperative principle of Concern for Community, FreeState has participated in the Sharing Success Program for the past decade. The co-op has provided powerful gifts of more than \$126,000 over the past 10 years to organizations committed to their communities.

These gifts are unique because FreeState employees and trustees donate money that the cooperative's lender, CoBank, then matches.

In 2022, FreeState employees raised \$15,000 for Ronald McDonald House of Charities of Northeast Kansas. Because of the \$10,000 CoBank match, FreeState was able to make a significant donation of \$25,000 to an organization that helps families going through challenging circumstances.

Through the Sharing Success Program, funding is provided to organizations centered around community.

Do you know a charitable organization that needs additional funding to achieve its mission?

Scan the QR code to apply!

**THE DEADLINE TO APPLY IS  
APRIL 1, 2023.**

**Questions?**

**Call the office:**

**800-794-1989**

**or visit**

**[www.freestate.coop](http://www.freestate.coop)**

