

Powerful past, future focused

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. holds 84th annual meeting

Members of Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC) gathered Thursday, June 27 at the Hancock County Extension Center for their co-op's 84th Annual Meeting of Members. Before WIEC leadership provided updates, members were treated to a ribeye sandwich dinner, Dairy Queen Dilly Bars, and music by sibling pianists Katie, Anna and Luke Biery plus Sarah Steinmates.

"Over the last several years, maintaining reliable and affordable energy has become increasingly challenging, making it a primary concern in discussions with policymakers at both state and federal levels," WIEC Manager Todd Grotts said during his report. "Bad energy policies threaten access to reliable and affordable energy."

The North American Energy Reliability Corporation (NERC) warned the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that shutting down reliable power generation resources would increase blackouts, yet the EPA finalized a rule to close dependable power plants, Grotts explained. Despite protests from over 100,000 electric co-op advocates, the rule stands, posing significant risks to the nation's power grid.

The cooperative world believes the EPA's rule is unlawful, unachievable and unrealistic. It exceeds the EPA's authority, disregards Supreme Court rulings, demands technology that is not yet available, and imposes unattainable timelines. If not overturned, this rule

could lead to rolling blackouts over the next five years.

"Current policies are pushing us away from traditional, reliable power sources like coal, mandating closures of existing coal generation resources and threatening grid reliability with unachievable mandates for carbon-free power," Grotts said. "Our challenges are not rooted in engineering or financial barriers but in policies that disregard the limitations of solar and wind technology." **6519-26**

Grotts explained that there must be constant communication with legislators and regulators to ensure policies align with technological realities, emphasizing the need for time and maintaining proven dispatchable generating resources to avoid compromising reliability and affordability.

"Please know that you, the members of WIEC, are at the heart of everything we do," Grotts stated. "Co-ops adhere to seven guiding principles that reflect core values of honesty, transparency, equity, inclusiveness and service."

Board Treasurer Janet Spory reported that WIEC had a good year with operating margins of more than \$387,000. Profits made by the co-op are referred to as margins, which are allocated to each member in proportion to the value of the electricity they purchase.

Spory explained, "Margins are reinvested into the co-op for a period of time prior to being returned to the members to avoid or reduce interest

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OFFICE HOURS

8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday - Friday

BUSINESS OFFICE

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TO REPORT AN OUTAGE

800-576-3125

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Mark Burling** —
President, Carthage
- **Dustin Walker** —
Vice President, Burnside
- **Janet Spory** —
Secretary/Treasurer, Sutter
- **Kim Gullberg** —
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer,
Stronghurst
- **Landon Guymon** —
Director, Carthage
- **Jay Morrison** —
Director, Niota
- **Stephen Patrick** —
Director, Carthage

MANAGEMENT TEAM

- **Todd Grotts** — General Manager
- **Ryan Biery** — Manager
of Operations
- **Wendi Whitaker** — Finance and
Accounting Manager

MAP LOCATION CONTEST

Every month we are printing four members' map location numbers in the newsletter. If you find your map location number call the WIEC office by the 25th of the following month, tell us where it is and we will give you a \$10.00 bill credit. Keep on reading the WIEC News.

"Annual meeting' continued from 10A

charges related to borrowing other funds. The retirement of capital credits is a tangible demonstration of the financial value of your ownership in WIEC."

During Board President Mark Burling's report, WIEC employees were recognized for their extraordinary efforts over the past year. "They're the backbone of our cooperative — keeping the lights on 365 days a year, come rain or shine," Burling said. "But this past year, they went above and beyond in ways we couldn't have imagined."

He went on to discuss the devastating derecho that hit WIEC territory just days after last year's annual meeting. With nearly 500 poles snapped or needing replacement, more than half of the co-op's membership lost power, with some without power for more than a week following.

"The response was nothing short of heroic," Burling said. "Our guys usually work straight through until all power is restored. This storm was on a whole different level. We needed outside help. Ten cooperatives from across Illinois and as far as St. Louis came to our aid. I'll never forget seeing crews arrive

on July 3, knowing full well they'd be working through the holiday in brutal heat and humidity."

The total cost of the storm damage was around \$2.25 million, but just before the 2024 WIEC Annual Meeting, the co-op received word that it will receive just over \$1.6 million in FEMA funding to offset the costly storm damage.

"I want to express my deepest gratitude to our employees, directors and you, our members," Burling concluded. "Your resilience and support, especially during last year's crisis, remind us of the true strength of our cooperative community."

During the meeting, an election was held for three seats on the board of directors. District 1 Director Kim Gullberg, District 2 Director Dustin Walker and District 3 Director Jay Morrison ran unopposed and were reelected to new 3-year terms.

At the end of the meeting, prizes were drawn. Five grand prize winners received 1,000 kWh of free electricity. Congratulations to Jim Little, Dale Bell, Larry Buckert, Nancy Huls, and M. Keith Bruns. **7610-58**

Safety Tip

Interested in buying a Level 2 charger for your electric vehicle? Have the charger installed by a qualified licensed contractor. Charging stations that draw more power than your home can handle or those that are not wired correctly can overheat and cause a fire.



Safe
Electricity.org

Welcome new members

May
2024

Melina Atterberg
Richard Bonebrake
Richard G. Clayton
Joyce A. Lawson

Cole C. Little
James B. McGeehon
Wm. C. and Christina A.
Metternich

Amber N. Nwela
Trentin A. Rooney
Timothy A. Weyles, Jr.



Empowering tomorrow's leaders in Washington, D.C.

