

# POWERLINE

NEWSLETTER FOR CO-OP MEMBERS OF CORN BELT ENERGY



## Reflecting on Progress, Planning for the Future

As we close another year, we want to pause and express gratitude—for you, the members of Corn Belt Energy for your continued trust and support. Our cooperative was built on the promise of people coming together to improve the quality of life in their communities, and that promise still guides everything we do today.

Each decision, whether it's about delivering reliable electricity, innovating for the future or advocating for smart energy policies that impact our local community, comes back to one simple question: How will this benefit the members we serve?

This past year has been marked by meaningful progress, both in strengthening our local system and in working at the national level to influence energy policies that directly affect reliability, affordability and resilience. While the details of federal regulations can feel distant, they shape our daily operations here at home.

## Our Promise to You

As the demand for electricity continues to grow, our commitment to providing you with reliable power remains steadfast. Looking ahead, we are dedicated to:

- Advocating for energy policies that support our local communities
- Leveraging innovative technologies to strengthen our grid
- Listening to your feedback to enhance co-op programs and services

Over the past year, electric cooperatives across the country came together for advocacy efforts on the EPA's Power Plant Rule. As originally written, the rule would have forced a rapid shift away from always-available power generation resources, threatening the accessibility of a diverse fuel supply that keeps electricity reliable.

Renewable energy sources are an essential and growing part of our energy future, but we also know that the demand for electricity is rising rapidly, and natural gas, coal and nuclear

remain essential for ensuring power is available around the clock. As we collaborated and engaged with policymakers, we pressed for a more balanced approach to generating power—one that supports clean energy innovation while still recognizing the role of traditional resources.

Our efforts are helping to shape a more workable path forward that better protects reliability and keeps costs in check for Corn Belt Energy members.

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Another area of ongoing progress came through advocacy work on federal permitting reform. For too long, outdated rules and lengthy delays have stood in the way of building critical infrastructure, including new transmission lines and generation projects. Modernizing this process is essential if we are going to strengthen the electric grid and keep pace with growing demand. This year, electric co-ops helped move the needle on permitting reform, advocating for policies that make the process faster, more predictable and more efficient. Investments we make in infrastructure will reach communities sooner, improving reliability and preparing us for the future.

We're also seeing progress with bipartisan support of the FEMA Act of 2025, which would speed up the disaster recovery process for electric cooperatives and the communities they serve. Severe storms are a fact of life, and their impact on the electric system can be devastating.

FEMA is a crucial partner for electric co-ops in efforts to restore power after disaster strikes, but currently, the federal reimbursement process after a major storm is slow and full of red tape. If passed, the bill would make FEMA a stronger, more responsive agency to help strengthen rural

resilience, protect taxpayer dollars and ensure essential services are restored as quickly as possible after a natural disaster.

Achievements like these are not just wins in Washington—they are wins for Corn Belt Energy members like you.

In addition to advocacy efforts, we are proactively addressing our communities' needs for the future by investing in new technologies and programs that improve service for our members. Through advanced monitoring systems and AI tools that improve daily operations, we are better equipped to identify power delivery issues or challenges before they occur.

As we look ahead to a new

year, we see both challenges and opportunities on the horizon. The energy industry is undergoing significant change driven by the rising need for more electricity, new tools and technologies, and federal energy policies.

The path forward requires innovative thinking and member-focused solutions. We're confident that with the dedication of Corn Belt Energy employees and the continued support of our members, we are well positioned to adapt and meet challenges head-on. Through it all, our promise to you remains steadfast: reliable power for today—and tomorrow.

From your friends at Corn Belt Energy, we hope you have a bright, blessed holiday season.



# Christmas Lights: A History

Long before electricity, people brightened the dark winter months with firelight — from the burning of the Yule log to candles placed around the home. The first recorded candlelit Christmas trees appeared in Germany in 1660 and eventually spread across Europe, reaching the United States later in the century.

While the glow of the candles was festive, it also posed a serious fire hazard, so the light could only be enjoyed for a short time.

While Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb in 1879, it was his colleague, Edward H. Johnson, who created the first electric Christmas tree lights in 1882. He hand-wired 80 colored bulbs around a revolving tree in his parlor, all powered by a generator.

