



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

NEWS

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STRAIGHT TALK FROM THE TOP

Cooperative Values in Action

Electric cooperatives are guided by a simple but powerful idea: We exist to serve our members. That purpose is rooted in the cooperative values of democracy, responsibility, transparency, education and concern for community. These values are not just words we talk about once a year. They guide how we make decisions, how we communicate, and how we plan for the future.

One of the clearest examples of cooperative governance is the annual meeting. Western Cooperative Electric's recent annual meeting was more than a business meeting. It was an opportunity for members to take part in the democratic process that makes the cooperative model different. When members vote for trustees, hear updates, and engage with cooperative leadership, they are helping shape the direction of the organization they own. If you were unable to attend the annual meeting in person, you can watch it online at www.westerncoop.com/annual-meeting.

That member-owner relationship matters. Unlike investor-owned utilities, electric cooperatives are not driven by outside shareholders. We are accountable to the people we serve. Our board of trustees is made up of members who live in our communities, understand local needs and help guide decisions with the long-term best interests of the membership in mind.

Education is another important cooperative principle. In the coming months,

Western will be working with our generation and transmission partner, Sun-flower Electric Power Corporation, on an affordability education series. This effort will help explain the many factors that influence the cost of electricity, from power generation and transmission to reliability, infrastructure, regulations and changing energy demands.

Affordability is an important topic, but it must be discussed with care. What feels affordable to one household may be a real challenge for another. That is why education and transparency are so important. Members deserve clear information about what goes into their electric bill and what their cooperative is doing to provide reliable service at the lowest possible cost.

Cooperative values help us navigate complex issues with a steady focus on people. They remind us to listen, communicate honestly, and make decisions that support both today's members and future generations.

From the annual meeting to ongoing member education, Western Cooperative Electric remains committed to the cooperative difference: local control, member involvement and service built around the needs of our communities.



Nolan Numrich

**HERE TO SERVE,
NOLAN NUMRICH
CEO/GENERAL MANAGER**

Behind the Cost of Power | Part 1

Understanding the cooperative difference

BY STEVE EPPERSON, CEO, SUNFLOWER ELECTRIC POWER CORPORATION

CO-AUTHORED BY NOLAN NUMRICH, CEO/GENERAL MANAGER, WESTERN COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC

For many families and businesses, monthly expenses have become harder to manage. Groceries, fuel, insurance, housing, and nearly every other essential service have experienced rising costs. Electricity is no exception.

We know higher electric bills matter. They affect family budgets, farms, businesses, and communities across rural Kansas. That is why Western and its wholesale power supplier, Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, are committed to helping you better understand the factors shaping the cost of electricity and the work happening behind the scenes to manage those pressures responsibly.

This article is the first in a series that explains what goes into the cost of power, the challenges utilities across the country face, and how the cooperative model continues to put members' interests first. With the electric industry evolving rapidly and many factors remaining uncertain, we are not intending to predict future rate changes. We simply want to give you a clearer picture of the pressures affecting electricity costs and the work we do to keep power safe, reliable, and competitively priced.

A PARTNERSHIP BUILT TO SERVE YOU

As members, many of you are familiar with your local electric cooperative, but fewer know about the integral partnership that helps ensure the delivery of electricity to homes, farms, schools,

hospitals, and businesses across central and western Kansas. We each focus on different parts of the electric grid system, but we share the same purpose: serving our members and local communities reliably and responsibly.

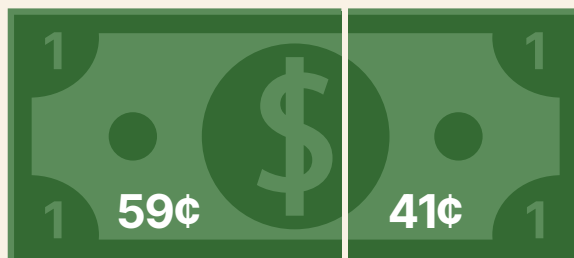
Western specializes in serving members directly by maintaining local distribution lines, restoring outages, and providing the service and support you depend on every day. Sunflower's role as the wholesale power supplier is different but closely connected. As a generation and transmission (G&T) utility responsible for producing and transmitting high-voltage electricity, Sunflower is owned and governed by six distribution electric cooperatives, including Western, and one wholly owned subsidiary. Together, these member utilities serve communities in 58 counties across central and western Kansas.

When making power supply decisions, Sunflower's board of directors is uniquely positioned to understand and respond to your local community needs because it's made up of two representatives from each of its six member cooperatives. These representatives include a trustee from Western who was democratically elected to represent and speak on behalf of the cooperative's membership. The second representative is CEO and General Manager Nolan Numrich. This unique, shared governance ensures local voices help guide long-term decisions about

Power Cost *breakdown*

For every dollar you pay toward your electric bill, 59 cents is attributed to the wholesale cost of power from our power supplier, Sunflower Electric Power Corporation. It covers the cost of generating electricity, transmitting it to Western, and adjusting for changes in fuel prices and market conditions.

