



# WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC NEWS

## WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC, INC.

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## FROM THE MANAGER

# Advocating for Cooperative Values at the Capitol

Legislative engagement is paramount for Western Cooperative Electric and our members. This includes participating in events like the Kansas Electric Cooperatives (KEC) Day at the Capitol, where cooperatives meet with lawmakers while they are in session to discuss key issues.

During events like KEC's Day at the Capitol, Western Cooperative Electric joins forces with other cooperatives to advocate for policies that benefit our rural communities. These gatherings provide a valuable opportunity to engage with legislators directly and ensure that our members' voices are heard in the legislative process.

As we come together with other Kansas cooperatives, we set priorities for legislative action that address the unique challenges faced by our community. These priorities focus on maintaining the reliability of our electric systems, safeguarding against physical and cyberthreats, and ensuring affordable service for our members.

Reliability is paramount for electric cooperatives as they strive to provide their members with a consistent and uninterrupted power supply. Electric cooperatives serve rural and often remote areas where access to electricity is not just a convenience but



Western's board and staff members discuss cooperative issues with Senator Rick Billinger (far right).

a necessity for daily life, agriculture, and businesses. Reliable electricity is essential for powering homes, schools, hospitals, farms, and businesses and enhancing quality of life.

In Western Kansas, reliability is crucial for our way of life and can no longer be taken for granted. While renewable energy sources like wind and solar play an increasingly significant role in the energy mix, they are intermittent and dependent on weather conditions. Dispatchable generation sources provide stability and flexibility, allowing electric cooperatives to meet fluctuations in demand and ensure a reliable power supply, especially during peak periods or when renewable sources are unavailable. Coal and natural

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## Advocating for Cooperative Values at the Capitol *Continued from page 12A*



Representative Jim Minnix (center)

gas power plants can be ramped up or down quickly to respond to changing energy needs, providing essential grid stability and reliability. Electric cooperatives can maintain grid reliability by integrating dispatchable generation alongside renewable energy while transitioning toward a more sustainable and resilient energy future.

Electric cooperatives rely heavily on cybersecurity measures to safeguard their grids against an evolving landscape of digital threats. In today's interconnected world, where critical infrastructure is increasingly digitized, protecting against cyberattacks is paramount. Electric cooperatives must defend against hackers, malware and other cyberthreats that could compromise the integrity and functionality of the grid. A successful cyberattack could disrupt power distribution, trigger widespread outages, and potentially cause significant economic and societal disruptions. By implementing robust cybersecurity protocols, such as firewalls, intrusion detection systems, and regular security audits, electric cooperatives can mitigate the risk of cyber incidents and ensure the reliability and resilience of the grid for the communities we serve.

Physical security also remains an ongoing threat to cooperative infrastructure and the electric grid. Electric cooperatives require robust



Representative Barb Wasinger (second from the left)

physical security measures for their grids to safeguard critical infrastructure from various threats and vulnerabilities. The grid serves as the backbone of modern society, powering homes, businesses and essential services. Physical security protects substations, transmission lines, and other vital components against potential sabotage, vandalism or terrorist attacks that could disrupt the power supply and cause widespread chaos. By implementing stringent access controls, surveillance systems and perimeter fencing, electric cooperatives can mitigate risks and uphold the reliability and resilience of the grid, ensuring continuous service for the communities they serve.

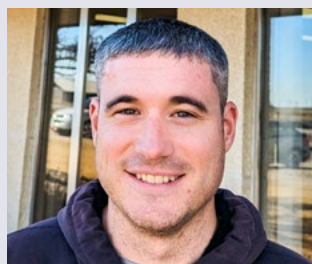
Through events like KEC's Day at the Capitol, Western Cooperative Electric can advocate for policies supporting our members and community. As we continue legislative engagement efforts, we remain committed to ensuring that the needs of our members are met and that our rural communities thrive now and in the future.



Representative Ken Rahjes (second from the right)



Senator Elaine Bowers (left)



Caleb Hirsch

## WELCOME TO WESTERN

**CALEB HIRSCH** joined the Western Cooperative's Olmitz crew on Feb. 1. He is a native of Sylvan Grove, attended line school at Pratt Community College, and is married with three daughters. Hirsch is a journeyman lineman and brings 12 years of linework experience to Western.

