

*From the Desk of the Manager*

## Reflecting on progress, planning for the future



*Todd Grotts  
General Manager  
WIEC*

As we close another year, I want to pause and express gratitude — for you, the members of Western Illinois Electrical Coop. — 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.

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.

Our efforts are helping to shape a more workable path forward that better protects reliability and keeps costs in check for Western Illinois Electrical Coop. members. **7713-60**

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 For too long, outdated rules and lengthy delays have stood in the way of building critical infrastructure, including new transmission lines and generation projects.

### 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.

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.

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

*Continued on 18B*



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### OFFICE HOURS

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

### BUSINESS OFFICE

217-357-3125

### 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.

"Reflecting on progress" continued from 18A

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 Western Illinois Electrical Coop. 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. **757-23-1**

As we look ahead to a new year, I 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. I'm confident that with the dedication of Western Illinois Electrical Coop. 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.*



### Welcome new members

September  
2025

Jake D Allen  
Kirk M Barry  
Dustin E Limkemann  
Josh & Jordan Meierotto

Roger F Whitcomb  
& Sara A Balagna  
Paula R & Daniel D Williams  
Peter Wilson





## IEC MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

### Deadline approaching... 17 scholarships up for grabs in 2026!

**I**llinois electric cooperatives will award 17 scholarships in 2026 to financially assist deserving students in the electric cooperative family. The amount of each scholarship has been increased by \$500 for the past two years. The 17 scholarships, \$3,000 each for 2026, will be awarded through the Thomas H. Moore Illinois Electric Cooperatives (IEC) Memorial Scholarship Program.

10 scholarships will be awarded to high school seniors whose parent(s) are Illinois electric co-op members.

1 scholarship, the Earl W. Struck Memorial Scholarship, will be awarded to a student who is the child of an Illinois electric cooperative employee or director, honoring a legacy of service within the cooperative family.

5 additional scholarships are reserved for students enrolling full time at an Illinois community college whose parent(s) are Illinois electric cooperative members.

1 scholarship, the LaVern and Nola McEntire Memorial Lineworker's Scholarship, will help pay for costs to attend lineworker school conducted by the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives in conjunction with Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, Ill. Children of co-op members, relatives of co-op employees or directors, and individuals who have served or are serving in the armed forces or National Guard are all eligible for this scholarship.

**The deadline to apply is Dec. 31, 2025**, for all except the lineworker's scholarship; the deadline for it is

April 30, 2026. For more information regarding the scholarships, contact Karmen Metternich at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125. Information has also been shared with area high school guidance counselors and is available online at [aiec.coop/iec-scholarship/](http://aiec.coop/iec-scholarship/) or at [wiec.net](http://wiec.net).

## 2026 Operating Budget

Upon request, copies of the Western Illinois Electrical Coop. operating budget for 2026 will be available at the office during regular business hours starting in January.

## Member Appreciation Day — a sweet success!

**A**s the golden hues of autumn settled in around Carthage, Western Illinois Electrical Coop. held



its Member Appreciation Day. This annual tradition brings together cooperative members, board representatives and staff for a day of sweet autumn treats and good discussions.

Friendly conversation could be heard around the office as members stopped in to chat with cooperative Manager Todd Grotts and the welcoming front office team. Smiles were exchanged and a few stories shared.

Of course, no celebration is complete without a little indulgence. This year's spread featured both piping hot and ice-cold cider, fresh cookies and delightfully cute mini donuts — each bite a reminder of the simple joys that come with small town community gatherings. The scent

of cinnamon and apples mingled with a little laughter filled the air. **6511-18**

Member Appreciation Day is more than just a seasonal event — it's a reflection of some of the values that define our cooperative: concern for community and a chance to educate, train and inform. It's an opportunity to say thank you to those who make our organization thrive, and to strengthen the relationships that keep us moving forward together.

We're already looking forward to next year's celebration, and to many more moments that remind us why we're proud to be part of something bigger.

Until then, thank you for being part of our story.

# Christmas lights: A history

**L**ong 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. **6529-9**

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.

## A revolutionary spark

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

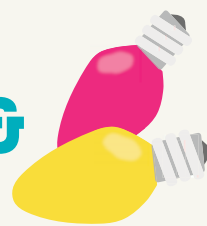
Christmas lights have come a long way. Today's LED lights shine brighter than ever, creating beautiful displays while using less energy, and they're built to last.

Every holiday season, millions of lights 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:

 **Safe Electricity.org**

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

To maximize your fireplace's efficiency, always keep the damper closed when the fireplace is not in use. An open damper is like an open window, allowing warm indoor air to escape and cold air to enter. Consider installing a fireplace insert, which improves heat output by circulating warm air into the room rather than letting it escape up the chimney. Also, burn only seasoned hardwood to ensure a hotter, cleaner burn. Regularly clean and inspect your chimney to maintain safe and efficient operation.

Source: [energy.gov](http://energy.gov)