The other 41 cents stays with Western to support cooperative operating, infrastructure, and service costs required to safely deliver electricity to homes and businesses, as well as the collection of other transaction taxes and fees on behalf of local entities.



power supply, wholesale electric rates, transmission, and reliability at every level of the electric system.

Our partnership matters because decisions are made locally and collaboratively. We are not-for-profit cooperatives, and any margins generated are ultimately reinvested into the system or returned in ways that benefit members like you. That cooperative business model creates an important layer of accountability that keeps the focus on long-term reliability, responsible planning, and protecting the interests of the people we serve.

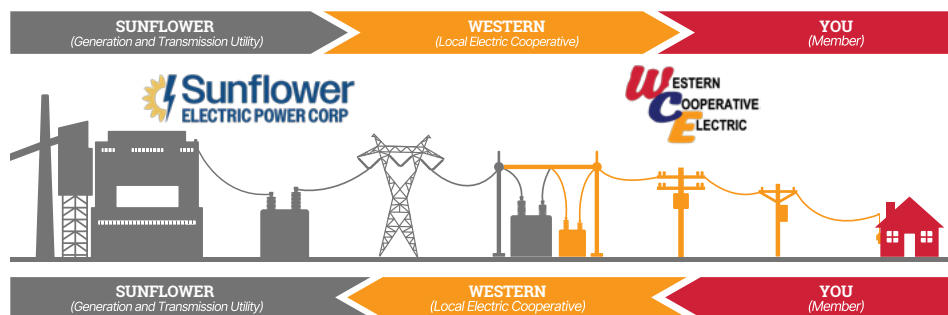
UNDERSTANDING THE COST OF ELECTRICITY

One of the most common questions members ask is: “What exactly am I paying for on my electric bill?” While every utility is different, on average, about 59 cents of every dollar on an electric bill is tied to wholesale power generation and transmission costs, the portion managed by Sunflower. The remaining portion supports Western’s operating, infrastructure, and service costs required to safely deliver electricity to homes and businesses, as well as the collection of other transaction taxes and fees on behalf of local entities.

That distinction is important because electricity is supported by an enormous interconnected system that must function every second of every day. Power plants, transmission lines, substations, poles, wires, technology systems, and skilled employees all work together to ensure electricity is available whenever it is needed.

Across the country, the cost of building, maintaining, and expanding the electric grid system is increasing. Demand for electricity is growing at a pace the industry has not experienced in decades as homes, businesses, technology, and manufacturing become increasingly electrified. Utilities nationwide are also replacing aging infrastructure while simultaneously building additional generation and transmission resources to maintain

Flow of Power / Affordability ▶



◀ Cooperative Ownership / Accountability

reliability and meet any future demand for electricity.

At the same time, critical electric grid equipment, including transformers, breakers, switchgear, and other specialized materials, is becoming more expensive and increasingly difficult to obtain in a timely manner due to nationwide supply chain constraints and growing demand. These are not challenges unique to Sunflower. G&T utilities across the country are navigating many of the same challenges.

AFFORDABILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY GO HAND IN HAND

As we discuss the cost of electricity, it is important to recognize something else: accountability. At Sunflower, we often describe the electric system as a partnership where electricity flows in one direction from generation facilities through the transmission system to Western and ultimately to your home, while cooperative membership and accountability flow in reverse. The cooperative structure creates a chain of ownership from you to Western and from Western to Sunflower.

As a member and an owner, this means the people making decisions about your power supply are held directly accountable to you for ensuring decisions across the entire electric system are made with the long-term interests of all members in mind.

We know rising costs create con-

cern, as we share many of those same concerns. The responsibility to provide reliable electricity at the lowest cost is not something we take lightly. That is why our focus is not simply on reacting to industry changes but actively planning for them. Every day, Sunflower and its member utilities work together to operate efficiently, plan responsibly, advocate for fair policies, and pursue strategies that help manage long-term cost pressures while maintaining reliable service.

LOOKING AHEAD

The electric industry is changing rapidly, and many of the forces shaping electricity costs are complex. Over the next year, we will take a deeper dive into the major factors influencing the cost of electricity and the opportunities and challenges ahead. Future articles will discuss topics such as growing energy demand, regional transmission expansion, supply chain challenges, infrastructure investment, economic growth, and the steps Sunflower and its members are taking to help manage costs and maintain reliability for the long term.

Through it all, one thing remains unchanged: the cooperative mission to serve members, strengthen communities, and provide reliable electricity as responsibly and efficiently as possible. That mission is shared by Sunflower and Western, and it continues to guide every decision we make on your behalf.

WESTERN CELEBRATES

81ST ANNUAL MEETING

PARTNERS IN POWER



A substantial crowd listens to presentations during the annual meeting.

Western Cooperative Electric welcomed members, guests and community partners to its 81st Annual Meeting on May 14 at the VFW in WaKeeney, celebrating this year's theme, **PARTNERS IN POWER.**

The lunch meeting highlighted the strong partnerships that help keep reliable and affordable electricity flowing to the communities Western serves. Members gathered to hear cooperative updates, visit with trustees and employees, enjoy lunch and participate in prize giveaways.

