



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 S.W. Auburn Road
Topeka, KS 66615

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

REMINDER

Trustee election ballots will be mailed at the end of this month. As a member-owner, your vote matters.

FROM THE CEO

2025 Trustee Elections will Introduce Hybrid Voting

We are getting into annual meeting season here at FreeState, and that means members will be exercising an important aspect of the cooperative difference by choosing their representation in the board room.

Every member has one vote, and this year, we are adding a more convenient way to cast that vote. You will now have the option to vote via paper ballot or electronic ballot.

WHAT IS HYBRID VOTING?

Hybrid voting is an election where members cast their ballot either in person at the annual meeting, on paper through the mail, or online. We know that some members prefer paper balloting and dropping the envelope back in the mail, but we also understand that the convenience of voting online may work better for other members who tend to do more business through mobile phones and email. This new system of casting votes is simple and secure.

THE BENEFITS OF HYBRID VOTING SYSTEMS

Hybrid voting combines the best of paper and digital options. Here are a

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Chris Parr

“Every voice and vote counts, and FreeState wants to make it easy for all members to cast their votes.”



Your 2025 Trustee Candidates

The entire FreeState membership will vote for all trustee positions up for election. Members will vote for two trustees in the East District and one trustee in the West 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: **ONLINE, MAIL OR IN PERSON AT THE ANNUAL MEETING.**

EAST



RALPH PHILLIPS

MAYETTA (INCUMBENT)

Ralph Phillips has been a cooperative member for 51 years, and for 39 of those, he has served as a trustee.

Phillips has served on numerous boards including Mid-Am Dairy Co-op, the Dairy Farmers of America area council and the Jackson County Farm Bureau. He served as a 4-H community leader and is a former president of both the Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. board and the FreeState board.

Phillips has earned all three certifications for board members from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. He earned Credentialed Cooperative Director in 2002, Board Leadership Certificate in 2008 and the Director Gold Credential in 2023.

He and his wife, Phyllis, live in rural Mayetta. They are parents to five children who have blessed them with 15 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, including a set of very active twin boys.

EAST



KAROL LOHMAN

LEAVENWORTH (INCUMBENT)

Karol Lohman has been a cooperative member for 44 years and has served as a trustee for the past three.

A graduate of the Kansas State University College of Agriculture, she worked 37 years at Leavenworth County Co-op and retired as both the general manager of the St. Francis Mercantile Equity Exchange Co-op, as well as the K-State Extension Ag Agent of Leavenworth County.

She has volunteered with the Leavenworth County Livestock Committee and the Water Restoration and Protection Strategy, is a WRAPS committee member of the Jarbalo Community Church.

Lohman earned Credentialed Cooperative Director status through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in 2022, and the Board Leadership Certificate in 2024.

Lohman and her husband, Terry, have two adult sons and an 18-month-old granddaughter.

WEST



MARK WULFKUHLE

LAWRENCE (INCUMBENT)

Mark Wulfkuhle has been a cooperative member for 45 years and a trustee for 15 years.

He earned his bachelor's degree in animal science and industry, and has leadership training from the Kansas State

University board, Farm Credit Association board and the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). He has a Kansas Commercial Applicator 1A.

Wulfkuhle is the president of Rocking H Ranch, Inc. and manager of both 2BMD Farms, LLC and M&B Applying, LLC.

Wulfkuhle earned Credentialed Cooperative Director status through NRECA in 2010, and the Board Leadership Certificate in 2021.

Wulfkuhle and his wife, Brenna, live in Lawrence and have three grown children. They were honored to be named the Farm Bureau Farm Family of the Year.

WEST



TOM SLOAN

LAWRENCE (CHALLENGER)

Tom Sloan has been a cooperative member for 44 years and has seven meters among his properties.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts from Syracuse University, a master's from Michigan State and doctorate from University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Sloan served on the utilities committee all 24 years in the Kansas House of Representatives. After retiring, he served as a senior advisor to Public Utilities Fortnightly, transitioning the publication from a focus on public utility commissions and electric utilities to one that included federal agency leaders and state legislators.

Sloan serves on the Douglas County Rural Water District 1, Information Network of Kansas, LMH Health Board and the Kansas Rural Water Association Board.

Sloan and his wife, Gail, have been married 45 years, raise corn and soybeans and have a registered sheep farm in Douglas County.

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.

PHILLIPS – At a cooperative, the members are the owners of the business.

LOHMAN – Cooperatives are owned and governed by the members. All facets of the co-op business are transparent to the member-owners. All members have a voice, they vote for representatives to serve on the board and give direction to management. Being not-for-profit, cooperatives return any excess revenues to the members.

WULFKUHLE – Being a member of the co-op, I can have a voice in how the business is run. I'm able to vote for the trustees who make the ultimate decisions on the direction of the co-op. Each member is an owner of the business who is allocated capital credits from any excess revenues, unlike an investor-owned utility, where dividends are paid only to the investors.