Local student represents Western Illinois Electrical Coop. during Youth Tour

Each year, hundreds of high school students from across the United States embark on an educational and inspirational journey to the nation's capital city. Sponsored by Illinois' electric and telephone cooperatives, 54 students departed Springfield, Ill., by bus on June 14 to Washington, D.C., for a weeklong trip of a lifetime.

Western Illinois Electrical Coop. (WIEC) sponsored Corin Robinson from its service territory.

Youth Tour began in 1964, after President Lyndon B. Johnson inspired the nation's electric cooperatives to sponsor youths to go to D.C. to educate young people about the role of electric co-ops and the significance of the legislative process. It became an annual tradition.

"Youth Tour is more than just a trip," said Brooke Gross, Youth Tour coordinator from the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. "It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that empowers future leaders to become informed, engaged and active citizens. Many Youth Tour alumni go on to become leaders in their communities, inspired by this experience."

The event offers a unique opportunity for students to explore the nation's capital, meet their peers from across the state and beyond, and engage with the political process. Youth Tour not only highlights the importance of electric cooperatives but also fosters civic engagement and leadership skills.

The itinerary for the Youth Tour was packed with both educational

and cultural experiences. The students visited major landmarks such as Gettysburg, Arlington National Cemetery, the U.S. Capitol and the National Mall. They also visited several museums, including the Smithsonian, Air and Space Museum, and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

"There's a lot more to Youth Tour than sightseeing," Gross said. "It also provides students with a deeper understanding of American history

The students created their own snack shop cooperative by forming a nominating committee, electing a board of directors and hiring a co-op manager. WIEC representative Corin Robinson was elected to serve on the co-op's board of directors. The students worked together to manage all aspects of the operation and had an equal say in decision-making, just like the cooperatives that sponsored them on the trip. **7513-64**

In addition, the students voted for one of their peers to represent Illinois on the Youth Leadership Council (YLC). Those interested in becoming Illinois' YLC representative filled out an application, and five were selected to give a speech in front of their peers. Cole Buchanan, representing SouthEastern Illinois Electric Cooperative, was selected as the 2024-2025 YLC representative for Illinois. He will represent the state at national and state

meetings and events in the year ahead.

"The impact of Youth Tour goes far beyond Washington, D.C.," Gross. "One of the most impactful parts of Youth Tour is the relationships that students build with their peers from different parts of the state and country. These connections often turn into life-long friendships."

High school students who live within the service area of WIEC are eligible to participate in the annual program. To learn more about Youth Tour, go to youthtour.coop or facebook.com/ILYouthTour.



and government and the role electric and telephone cooperatives play in the communities they serve."

One way the students learned about cooperatives was by forming one themselves. The Chip 'n' Pop Co-op is an engaging way to provide the Youth Tour participants with experience in understanding the fundamentals of the cooperative business model.

"This hands-on activity emphasizes the importance of teamwork," Gross said. "The students gained practical business skills and a deeper appreciation for cooperatives."

Electricity provides powerful value

If you're like me, there are aspects of your life that become sort of a daily routine. I get ready for work, get in my car and drive to the coffee shop on the way to the office. At lunchtime, I drive to the nearest fast-food location and get lunch. Once I finally end the day at home, I stream an episode or two of my favorite show before bed.

As we all look for ways to save money in this age of increasing inflation, I began to think about my daily routine and how much value it provided me compared to the money I spent. A morning latte was costing me about \$6, a fast-food combo with a burger, fries and a drink was setting me back \$10, and my Netflix subscription is about \$16 each month. All these daily expenses totaled around \$85 a week, or about \$340 monthly. And what was the real value — short-term satisfaction and a larger waistline? Even as I started packing my own lunch, my latte was still costing me about \$120 a month. This got me thinking — is this the best value for my money?

The average daily cost of electricity is about \$4.57, and the average monthly electric bill for non-commercial members of Western Illinois Electrical Coop is just over \$145. You could power your entire home every day for the price of a medium latte. I could brew my own coffee, cook my own meals, binge a series and run on a treadmill for less than the cost of that drink. Now to me, that's real value.

Electricity provides benefits that we often take for granted. It goes well beyond short-term satisfaction by

allowing us to charge devices and have cold food and hot water, all in a comfortable indoor climate. Besides the privilege it affords, electricity has also remained relatively cost-stable, even amidst rising inflation.

As a member-owned cooperative, Western Illinois Electrical Coop. does everything in our power to ensure your costs stay reasonable and that electricity remains a great value for our members. It's not always easy, as there are several factors beyond inflation that impact the price of electricity — some within our control but most beyond it.

The cost of electricity can fluctuate due to supply and demand, infrastructure investment, maintenance and operational expenses. Weather patterns also contribute, affecting both demand and generation capabilities, with extreme conditions leading to heightened energy use or disruptions. Government policies, such as subsidies for renewable energy or taxes and regulations on emissions, shape electricity costs as well. Your electric co-op considers all these aspects when adjusting rates, and because we're a cooperative, we consider the impact of those costs on our members as well. **7715-28**

As our community continues to rely on electricity for nearly everything in our homes, schools, hospitals and businesses, we need it to be reliable and affordable. You can be assured, WIEC always keeps you top of mind and works each day to ensure electricity remains the best value for your money.

Where Do You Find Value?

Did you know the average daily cost of electricity is \$4.57, or about \$145 per month?

Electricity fuels our daily life essentials, from heating/cooling equipment to entertainment devices and appliances. Think of how vital power is compared to other everyday purchases. **That's real value.**



Morning To-Go Latte



Fast-Food Combo Lunch



All-Day Power

Sources: Energy Information Administration, MoneyGeek and CNET