

# FreeState

Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



FREESTATE ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVE, INC.

## The Outlet

### FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc.

#### Board of Trustees

**Larry Butel**  
Overbrook

**Larry Meadows**  
Tonganoxie

**Dallas Caster**  
Auburn

**Don Montgomery**  
Burlingame

**Bill Conley**  
Delia

**Jeanine Murphy**  
Leavenworth

**Rob Sage**  
Maple Hill

**Ralph Phillips**  
Mayetta

**Mark Gratny**  
Leavenworth

**Mark Wulkuhle**  
Berryton

**Harlan Hunt**  
Meriden

**Betsy Baker**  
Legal Counsel

#### Staff

**Steve Foss**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Christopher Parr**  
Assistant General Manager

**Randy Richards**  
Assistant General Manager

#### District Offices

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

**West District**  
1100 SW Auburn Rd  
Topeka, KS 66615

**East & West District Office Hours:**  
Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.

### Tip of the Month

In spring and summer months, set your ceiling fans to turn in the counterclockwise direction to create a cool breeze. Remember, ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. Turn them off when you leave the room to conserve energy.

### FROM THE CEO

#### Why You Should Attend FreeState's Annual Meeting

FreeState Electric Cooperative will hold its first annual meeting on Tuesday, April 24, 2018, at 7 p.m. in Perry. Don't miss this history-making moment.

We are working toward bringing FreeState members together, even though in rural America, we do a pretty good job of staying connected. However, it isn't something we should take for granted. There is just something about being around like-minded people. People who are engaged and ready to take part in something special.

You might think you're too busy to attend the annual meeting. You might even say "everything is fine; they don't need me to be there."

However, there are some significant benefits to attending your annual meeting. The most prominent is protecting your investment. As a member of FreeState, every bill you pay is an investment in your service. Your dollars are used for capital projects that will impact the affordability, reliability and safety of your electric service. The benefit of a co-op is you have a voice; you have a vote. You have a say in how things run. After all, we work for each of you.

Annual meeting not only provides you insight on the financial security of the cooperative, but it also gives you a chance to hear how the business is run. You have an opportunity to bring any questions you might have about your service to the board of directors and co-op staff. You can give your opinion, and better yet, you can vote for your board of trustees who serve as your voice and act on your behalf when making decisions in the board room.

We are trying something new this year. Members will be able to see the annual meeting proceedings on Facebook live. We're reaching out to share information, as well as engage with members no matter where they are on Tuesday, April 24 at 7 p.m. If you have access to Facebook—you can follow and watch the meeting live on our Facebook page.

While online viewing may be convenient, in-person attendance still matters. There is just something about gathering with other members who are as engaged as you are in the cooperative, and the topics of the evening. There's often lively



Steve Foss

**“The benefit of a co-op is you have a voice; you have a vote. You have a say in how things run.”**

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# FreeState Hosts Inaug

## Join FreeState on April 24, 2018

Join us at the upcoming annual meeting of FreeState Electric Cooperative on April 24, 2018, in the theater at Perry-Lecompton High School. Members attending the annual meeting will receive a \$10 bill credit on their electric bill. There will also be a chance to win great door prizes. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. and the business meeting will begin at 7 p.m.

### At-Large Trustee Election

On Feb. 5, 2018, 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 are to be presented to the membership for consideration at the upcoming annual meeting on April 24.

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 any district.

The 2018 trustee positions up for election are as follows:

### East District, Position 1

- ▶ **MARK GRATNY** (incumbent)
- ▶ **THOMAS FOUSEK**
- ▶ **MATTHEW TRUECEK**

### West District, Position 1

- ▶ **BILL CONLEY** (incumbent)
- ▶ Unopposed

### West District, Position 2

- ▶ **ROBERT SAGE** (incumbent)
- ▶ **STEVEN CRANE**

FreeState is governed by the policies set by our board, which is made up of cooperative members. Our board provides a vital connection with our membership and the community at large. Candidate information is included below, and will also be

### Mark Gratny, Leavenworth



**MARK GRATNY** has served on the FreeState board for 15 years and has been a member of the co-op for 42 years.

As a rancher, Gratny is involved with the Kansas Quarter

Horse Association and the Kansas Racing Horse Association serving as a past president for both. He is involved with the Kansas Horse Council, and is a Kansas State University Stakeholder.

