



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.

## FREESTATE FORUM

Offices will be **CLOSED** on Thursday, May 23 for an all employee training, and Monday, May 27 for Memorial Day.

## FROM THE CEO

# Modernizing Rates and Technology

From the trustees in our boardroom to the linemen in the field, every decision we make is driven by one simple question: How will it impact our members? It's this member-centric approach that sets us apart and drives us to continually elevate our service standards.

Each member of our staff embodies our core values, working tirelessly to ensure that we deliver safe, reliable and affordable electricity to your homes and businesses. The board of trustees plays a big role in our ability to provide you with first-class service, too. Members of FreeState have incredible representation in the board room. This group of member-elected trustees works hard to understand the evolving industry, and how it will impact the communities we serve. They are open to progressive ideas and innovation, and are willing to make positive changes that make a difference.

Late last year we did another member satisfaction survey. The feedback has been valuable in guiding our direction, and our scores have risen since the last survey in 2021. This is a testament to the team here and their commitment to meeting and exceeding your expectations.

Your expectation includes being served by a financially viable and stable cooperative. Business strategy is important at FreeState. Each year,

we participate in strategic planning with our trustees to think about where we need to go next. In 2023, two of our biggest strategic initiatives involved upgrading technology and reviewing rates.



Chris Parr

### UPGRADING METER TECHNOLOGY

You may have noticed our crews installing large poles with antennas on the top, the first step in upgrading our metering system. This technology will improve reliability, reporting and accuracy, as well as detect potential issues faster and more precisely. In some cases, we may be able to fix a problem before members even recognize an issue.

This improved technology will increase the speed of reporting outages and allow us to be more efficient in our restoration efforts. New technology in the field means members will have updated tools to understand energy consumption and how it impacts their electric bill.

Right now, members can access their account information, view usage, and pay bills online securely via SmartHub,

*Continued on page 12D ►*

“This past year, our two big initiatives involved upgrading technology and reviewing rates.”



**LEFT:** Board President Jeanine Murphy presides over the annual meeting. **ABOVE:** CEO Chris Parr delivers his “State of the Cooperative” address discussing FreeState’s initiatives to upgrade technology and complete a comprehensive review of current rates.

# 2024 Annual Meeting

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
ALEXANDRA GREENBERG,  
COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

More than 200 members braved severe weather to attend the annual meeting on April 30 at the Topeka office.

Oleander Café catered a delicious meal before the meeting.

Before the meeting was called to order, Shawnee County issued a tornado warning, and attendees were guided to shelter by FreeState employees. After the storm passed, members resumed dinner and prepared for the meeting.

Washburn Rural High School JROTC presented the colors and led the pledge of allegiance. Jeanine Murphy, president of the FreeState Board of Trustees, called the meeting to order.

CEO Chris Parr presented the “State of the Cooperative.” He began by acknowledging the success of FreeState employees and trustees in the past year, and the progress of initiatives undertaken.

He spoke about the recent member satisfaction survey. Responses solidified the understanding of trust between members and their cooperative. Parr explained many of FreeState’s employees and all our trustees are cooperative members themselves, and the mutual respect, understanding and care between members and the cooperative is of the utmost importance to FreeState.

Parr explained that changes in technology, regulations, consumer preferences, and environmental issues would all impact the industry. Completing technology upgrades and a class cost-of-service study, will enable FreeState to handle these industry changes. Members, trustees and employees will work together to ensure changes are well communicated and understood prior to any changes.

The results of the 2024 trustee election were then announced. **MATT TURECEK** was reelected as an east district trustee, and **ROB SAGE** and **BILL CONLEY** were reelected in the west district.

As winning numbers for the door prize raffle were drawn, and the sun began to set in the cool breeze after the storm, FreeState members headed home after another successful annual meeting. Thank you to everyone who joined us for an incredible night of connecting with our FreeState community and discussing cooperative business.





**CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:**

A member selects an annual meeting gift at registration.

More than 200 members braved severe weather to attend the annual meeting on April 30 at the Topeka office.

Washburn Rural High School Air Force JROTC presents the colors.

FreeState members took shelter during a tornado warning before the meeting.

Members were served a barbecue meal and enjoyed a sweet treat.

There were energy efficiency displays and information available for members to view.



**MODERNIZING RATES AND TECHNOLOGY**

*Continued from page 12A ▶*

but as we roll out improved technology there will be new usage comparison tools, and energy insights giving members even more power when it comes to controlling and analyzing their energy usage.

**COMPREHENSIVE RATE REVIEW**

Electric rates also need upgrades and modernization, which is why a cost-of-service study is currently underway at FreeState. For seven years we have maintained two separate rate structures, which need to be combined to decrease administrative cost burdens and provide our members with more rate choices to fit their lifestyles.

So, why undertake a review? Simply put, it's about ensuring that our rates accurately reflect the costs associated with providing you with reliable electricity. By analyzing our expenses and reallocating costs where necessary, we can ensure that our rates remain sustainable, equitable and responsive to your needs.

When the cost-of-service study is complete, the findings will be presented to the board of trustees who will review the study and recommendations. That process does include opportunities for members to discuss and learn more about the recommendations prior to any board action. We will communicate with members continuously through the study process and provide more information.

It has been over a decade since the cost per kilowatt-hour was adjusted. The board of trustees and staff understand there is never a good time to potentially change rates, and that nobody likes the thought of something they rely on every day changing in price. It's important to note that this is not something the cooperative would undertake unless it was necessary.

As we move forward with these initiatives, we are committed to communicating with our members. We will provide monthly updates here in *Kansas Country Living*, online at [www.freestate.coop](http://www.freestate.coop), on our social media channels. We will also have in-person meetings and events where you can find out more information.

**Wager Retires After 23 Years**

On April 29, FreeState celebrated the retirement of Right-of-Way Superintendent **RANDY WAGER**, who has been a valued cooperative employee for 23 years. Wager was hired in 2000 by Leavenworth-Jefferson Electric Cooperative and has served as FreeState's right-of-way superintendent since 2017. Wager's dedication, professionalism and knowledge will be missed.

**Right-of-Way Superintendent Randy Wager with his retirement cake celebrating 23 years of service.**



FreeState Electric Cooperative Presents **FAMILY FUNDAY** at Gary's Farm Fest!

**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**SUNDAY, SEPT. 29, 2024**

Sippin' All **Summer** Challenge

Collect pop tabs and join the Sippin' All Summer Challenge!  
Visit [www.freestate.coop/sip](http://www.freestate.coop/sip) or scan the code for more information.  
**BE A SUMMER SIPPERHERO!**