



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
Mon.-Thu.: 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

TEMP. TOPEKA OFFICE

7332 S.W. 21st St.
Topeka, KS 66615
Mon.-Thu.: 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

NOTICE

As our GIS Audit continues, you may see people walking or riding ATVs along the right-of-way or easement areas to take pictures of our infrastructure.

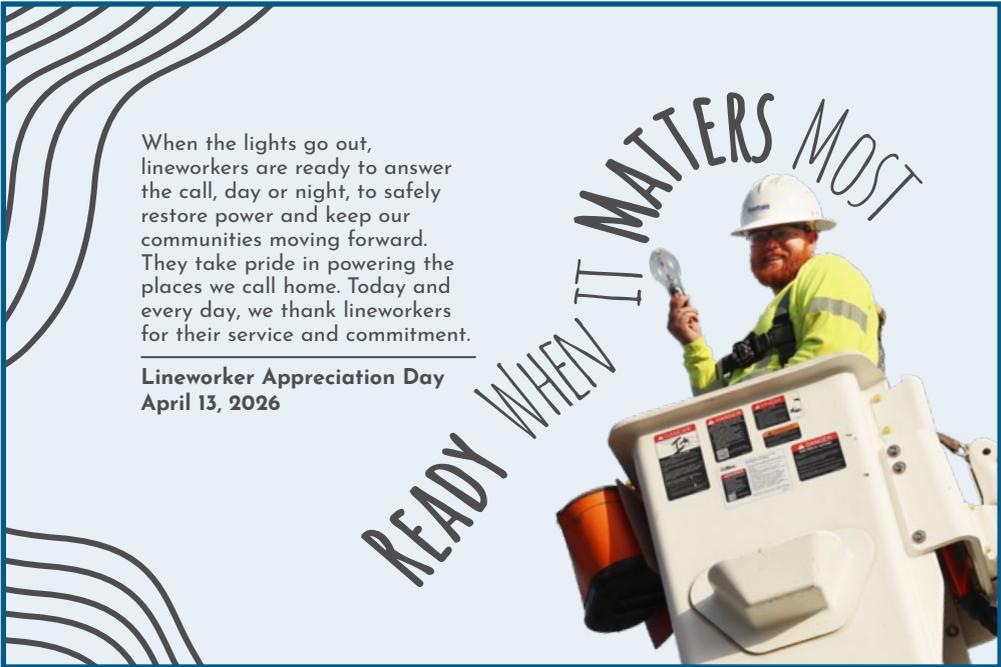
APRIL 22, 2026

Official Notice of the Annual Meeting

To the attention of all members of FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc., organized and existing under and by virtue of Chapter 17, Article 46, of the laws and the State of Kansas.

You and each of you are hereby notified that on the 22nd day of April 2026, the annual meeting of said FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc., referred to above, will be held at 6 p.m. at the McLouth office located in Jefferson County at 507 N. Union, McLouth, Kansas, to take action on the following matters:

1. The report of officers, trustees and committees.
2. The election of three trustees of the cooperative.
3. All other business that may come before the meeting or any adjournment or adjournments thereof.



When the lights go out, lineworkers are ready to answer the call, day or night, to safely restore power and keep our communities moving forward. They take pride in powering the places we call home. Today and every day, we thank lineworkers for their service and commitment.

Lineworker Appreciation Day
April 13, 2026

Your 2026 Trustee Candidates

The entire FreeState membership will vote for all trustee positions up for election. Members will vote for one trustee in the East District (in green) and two trustees in the West District (in blue). 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 ballot, and every member has **THREE** voting options available: **ONLINE, MAIL OR IN PERSON AT THE ANNUAL MEETING.**

JEANINE MURPHY

LEAVENWORTH (INCUMBENT)



Jeanine Murphy of Leavenworth is a lifetime cooperative member and has served on the FreeState Board of Trustees for 16 years, including the past five years as board president. She currently serves as director of curriculum and instruction for USD No. 449, the Easton School District.

