



FREESTATE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.

# The Outlet

## 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.

## LIEAP DEADLINE IS MARCH 31

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) deadline is March 31, 2024. Visit [WWW.DCF.KS.GOV](http://WWW.DCF.KS.GOV) for more information.

## FROM THE CEO

# Upcoming Election Defines Difference

It's annual meeting season at FreeState, and that means we are not only planning for the annual meeting, we are also getting prepared to hold the trustee election — one of the most important aspects of the cooperative difference.

Members can expect ballots in their mailboxes in early April. In this issue, you will find basic information about our board candidates. Each candidate also has their own, "candidate corner" at [www.freestate.coop/candidatecorner](http://www.freestate.coop/candidatecorner) with answers to specific questions about cooperative service and their qualifications. I encourage you to visit the website and find out more about our candidates.

As we start thinking about our annual election, I wanted to provide some reasons why you should vote in the upcoming election.

**REPRESENTATION:** The trustees you elect make decisions that impact all members, including themselves. By participating in the election members ensure that their perspectives and concerns are represented at the decision-making level.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Throughout the election process, members hold the trustees accountable. The trustee election creates a mechanism for transparency and ensures that the board acts in the best interest of members.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTION:** The board plays a role in the strategic direction of

your cooperative. Voting allows members to have a say in how the future is shaped.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Voting in the trustee election fosters engagement and collaboration as members come together to participate in the democratic process of electing leadership.

**OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL:** Voting empowers members to exercise their ownership rights, ensuring that decisions about the cooperative's operations are made collectively rather than by a select few.

**ENSURING COMPETENT LEADERSHIP:** By participating in the election of board members, cooperative members have a say in selecting individuals with the skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to effectively lead the organization.

As we near the upcoming election, I encourage you to take part in this fundamental process of a democratic and member-driven governance structure. It's just another part of the cooperative difference, where membership matters most.



Chris Parr

I encourage you to take part in this fundamental process of a democratic and member-driven governance structure.

# Candidates Seeking BOARD SEATS

## VOTING GUIDELINES

The entire FreeState membership will vote for all trustee positions up for election. 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 options available: **VOTE BY MAIL OR VOTE AT THE ANNUAL MEETING.**

## SUBMIT BUSINESS IN ADVANCE

Members with cooperative business to bring before the board of trustees are asked to submit information in advance of the annual meeting. To submit information, visit [www.freestate.coop/coopbusiness](http://www.freestate.coop/coopbusiness) or call the office 800-794-1989 **BY MONDAY, APRIL 22, 2024.** Once submissions are reviewed, the submitting member will be contacted with further information.

## LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Visit [WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/CANDIDATECORNER](http://WWW.FREESTATE.COOP/CANDIDATECORNER) or scan the QR code for more candidate information including their philosophies on board leadership and the cooperative.



Trustees are vital to the wellness of the cooperative. These individuals are seeking the opportunity to be elected to serve members on the FreeState Board of Trustees.



### BILL CONLEY — WEST DISTRICT

#### DELIA, INCUMBENT

Bill has served the cooperative as a second-generation trustee since 2014 and has been a member since 1980. He lives in the rural Delia area with his wife, Tricia. They have three children and one grandchild.



### ROBERT SAGE — WEST DISTRICT

#### MAPLE HILL, INCUMBENT

Rob has lived in Wabaunsee County his entire life and has been a cooperative member since 1990, serving on the cooperative board of trustees for 20 years. He and his wife, Denise, have two children, Reed and Raven. Being active in the community is important to Rob and his family. Rob has been an area Farm Bureau Financial Services agent for 22 years.



### MATT TURECEK — EAST DISTRICT

#### VALLEY FALLS, INCUMBENT

Matt has served on the FreeState Board of Trustees for two terms. He enjoys being a voice for the members while keeping the financial stability of the co-op in mind. He continues to work on the board director classes and stays involved in his job as a trustee and the responsibilities required.



### MISTY STEPHENSON — EAST DISTRICT

#### LAWRENCE, CHALLENGER

Misty is a native Kansan who has lived all over the world as part of her husband's military career. They moved back to Kansas almost five years ago. Misty, her husband, and four children live in rural Leavenworth County. She believes community involvement and leadership are important.

# Candidate Q & A

As part of the application process, all trustee candidates were asked the same questions about serving member-owners of FreeState. Below are the answers each candidate provided to those questions.

## EXPLAIN THE COOPERATIVE DIFFERENCE.

**CONLEY** – Being a member of a cooperative means you are more than just an account number. You are represented and you have a voice.

**SAGE** – Cooperatives are about helping your friends and neighbors and providing them with an affordable, safe and reliable electric power source.

**TURECEK** – The co-op difference is the ability for the members to realize that they are part owners of the business. They will get patronage checks back when the co-op is profitable.

**STEPHENSON** – The cooperative difference is being a member-owner. It's driven by all members who use the service and all members have a voice and responsibility in the organization, not by strangers being paid to act on our behalf.