Being involved with the decision-making that makes the cooperative a better company is something Gratny has enjoyed while serving the members of FreeState. He finds the best way to educate members is to have a conversation, whether it be phone, email or face-to-face.

### Thomas Fousek, McLouth



**THOMAS FOUSEK** is a retired grain industry executive who operates a cattle operation. He has been a member for 21 years.

Fousek has interest in serving on

FreeState's board of trustees to understand the infrastructure, distribution and generation of the area's power supply. He believes investment in infrastructure is key to success.

Fousek has also served on boards like Texas Feed and Grain, Kansas Feed and Grain, National Feed and Grain and the Federal Grain Inspection Service. He currently serves on the board of directors for the Leavenworth County Beef Improvement Association, serving two years as president.

### Matthew Turecek, Valley Falls



**MATTHEW TURECEK** has been a member of the co-op for more than four years.

As a farmer and rancher, he understands business ventures and how

cooperatives are the lifeblood of rural Kansas. He knows first-hand the role co-ops play in not only agriculture, but the rural areas of Northeast Kansas.

As a former vice-president of a rural fire district board in Colorado, Turecek understands the needs of rural communities and the resources it takes to thrive. As a board member, Turecek would work to educate member-owners on the inner workings of the cooperative at a higher level that would lead to better engagement for all.

# Annual Meeting

included in ballots that will be mailed to each member beginning April 2, 2018.

## How can I vote?

We understand that not every member can attend the annual meeting, but we want to make sure you have the opportunity to participate in the election. Each FreeState member gets only one vote and every member has three voting options available.

- ▶ Vote at the annual meeting
- ▶ Vote by mail
- ▶ Vote by proxy (see form on Page 16H).

## Vote at the Annual Meeting

The annual meeting is Tuesday, April 24, 2018, at Perry-Lecompton High School Theater. Registration begins at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting will begin at 7 p.m. This is a business meeting only.

Members will be issued a ballot when they register if they have not voted by mail prior to the meeting. Ballots will need to be cast by 7 p.m.

## Vote by Mail

Mail ballots are offered so all members have an

opportunity to participate in the voting process. Ballots will be mailed beginning April 2, 2018, and will need to be returned to FreeState by April 19 to ensure they are counted. If you are unable to mail the ballot by April 19, bring it to the annual meeting to cast your vote there.

Simply complete the ballot using the instructions listed and return as directed in the postage-paid envelope provided.

## Vote by Proxy

If you cannot attend the annual meeting and you forget to mail your ballot in time, you can vote by proxy. Complete the proxy form on Page 16H (or 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 cast the vote for you.

We hope you will join us at this year's annual meeting. There will be information covered regarding last year's business and the business moving forward.

If you have any questions about the annual meeting and/or the voting process, please contact us at 800-794-1989.

## William (Bill) Conley, Delia



**WILLIAM (BILL) CONLEY** has served the cooperative for the past three years as a second-generation trustee.

As a farmer and stockman, Conley believes it is important

to stay involved to advocate for members. As a trustee, Conley's goals are to promote reliable, safe, and economical service to all by striving to implement new and cutting-edge technology and continued education to the co-op membership.

Conley is involved with the Jackson County Soil Conservation Board, as well as the Rossville United Methodist Church. He has also served on the Kaw Valley USD 321 strategic planning committee.

## Robert L. Sage, Maple Hill



**ROBERT SAGE** has served the cooperative for the past 13 years as a second-generation trustee. He has been a member-owner of the co-op for 28 years.