Jeanine believes active listening, transparency and continuous learning are essential to effective trustee service. She is committed to staying informed on issues affecting the electric industry and regularly participates in educational opportunities to better serve cooperative members.

She has earned Director Gold Certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and has completed the education requirements for Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certification.

Jeanine lives in rural Leavenworth, where she is active in her church and supports her grandchildren's school and 4-H activities. She is especially proud of FreeState's youth programs and believes investing in young members strengthens the cooperative's future.

STEPHEN STEPHENS

OSKALOOSA (CHALLENGER)



Stephen Stephens is a lifelong advocate for agriculture and cooperative principles, with deep roots in the Oskaloosa area. He grew up on a small farm near Oskaloosa and, after a long professional career, returned to the community in 2021.

Stephen retired after more than 40 years with the Farm Credit System, having served nearly every aspect of agricultural finance and leadership. He is also a retired certified general appraiser.

Stephen earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics and a Master of Agribusiness from Kansas State University.

Stephen has served on the Kansas Cooperative Council and the Great Plains United Methodist Pensions Board. He currently serves as treasurer of the Oskaloosa Rural Housing Board. He and his wife, Laurie, recently celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary and have five daughters and three grandchildren.

With a strong belief in cooperative values, deep financial expertise, and a passion for learning and problem-solving, Stephen hopes to continue serving his community as a trustee.

DAVE LAYMAN

LEAVENWORTH (CHALLENGER)



John "Dave" Layman is a business leader with experience spanning sales, management and service. Born and raised in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area, Dave went on to earn a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Baker University.

He built a 30-year career in the facility supply distribution industry, starting in outside sales and advancing into sales management and general management roles with several respected organizations.

Eight years ago, Dave transitioned into the commercial roofing industry, serving five years as chief revenue officer for JR & Co., Inc., now one of the nation's top 30 commercial roofing companies. He currently serves as managing broker for the Midwest with Commercial Roof Broker's Group.

Dave is committed to lifelong learning and professional development and spent 15 years on the board of Midwest Parent Educators, including terms as president and secretary.

Dave and his wife of 38 years, Beth, raised nine children in rural Leavenworth County, where they have lived since 2001.

DON MONTGOMERY

BURLINGAME (INCUMBENT)



Don Montgomery was born and raised on a farm just north of Burlingame. He earned a degree in Agricultural Mechanization from Kansas State University and was certified to teach computers through Emporia State University.

Don taught at Burlingame Schools for 32 years, beginning as a Vocational Agriculture instructor and phasing into computer education and being the district's technology coordinator. He was recognized as the 2006 Kansas State Grange Teacher of the Year and received the FFA Legacy award in 2025. Throughout his teaching career, Don remained actively involved in farming and continues today alongside his wife, Karen.

Don is on the Burlingame Cemetery Board and was recently elected to the Frontier District Extension Board. He just completed six years as president of the Southeast Kansas Farm Management Association.

Other service includes a number of agriculture and extension boards, in addition to local service boards for independent living, fire and rescue. He was also a member of the Kansas National Education Association, serving as head negotiator for the teachers for a number of years.

LARRY BUTEL

OVERBROOK (INCUMBENT)



Larry Butel is a lifelong resident of the area, with ancestors coming to Douglas County in 1856 and Overbrook in 1879. He spent a year working as a grain merchandiser for Cargill, Inc. in Fargo, North Dakota, before returning to co-found Butel Farm, Inc. with his parents in 1989, where he has worked ever since. Larry and his wife of 28 years, Boni, operate the row-crop and stocker cattle operation. They have two adult sons.

Larry earned a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Kansas State University in 1987. He has completed the NRECA Gold level trustee training. He was selected for the Rotary Group Study Exchange with India in 1997 and was named the 2024 Kansas Master Farm Family.

Larry has served and continues to serve on a wide variety of boards and committees, often as the president, chair, vice chair or treasurer. The organizations range from agricultural and livestock to cooperatives, education, service groups, banks and water. His agricultural expertise, cooperative experience and strong community presence make him a respected and effective leader.

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.