## WHAT CRITICAL ISSUES DO YOU BELIEVE THE CO-OP SHOULD FOCUS ON IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?

**CONLEY** – Cost-of-service study and maintaining an excellent workforce.

**SAGE** – Cybersecurity, safety awareness and electric grid reliability.

**TURECEK** – Electric vehicles and charging stations, and maintaining reliable and affordable electric service for members.

**STEPHENSON** – Understanding changing stressors on the power grid due to weather. Keeping costs as low as possible, and keeping infrastructure up to date and reliable.

## WHAT KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE WOULD YOU BRING TO FREESTATE'S BOARD AND MEMBERS?

**CONLEY** – I have experience leading the cooperative and would appreciate the opportunity to continue in that role.

**SAGE** – I have many years of board experience, specifically in budget and finance.

**TURECEK** – As a business owner and farmer, I work with many co-ops. The electrical industry knowledge from being on the board these past six years has helped me understand and collaborate with other board members and the co-op staff in making decisions on behalf of the co-op and the members.

**STEPHENSON** – Having lived all over the world as a military spouse, I'd bring fresh perspective to the board and members. Being an involved and active member and leader in many community organizations has always been important to me. I have a willingness to serve and a natural curiosity to learn as much as I can — whether that be about my fellow members or about rural electric as a whole.

## WHAT MAKES YOU THE IDEAL TRUSTEE?

**CONLEY** – As a trustee, I aim to promote reliable, safe and economical service to all by striving to implement new and cutting-edge technology and continued education to the cooperative member-owners. I am proud to support our youth programs and our rural communities through the Operation Round-Up program.

**SAGE** – I am an active member of our communities and available to visit with any members about cooperative concerns at any time. I take pride in serving my friends and neighbors and look forward to the opportunity to continue to represent members in the board room.

**TURECEK** – I am the ideal trustee because of my experience as a director for six years, educating myself with the director classes and being involved in the electrical industry. I work with a lot of different co-ops in my business. I am vocal in the board meetings, expressing my feelings about what my co-op members would want. Thank you for your vote and for allowing me to keep serving you on the FreeState Electric Co-op Board.

**STEPHENSON** – I am a person who commits to something and puts in the time and effort to make it the best it can be. Involvement and representing those who are members and may not be active and involved is important.



# Higher Bills Due to FRIGID TEMPS

Winter temperatures plummeted early this year. As temperatures bottom out, our reliance on heating skyrockets, and that can mean a significant increase in energy usage. These extreme temperatures can impact our wallets when the monthly electric bill shows up especially when you have electric heat. There are a few major impacts on your bill due to extreme cold temperatures.

## 5 COMMON DRIVERS OF HIGHER BILLS

- ▶ **OVERWORKED HEATING SYSTEMS:** extreme cold forces heating systems to work double time. This means the kilowatt-hour (kWh) tally increases significantly as the system works to maintain a comfortable temperature inside. The harder the system works, the higher the bills can be. Whether you are electric or gas, it needs to work twice as hard to keep temperatures comfortable.
- ▶ **HEAT LOSS:** If your home has poor insulation and drafts can be felt, that means keeping a comfortable temperature is harder to accomplish. This means the heat system works harder and consumes more energy.
- ▶ **PLUMBING:** Keeping pipes from freezing may require keeping your thermostat higher or using space heaters strategically. As a reminder, when you plug anything in you are using energy.
- ▶ **WATERING ANIMALS:** Frozen water tanks can be a big problem when it comes to keeping water flowing for animals. Using tank heaters or other forms of electric heat to keep water from freezing could impact your energy use and your bill.
- ▶ **BLOCK HEATERS:** Plugging in tractors or diesel engines to keep vehicles running will also increase energy use.

## WINTER ENERGY CONSERVATION

- ▶ **DIY SOLUTIONS:** There are DIY ways to insulate your home that are also inexpensive. You can pick up kits that can help you cover windows with plastic, or kits to help seal any gaps or cracks around doors and windows. You can always use door sweeps or towels to keep under door drafts to a minimum. Rugs on floors also can help retain heat. These are all ways to winterize even if you rent.
- ▶ **DOORS AND WINDOWS:** Make certain windows are locked and storm windows are securely shut. Locked windows make certain gaps are sealed. Drapes are also a way to keep cold air out. It's also important to keep garage doors closed to keep heat in.
- ▶ **DRESS WARM:** Layering up at home can help you maintain comfort without having to turn up the thermostat. Explore other heating sources like electric blankets or heating pads for personal warmth. These can be energy-efficient options for targeted comfort.
- ▶ **STRATEGIC SPACE HEATING:** Space heaters are a great supplement in the winter but remember that if it plugs in — it uses energy. Keep safety a priority and be mindful of when and where you utilize a space heater. Heat only rooms you're utilizing and turn them off when not in use. Winter temperatures can be a battle when it comes to energy conservation, but with a few saving strategies you can weather the storm. Always keep safety a priority, and follow safety protocols when utilizing alternative heating sources and generators.  
If you need assistance with winter bills, you may be able to utilize FreeState's budget billing program or call our office to determine what options can help keep winter bills manageable.