As a farmer and

Farm Bureau insurance agent, Sage is involved within the communities of FreeState's West District. He is also involved in the Dover Community Foundation, was a past USD 330 school board president and has served as a volunteer fireman for Shawnee County, District No. 4.

Being accessible to all members is vital to the success of the board and being involved within the community to work together for a common goal are important to Sage.

## Steven Crane, Lawrence



**STEVEN CRANE** has been a member of the co-op for seven years.

As a retired competitive intelligence manager for Hill's Pet Nutrition, Crane was responsible for understanding competitor

companies around the world. This understanding led to a position as an adjunct professor with Baker University teaching International Business in the MBA program. He retired in 2016 as CEO and president of the board of directors of DeMolay International, where Crane managed 140,000 youth.

Crane says listening to members is key to education and outreach. Crane is involved with DeMolay International and the Grand Lodge Freemasons in Kansas.

# Packing a Punch Against PARKINSON'S

Cooperatives were built upon a foundation of seven principles. Of these principles, the most vital and well-recognized among member-owners is a cooperative's concern for community.

FreeState Electric Cooperative is dedicated to upholding those principles. One of our community focused programs is Operation Round-Up. This program recently provided funding for a fitness program that is assisting the the fight against Parkinson's disease with **ROCK STEADY BOXING**.

In 2017, FreeState received an application through the Operation Round-Up Committee requesting a grant to help kick start a community program that will help members of the community fight back against Parkin-

son's disease through a wellness class known as Rock Steady Boxing, offered by McCrite Plaza Topeka.

"The Rock Steady Boxing class is made up of a variety of core and stretching exercises, boxing and hand-eye coordination techniques," said Christine Cunningham, McCrite Plaza wellness coordinator and certified Rock Steady Boxing coach. "Boxing is scientifically proven to help improve neurological symptoms of those with Parkinson's."

FreeState members participate in Operation Round-Up by rounding up their monthly bills to the nearest dollar. FreeState then takes the funds and distributes them in the communities we serve. FreeState was able to donate \$2,500 to the Rock Steady program in 2017.



FreeState member Teri Rye participates in boxing exercises to reduce her symptoms. She said the support system has been the most beneficial aspect.

Cunningham said the grant made it possible for the program to relocate from McCrite Plaza to the Topeka Southwest YMCA. The grant also assisted with Cunningham's certification to lead Rock Steady Boxing, boxing gloves for program members and two standing punching bags for boxing exercises.

"The class takes place twice a week and is open to the McCrite Plaza residents as well as residents from surrounding communities," Cunningham said. "Our members range in ages from 65 to 90 with various degrees of Parkinson's. This class really seems to help benefit them all."

One McCrite Plaza resident, Don Campbell, says he feels participating in the class gives him the chance to take control of his Parkinson's and do something more to improve his symptoms.

"The whole concept and idea of the Rock Steady class is extremely beneficial. Having nothing to go on at the start of my Parkinson's to having this come up and getting involved has been quite the experience. So far, it has really helped my voice control, attitude, stamina and coordination."

Campbell said a major factor contributing to the success of the class is a positive mental attitude.

"There will be a lot of days when you don't want to go or participate but you have to push through a little harder. The payoff is worth it," Campbell said.

Cunningham said she can easily see the progress Campbell and other class participants are making with each class.

"With Don (Campbell), he came to the first class a bit reserved. After just one week, I began noticing him open up and gain confidence in himself—and he is just one example."

Other Rock Steady participants agreed and said this class has helped them in more ways than just reducing their Parkinson's symptoms.

Even though the class primarily consists of exercises, it also came with a support aspect due to all of the participants fighting against the same disease. They understand the challenges one another face every day.

While the class focuses on overall wellness and boxing, each

week brings new exercises, stretches and movements to challenge students and keep the class exciting.

While the Rock Steady participants battle Parkinson's, each try to keep a positive outlook on their disease.

"Everyone is dealt a hand," said Joe Heinen, FreeState member of Valley Falls. "It is what you do to overcome your obstacles that matters."