MURPHY — The cooperative difference refers to the fact that cooperatives are member-owned rather than investor-owned. Decisions are made to benefit the members, not to maximize profits. Any excess revenue is returned to members as capital credits or reinvested into the system.

STEPHENS — Cooperatives put market power directly into the hands of users, improving the lives and well-being of members. Member/user interests and stockholder/owner interests are aligned, resulting in better results for all.

LAYMAN — As a co-op we are not driven by investor interests, but rather member needs and economic growth. The money is reinvested in the community to provide the very best electric services to our members. Each board member is a co-op member and lives in the community the co-op serves.

MONTGOMERY — Our members own FreeState Electric Co-op and elect a board to represent them in developing standards for the co-op, which are in turn carried out by management. As a not-for-profit, earnings above the cost of providing electric power is returned to the members in the form of capital credits.

BUTEL — The co-op is owned by the members, who elect a board to represent them. Trustees then hire management for day-to-day operations but still provide direction and oversight. Margins are returned to the members rather than benefitting outside investors. Members own a piece of every asset used to provide their services.

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

MURPHY —

- ▶ Maintaining strong member engagement and local governance.
- ▶ Workforce recruitment and retention.
- ▶ Meeting the growing demand for electricity at an affordable cost.

STEPHENS —

- ▶ Capacity and scale are issues that face all businesses.
- ▶ Human resources are also critical as finding, hiring, training and retaining good employees is difficult in the best of times and will be critical to future success.
- ▶ Incorporating AI will be challenging but critical to continued success.

LAYMAN — Without any background in the energy field these “issues” are from a consumer point of view.

- ▶ Future electric demand, capacity and cost
- ▶ Infrastructure
- ▶ Emergency/planned maintenances

MONTGOMERY —

- ▶ Power supply. Our power contracts will be renegotiated with Eergy in 2030 and KEPCo in 2045.
- ▶ Managing our expenses. Costs for the co-op are increasing just like for everyone else.
- ▶ Safety needs to be a priority as we provide low-cost and reliable power to our members.

BUTEL —

- ▶ Assessing power supply options with contract renewals and expanding demands on the horizon.
- ▶ Adapting the co-op to rapidly changing forces within the electric utility industry.
- ▶ Affordability: Rising costs will continue to pressure rates that must cover the cost of service with enough margin to revolve capital credits and maintain reliability and safety.

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

MURPHY — Understanding of cooperative governance and fiduciary responsibilities; knowledge of financial oversight, strategic planning, and industry trends; commitment to representing members' interests and cooperative principles; balancing affordable service with community support.

STEPHENS — Deep knowledge of financing and real estate, as well as the ability to analyze markets and strategies.

LAYMAN — My work and board experience — I work well within teams to contribute and reach the best outcomes for the members. I'm a solid communicator, and bring decades of honed business acumen, working for large corporations, family-owned businesses and a successful start-up.

MONTGOMERY — After serving on the Kaw Valley and FreeState boards for 10 years, I have had the opportunity to learn a lot about the electric business. I have taken over 40 classes and have attained the Credentialed Cooperative Director, Board Leadership and the Director Gold certification from NRECA.

BUTEL — I have many years of experience dealing with both Kaw Valley Electric and FreeState electric issues. NRECA classes and years of experience help me to understand issues and opportunities, and how to proceed.

WHAT MAKES YOU THE IDEAL TRUSTEE?

MURPHY — Commitment to the mission; deep understanding of member needs; strong foundation in cooperative governance; willingness to listen, ask thoughtful questions, and make informed decisions; focus on responsible oversight, long-term planning, and member-first leadership; dedication to supporting community programs and cooperative values.

STEPHENS — I believe my experience makes me a good candidate and my curiosity will help me to improve with specific experience. I hope to serve the community in this role as a trustee and would appreciate your support.

LAYMAN — I am a positive, high-energy, individual with extensive, successful, business and non-profit board experience. I would be committed to learning the nuances of the electric energy industry, FreeState's mission, and helping find and implement the best solutions, with a team of other committed folks — that's what I have done for years and what I enjoy.