Johnson's lights were ahead of their time, as electricity was not yet routinely available, and electric lights were considered expensive. President Grover Cleveland and his wife, First Lady Frances Cleveland, helped boost acceptance in the 1890s, when the White House Christmas tree was illuminated with colored bulbs to delight their young daughters.

The tradition of outdoor light displays, which we now associate with driving around to view beautifully lit homes and elaborate light shows, began in North America. This expansion was made possible by the development of safe outdoor Christmas light bulbs and light strings in the 1920s.

LEDs, smart displays and sustainability

Christmas lights have come a long way. Today's LED lights shine brighter than ever, creating

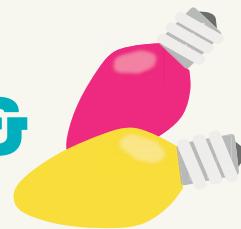
beautiful displays while using less energy — they're built to last.

Every holiday season, millions of light sets brighten homes across the country. From twinkling displays set to music to TV favorites like ABC's "The Great Christmas Light Fight," modern holiday lighting turns

neighborhoods into dazzling shows filled with festive "flip the switch" moments. Year after year, Christmas lights continue to brighten our lives and homes. The evolution reflects our desire to bring light, warmth and joy to the darkest winter days — with a mix of new technology and timeless tradition that makes holiday lights truly magical.

## Keep Your Holidays

# MERRY & BRIGHT



Don't add stress to your holiday season. Knowing how to properly use and hang lights could prevent injury or fire.



Make sure your home's electrical system can handle the load.



Unplug lights or decorations before changing a bulb or other parts.



Do not use cords or plugs that are damaged, frayed or cracked.



Only use lights certified by a reputable testing lab.



In addition, consider LED lights when replacing old light strands. LEDs use 80 to 90% less energy than incandescent bulbs.

Learn more:

 [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.safeelectricity.org)

# THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

## Education grants available

Corn Belt Energy is pleased to announce that applications are now open for the 2026 Education Grants Program.

Five schools that serve children of Corn Belt Energy electric members will each receive a \$1,500 grant, and one school will be awarded the \$2,000 Jeff Reeves Memorial Education Grant to fund innovative programs that enrich students' learning experiences.

Teachers and administrators from public or private K-12 schools are invited to apply. While schools do not need to receive electricity from Corn Belt Energy, they must serve families within Corn Belt's footprint in Central Illinois. Multiple projects within the same school may be combined for a total award amount.

An impartial panel of judges will review all submissions. Preference will be given to projects and programs that enhance learning

opportunities and are not currently funded through the school's budget.

Application deadline:  
**December 31, 2025**

Learn more and apply:  
[cornbeltnenergy.com](http://cornbeltnenergy.com)

For additional information, please contact: Megan Marlowe, Manager of Communications 309-664-9250

## Scholarships available for high school seniors

The deadline is fast approaching to apply for an IEC Memorial Scholarship. Each scholarship is worth \$3,000!

TEN scholarships will be awarded to co-op students receiving service from the cooperative.

FIVE scholarships will be awarded for co-op students applying to a

community college.

ONE scholarship will be awarded to the child of an electric cooperative employee or director.

ONE scholarship will be the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship.

The deadline to apply is  
**December 31, 2025**

The deadline for the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship is  
**April 30, 2026**

More information and to apply can be found at:  
<https://cornbeltnenergy.com/scholarships/>

## Youth Day and Youth Tour 2026

Corn Belt Energy invites high school sophomores and juniors to apply for Youth Day in Springfield and the Youth to Washington Tour.

Up to eight students will be selected to attend Youth Day in Springfield, where they'll meet legislators and learn about state government. From that group, up to three students will earn an all-expense-paid trip to Washington,

D.C. in June to experience the nation's capital.

Applicants must live in a Corn Belt Energy served home. Home-schooled student are also eligible.

Youth Day- Springfield, IL  
**March 25, 2026**

Youth Tour- Washington, D.C.  
**June 15-22, 2026**

Deadline to apply  
**February 20, 2026**

For more information and application, scan the QR code below or contact us at 309-662-5330.



## CONTACT US

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