Cunningham said her future goals for the program include certifications of another Rock Steady Boxing coach and increasing awareness of this opportunity to surrounding community members battling Parkinson's.

Interested participants can call the Topeka Southwest YMCA and they will be directed to an assessment coach and, if eligible, can begin participating in the class.

FreeState's assistance in this program would not have been possible without the generosity of our members and their participation in Operation Round-Up. Spare change is creating big change for the betterment of our communities.

Operation Round-Up is voluntary and members can choose to opt-out of the program by calling our office at 800-794-1989. To view other organizations FreeState has helped through Operation Round-Up, visit [www.freestate.coop/ORUawards](http://www.freestate.coop/ORUawards).

## Everyone is dealt a hand. It is what you do to overcome your obstacles that matters.

JOE HEINEN, VALLEY FALLS



Left: Don Campbell warms up with weights to increase stamina and stability before boxing for the day. Top Left: Don Campbell (left) works on boxing techniques with FreeState member and fellow Rock Steady Boxing classmate, Joe Heinen.

# We Are Free Human Resource

*As a member-owner of FreeState Electric Cooperative, your knowledge and engagement with our cooperative is our priority. We strive to help you better understand the services available to you while getting to know those who are continuously working to provide you with safe, reliable, and efficient power. FreeState will bring our members a year-long series focusing on our individual departments and the employees are member-driven. This series will be published monthly in The Outlet, on our social media channels, and on our website [www.freestate.coop](http://www.freestate.coop), where exclusive web content will be featured. Our goal is to help our members relate to our employees and put faces behind your electric service because we work for you. We are FreeState.*

Within all of FreeState's departments, there is a common goal of making the member-owners of FreeState our main priority. However, one department remains dedicated to ensuring the foundation of FreeState is set up for success starting with our employees.

The Human Resources department is made up of three positions where each play a role in assisting the employees at FreeState. This includes payroll, benefit packages, orientation, recruitment, compensation and more.

**DESIREE LAFORGE** heads the department as the executive support and human resources manager and oversees **KIM HOWBERT**, FreeState's payroll specialist, and **CHELSEA RENYER**, the human resources generalist.

Aside from guiding Howbert and Renyer, LaForge is responsible for assisting FreeState's CEO and assistant general managers with projects and meetings while serving as the board liaison for our board of trustees.

"I oversee the overall administration of the Human Resources department, including ensuring we are compliant and that FreeState and its employees are protected," LaForge said. "I also work directly with our board members to help bridge the gap between them and our employees. Not one day is the same."

Sharing many of the same tasks and responsibilities, Renyer and LaForge work together in each of their roles.

"A lot of what we do overlaps in recruitment, projects, and compliance tasks so we typically



Chelsea Renyer (left), Desiree LaForge (center), and Kim Howbert (right) work together in FreeState's Human Resources department to ensure employees' needs are met to perform daily tasks.

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take the divide-and-conquer approach,” LaForge said.

This strategy is one that works to ensure all FreeState employees have access to the Human Resources department as a resource for when they have questions regarding benefits available to them or any questions they may have regarding policies and bylaws.

“We are always working toward being a reliable resource for our employees to turn to,” Renyer said. “We are here to ensure FreeState employees are successful and have everything they need to be able to serve our members effectively and efficiently.”

The third position in the Human Resources department, the payroll specialist, is primarily responsible for tax deposit and returns, payroll, W-2 and 1095 preparation, processing general liability claims and assisting in any human resources projects at any given time.

“Everyday I am doing something different,” Howbert said. “I feel as though I make a positive contribution to our cooperative, our members and our communities. That is why I love working for a cooperative such as FreeState.”

The Human Resources department is vital to FreeState due to the resources

they provide affecting not only an employee’s work, but their home life, as well. They rely heavily on the collaboration of all other departments in the cooperative to meet these goals and expectations in providing important services to all FreeState employees.

“Our department is ultimately

responsible for setting our policies and procedures through a collaborative process with our senior and executive management,” LaForge said. “Without that collaboration we cannot be successful and function properly as FreeState.”