SLOAN – Cooperatives are owned and led by their members. Investor-owned utilities have non-member boards and out of state investors who expect a good return on their investment. Cooperatives return unneeded revenues to their members. Management of cooperatives tend to be more responsive to member suggestions and requests because of the local ownership model.

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

PHILLIPS – We need to be diligent about transparency and focus on renewables, such as wind and solar.

Another challenge is that many in the work force are approaching retirement.

LOHMAN – Staying tuned in to industry trends and legislative changes.

Ensuring the culture of the cooperative makes the needs and morale of both employees and members a priority.

Keeping up-to-date equipment and facilities, adequate staffing and technology upgrades; no short cuts when it comes to safety.

WULFKUHLE – Securing a long-term power contract with cheap, dependable power sources.

Working to keep costs low, which helps keep rates low for our members.

Using the new metering technology to better understand the ever-changing needs of our members.

SLOAN – Aging infrastructure, especially in light of increasing summer temperatures and adverse weather events.

Technological innovations to make system monitoring easier and more efficient.

Aging workforce and the need to compete for employees in an ever-tightening market.

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

PHILLIPS – I worked 51 years as a dairyman. When I first ran for the board, I was looking for ways to reduce power bills for myself and others. I enjoyed transitioning through the merger. It had been considered for many years before we found such a good match.

LOHMAN – I have a strong cooperative background in the farm supply industry — working my way from the ground up to management. While serving on the FreeState Board, I have attended meetings and taken courses specific to board responsibilities and industry knowledge. I pride myself in keeping an open mind to hear all the information, following through and speaking up.

WULFKUHLE – Having served on both the Kaw Valley and FreeState boards over the last 15 years has given me a great understanding of how the co-op runs. I have chaired several committees and served as secretary and am currently the vice-chairman. I have also served and held offices on the Frontier Farm Credit board where we managed billions in assets.

SLOAN – I have a deep understanding of how the electric industry works — from the different types of generation through transmission and distribution. I understand ratemaking, budgets, and the time necessary to be an engaged and valuable trustee. I also understand the difference in roles of trustees and operational managers.

WHAT MAKES YOU THE IDEAL TRUSTEE?

PHILLIPS – Due to my years of experience, I can double as a historian. I have built meaningful connections with leaders at other cooperatives in the state and nation, which is invaluable for making wise business decisions.

LOHMAN – I am a solid, honest, open-minded person with significant cooperative experience and education. I have the time to serve on the board and be totally engaged in the responsibilities, as well as available to our members.

WULFKUHLE – 15 years of experience working for our members.

SLOAN – I have substantive knowledge of the industry, along with the regulatory agencies and policymakers. I understand strategic planning, budget management and commitment to the members and employees.

MAKE PLANS TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL MEETING

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

It's time to mark your calendars for the next FreeState Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting on April 15, 2025, at the McLouth FreeState office (507 N. Union). Members attending will be served a meal while supplies last.

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

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 or call the office 800-794-1989 **BY MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025**. Once submissions are reviewed, the submitting member will be contacted with further information.

TRUSTEE VOTING

This year, members may vote by mail, online, at the annual meeting, or by proxy. If you are voting by mail, your ballot must be returned **BY APRIL 10, 2025**. If you are voting by proxy, please call the office.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

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



LIEAP Applications Due This Month

The Kansas Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) is a federally funded program that helps eligible households pay a portion of their home energy costs by providing a one-time per year benefit.

Benefit levels vary according to: household income, number of persons living at the address, type of dwelling, type of heating fuel, and utility rates.

To qualify for this benefit program, you must be a resident of the state of Kansas and you must need financial assistance for home energy costs.

LIEAP will accept applications for benefits until March 31, 2025.



2025 Trustee Elections will Introduce Hybrid Voting *Continued from page 12A* ▶

few benefits this new system will bring to FreeState:

- ▶ **CONVENIENCE:** hybrid voting makes voting more convenient for all members, especially those who are not able to make it to the annual meeting, those who forget to vote, or those who may misplace paper ballots in the mail.
- ▶ **COST REDUCTION:** hybrid voting reduces the overall election costs by reducing the number of paper ballots needed. This is a measure that saves money on printing and postage.
- ▶ **IMMEDIACY:** online voting technology, such as an email invite

with a unique authentication link, allows each member to cast their votes immediately.

- ▶ **MAKES EVERY VOTE COUNT:** every voice and vote counts, and FreeState wants to make it easy for all members to cast their votes.
- ▶ **OUTREACH:** hybrid elections provide another tool to engage members in the process.
- ▶ **SECURITY:** FreeState's trusted election partner, Survey and Ballot Systems, provides the highest level of online encryption technology. FreeState's election website is a secure environment that is only

accessible to one authorized staff member to prevent any unauthorized access.

The trustees have carefully considered the addition of electronic voting and are excited at the prospect of bringing in another way to engage with members throughout this important process. Keep in mind that in-person and/or mail-in voting is available, as it always has been.

We are providing this option to make the voting process more convenient and provide an in-between solution that will appeal to more members' preferences.