MONTGOMERY — I have lived and worked in the Burlingame community my entire life. I would like to think I am approachable by anyone who has a concern. In addition I am not afraid to discuss these issues with management to resolve these issues.

BUTEL — I have a working knowledge of the structure and business of FreeState. I'm active and visible in the community and able to bring concerns in from the service area and be an ambassador for FreeState to the broader community.

Annual Meeting is April 22

It's time to mark your calendars for the next FreeState Electric Cooperative Annual Meeting on April 22, 2026, 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.

AT-LARGE TRUSTEE ELECTION

During the annual meeting, three board members will be elected. FreeState members will vote by an at-large system. Members can vote for any of the nominees in either district. The candidates receiving the most votes in each district will be elected to a three-year term. FreeState is governed by the policies set by our board, all of whom are FreeState cooperative members. Our board connects with our membership and the community at large.

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. Ballots were mailed March 30, 2026, and must be returned by April 20, 2026. Each FreeState membership gets only one vote, and every member has several voting options available.

- ▶ **VOTING BY MAIL** — Your official ballot will be mailed to you at the end of March. Mark your selections by completely filling in the box next to your choice. **DO NOT MAIL TO THE FREESTATE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. OFFICE.** Detach and place into the enclosed return envelope. Mail to Survey & Ballot Systems, 7653 Anagram Drive, Eden Prairie, MN 55344. **ENVELOPES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN APRIL 20, 2026.** Please allow sufficient time for delivery.
- ▶ **VOTING BY SMARTHUB** — If you are using your phone, open your SmartHub app, log in and click the “Vote Now” button. If you are using a computer, log in to your SmartHub online account and click the “Vote Now” button. **VOTING BEGINS MARCH 30, 2026, AND ENDS AT 3 P.M. CT, APRIL 20, 2026.**
- ▶ **VOTING ONLINE** — To access the login page of the official 2025 FreeState Electric Cooperative Inc. election, please type directvote.net/FSEC into the address bar located at the top of your internet screen. Use the Member Number and your Election Passcode printed on the upper left of the ballot you received in the mail to log in. Once registered, follow the online voting instructions. Online voting begins March 30, 2026, and ends at 3 p.m. CT, April 20, 2026. **DO NOT MAIL YOUR BALLOT IF YOU PLAN TO VOTE ONLINE.** If you have any problems voting online, please email support@directvote.net.
- ▶ **VOTING IN PERSON** — Vote at the annual meeting on April 22, 2026, in McLouth.
- ▶ **VOTE BY PROXY** — please call our office if you need this option.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHERE IS THE MEETING?

The meeting will be held in the warehouse of our McLouth office. The address is 507 N. Union, McLouth, Kansas 66054. Parking will be available, and members will be directed as they arrive. There will be handicap accessible parking available near the entrance. Staff will be on hand to assist members who may need additional assistance with mobility.

WHEN CAN I GET INTO THE BUILDING?

Doors to the warehouse will remain CLOSED until 5:30 p.m. This is for members' and staff's safety as final preparations are being made for the meeting. There is no seating available outside the doors of the warehouse. Members arriving earlier than 5:30 p.m. are asked to remain in their vehicles until doors open.

HOW DO I REGISTER?

Registration opens at 5:30 p.m. when the doors open. You will need to provide your service address to the member service representatives to register for the meeting. You must be in attendance to be counted as registered for the meeting. Virtual attendance does not count as registration for the meeting.

HOW CAN I EARN MY BILL CREDIT?

You must attend the meeting in person to be counted as registered for the meeting. Virtual attendance does not count as registration for the meeting. Every registered member will receive one \$10 bill credit for attending. The credit is added to the primary account of the member.

WHAT WILL WE DO AT THE MEETING?

Members will vote to approve the minutes from 2025, hear updates from the board of trustees, and the state of the cooperative from the CEO.

Questions about the annual meeting? Give us a call at 800-794-1989 or email customerservice@freestate.coop. We're happy to help!