Renyer enjoys having the opportunity to work with a variety of different people to meet a common goal—serving our members.

With the help of the Human Resources department and their active role

in keeping FreeState moving forward, employees are equipped with adequate resources and skill sets to be able to prioritize the needs of our members while upholding the seven cooperative principles. Here at FreeState, we work for our members.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at 800-794-1989.

**We are here to ensure FreeState employees are successful and have everything they need to be able to serve our members effectively and efficiently.**

**CHELSEA RENYER,  
HR GENERALIST**

## Opportunities To Join FreeState Electric

FreeState Electric Cooperative is currently seeking qualified individuals to join our team in three different areas. Applications for each position will remain open until filled. The three positions currently available are:

### Enterprise Applications Administrator

The Enterprise Applications Administrator is responsible for the administration of FreeState’s ERP system, NISC’s iVUE. This responsibility includes providing support and training to end-users, as well as developing customized reports to support FreeState’s various departments. This position focuses on developing a firm foundation within multiple products in NISC’s portfolio, as well as mastering the fundamental of NISC’s reporting/business intelligence tools. This individual will report to FreeState’s Director of Information Technology.

### System Engineer

The System Engineer is responsible for the design, coordination, overcurrent protection, voltage regulation, load balance, planning, and troubleshooting of the cooperative’s electric power distribution and transmission system. Additionally, this position is responsible for the cooperative’s Aclara AMI system and the supporting communication infrastructure. This position will report to the Engineering Manager.

### Tree Crew Groundsman (East District)

The East District Tree Crew Groundsman will be primarily reporting to FreeState’s McLouth office and will be responsible for effectively and efficiently conducting all right-of-way clearing and spraying in a safe and professional manner and in accordance with the system requirements to ensure quality electric service. This position promotes effective public and member relationships in the course of work on their properties. This position is the first level in a progressive, four-year, right-of-way training program.

**If you are interested in learning more, applying for any of the positions above or to watch for upcoming positions, visit [www.freestate.coop/jobs](http://www.freestate.coop/jobs).**

## Why Attend Annual Meeting

*Continued from page 16A* ▶

discussion, and neighbors are meeting with neighbors to talk about the latest progress. And there are door prizes to be won!

FreeState's annual meeting is designed to take care of business, but we also want to provide a sense of community and empowerment. For members who have attended an annual meeting, we urge you to bring a neighbor or friend with you who has not participated before.

At FreeState, many of us are your neighbors, and we look forward to seeing you at YOUR annual meeting on Tuesday, April 24 at 7 p.m. at the Perry-Lecompton High School Theater.

As always, if you have questions about your service, the co-op or this publication, we encourage you to contact us at 800-794-1989 or email customerservice@freestate.coop.

## Unable to Attend the Annual Meeting? Cast Your Vote by Proxy.

If you are unable to attend this year's Annual Meeting but would like to cast your vote in matters coming before the membership, please complete the proxy form below.

The proxy form must be completed in its entirety and given to another

FreeState member or to an adult relative living in the same household to present at the Annual Meeting.

Please keep in mind that each FreeState member may only hold one proxy and one vote is allowed per membership.

### FreeState Electric Proxy Voting Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, being a member of FreeState Electric Cooperative, Inc., an association, organized and existing under the laws of the State of Kansas, do hereby appoint \_\_\_\_\_ to vote in my stead upon the following propositions:

- ▶ The reports of officers, Trustees and committees.
- ▶ The election of three Trustees of the cooperative.
- ▶ All other businesses which may come before the meeting or any adjournment of adjournments thereof.
- ▶ At the Annual Business Meeting of members of said cooperative to be held at the Perry-Lecompton High School Theater at 7 p.m. on April 24, 2018, or any adjournments thereof, with full power of substitution shall be limited to persons who are also members of said cooperative or as provided in the bylaws of the cooperative.

Witnessed my hand this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2018.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Member