**WELCOME TO THE COOPERATIVE FAMILY!**

## McCoy Retires After 15 Years With Western

**BOB MCCOY** recently retired after 15 years with Western Cooperative Electric.

As the saying goes, "Jack of all trades, master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one." This phrase means you should engage your curiosity about everything because possessing skills in multiple areas is valuable in life.

This saying sums up McCoy's career as he has mastered many skills over the years. As an auctioneer, furniture upholsterer, welder and journeyman lineman, along with many hobbies and interests, McCoy has spent his career serving people.

"Bob was usually the person to unlock the doors in the morning and start the coffee," said Craig Cramer, Western's manager of information systems. "He was the kind of guy you could go to for anything, and he jumped into it with a smile."

Hired initially as a meter reader for Western Cooperative, McCoy's duties changed over time as technology evolved. "It made me nervous when they told me Western would be switching to digital meters that automatically transmit readings," McCoy said. "I was worried about losing my job, but I was assured there would be plenty of work with metering and GIS, and from that day forward, I was never fully caught up."

Never knowing a stranger and with his auctioneering background, McCoy always felt comfortable with a microphone in his hand, whether addressing school children at an electrical safety demonstration or the ping pong ball drop at the county fair.

"Bob was always an outstanding representative for the cooperative and encompasses the cooperative values that we strive to uphold as an



From left: Western's General Manager Tom Ruth with Bob McCoy and retired Western General Manager Dave Schneider.

organization," said Western's General Manager Tom Ruth.

McCoy doesn't plan on slowing down too much in his retirement. In addition to being an avid hunter and fisherman, McCoy plans on serving as a substitute teacher and helping his wife, Mary Jo, in the school's kitchen.

"Loving what you do, serving the public, and liking the people you work with makes leaving a job incredibly difficult," McCoy said. "Spending the last 15 years at Western Cooperative was life-changing for me and my family, and I'll always be thankful for the time I spent there."

## Members Helping Members: First Lutheran Church Makes Donation to Western Cares

The **FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH** in Plainville is committed to helping those in need. This time, the congregation rallied to make a \$500 donation to Western Cares, a payment assistance program dedicated to helping individuals and families struggling to pay their electric bills.

Pastor Schmidt of First Lutheran Church expressed, "As members of a compassionate community, it is our duty to extend a helping hand to those facing adversity. Due to the Lord's generous blessing, we were able to donate to Western Cares, which is a testament to our commitment to caring for our neighbors and ensuring that no one is left behind. We pray that this donation will be a blessing to everyone in the cooperative and inspire others to extend a helping hand to those in need."

By contributing to Western Cares, First

Lutheran Church has helped to alleviate some of this burden, providing much-needed assistance to those struggling to make ends meet. Whether it's a single parent working multiple jobs to support their children or an elderly couple living on a fixed income, every dollar donated has the power to make a meaningful difference in someone's life.

Nolan Numrich, assistant general manager of Western Cooperative Electric, shared, "The generosity of First Lutheran Church embodies the spirit of community support and has made the Western Cares payment assistance program viable for all these years."

As we reflect on the generosity of First Lutheran Church, let us also consider how each of us can contribute to building a stronger, more supportive community. Whether volunteering our time, donating resources, or

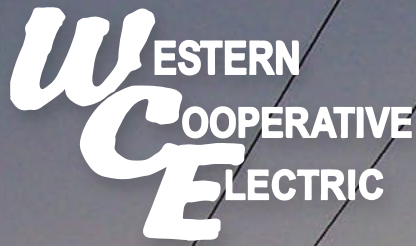


From left: Church elders Logan Numrich and John Hilgers with Pastor Michael Schmidt.

simply offering a kind word to those in need, we all can make a difference.

In the spirit of members helping members, let us continue to uplift and support one another, knowing that together, we can overcome any challenge that comes our way.

To donate to Western Cares, call the Western Cooperative Electric office at 785-743-5561 or enroll in Operation Round-Up at [www.westerncoop.com](http://www.westerncoop.com).



*Wired for Success*  
**79<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 8, 2024**

**Lunch at Noon | Meeting to follow.**

*Join us for*  
**Door Prizes | Cooperative Updates | Trustee Election Results**

*Can't Make it in Person?*  
**LIVE STREAMING OPTION IS AVAILABLE!**

**LOCATION WESTERN HEADQUARTERS | 635 S. 13TH STREET | WAKEENEY, KANSAS 67672**