Western extends a sincere thank you to all members who attended and participated in the annual meeting. For those unable to attend, videos of the meeting, including the manager's report and CEO/CFO financial presentation, are available on Western's website.

A special thank you goes to Steve Epperson, CEO of Sunflower Electric Power Corporation, for delivering an outstanding presentation focused on the long-standing partnership between Sunflower Electric and Western Cooperative Electric. His remarks emphasized the importance of collaboration in meeting today's energy challenges while continuing to provide reliable service for cooperative members.

Western also appreciated the attendance of local legislators who took time from their busy schedules to visit with members and learn more about issues impacting rural electric cooperatives and western Kansas communities.

One of the most memorable moments came from a longtime member who stood up and shared how she remembers when electricity was first brought to area farms and estimated she had

attended nearly 40 Western annual meetings over the years. Stories like these serve as a reminder of the cooperative's rich history and the generations of members who helped build and support rural electrification.

The VFW once again proved to be an excellent venue for the event, and Western is grateful to the many sponsoring businesses that donated outstanding raffle prizes for members to enjoy. Attendees also received giveaway items as a thank you for participating in the cooperative process.

Annual meetings remain an important part of



Sunflower Electric Power Corporation CEO Steve Epperson speaks at annual meeting.



the cooperative business model because they give members the opportunity to hear updates, ask questions, elect trustees and help shape the future direction of their cooperative. As a member-owned organization, Western values transparency, accountability and member involvement.

Western also extends appreciation to its dedicated employees whose hard work behind the scenes helped make the event successful. From planning and setup to member hospitality and technical support, their commitment reflects the cooperative spirit that continues to power Western forward.

RIGHT: Western Cooperative Electric Board President Nick Zerr presents a token of appreciation to outgoing trustee Dale Weinhold (right) for his years of devoted service to the cooperative and its members.



WESTERN MEMBERS REELECT HOBBS & HAUSLER, WELCOME MCNINCH TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Western Cooperative Electric members have once again placed their confidence in experienced leadership while also welcoming a new voice to Western's Board of Trustees following the 2026 trustee election.

Incumbents **TERRY HOBBS**, District 1, and **STEVE HAUSLER**, District 2, were both reelected to continue serving Western members. **DENNIS MCNINCH** was elected to represent District 3 following the retirement of longtime trustee Dale Weinhold.

Hobbs has served on the Western Board since 1993 and currently serves as vice president. A lifelong farmer and rancher, Hobbs has been a strong advocate for employee safety, technological advancement and maintaining competitive electric rates for members. Many members also recognize him as the author of the monthly "Talkin', Tootin' & Tailgatin'" column featured in *Kansas Country Living* magazine.

Hausler, who was originally appointed to the board in 2025, brings extensive experience in communications and power supply to the cooperative. Before retiring, he spent 12 years as a communications specialist for Sunflower Electric Power Corporation and more than 35 years in professional photojournalism. His work has appeared in newspapers, magazines and books throughout the United States and internationally. Hausler also serves as one of Western's representatives on the Kansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. board.

McNinch has been a Western member in rural Ness County for more than three decades and brings extensive agricultural and financial experience



Terry Hobbs
District 1



Steve Hausler
District 2



Dennis McNinch
District 3

to the trustee role. After retiring from Farm Credit of Ness City following a 32-year career, McNinch continued his leadership in agriculture through service with the Kansas Corn Commission and the U.S. Grains Council Trade Policy Advisory Team.

Western Cooperative Electric also extends sincere appreciation to outgoing trustee **DALE WEINHOLD** for his years of dedicated service to the cooperative and its members. His leadership and commitment helped guide Western through years of growth and change while always keeping the cooperative mission at the forefront.

Together, Western's Board of Trustees remains committed to serving the membership with integrity, vision, and a continued focus on reliable, affordable electric service for the communities Western serves.

W.O.R.K. SCHOLARSHIP

APPLICATIONS OPEN THROUGH AUG. 1

Western is now accepting applications for its 2026 W.O.R.K. Scholarship program. Two \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to local professionals with student loan debt.

The W.O.R.K. Scholarship is designed to support individuals who are within five years of completing a post-secondary degree or certification program and are actively contributing to the workforce in their community.

**APPLICATIONS MUST BE
SUBMITTED BY AUG. 1, 2026.**

Western encourages eligible applicants to take advantage of this as part of the cooperative's continued commitment to supporting education, workforce development and rural communities across western Kansas. Apply at www.westerncoop.com.

WESTERN ANNOUNCES

2026 Scholarship Recipients



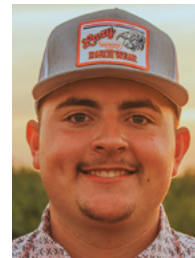
Mary (Lizzy) Vajnar



Grace Smith



Nicholas Robben



Luke Zerr

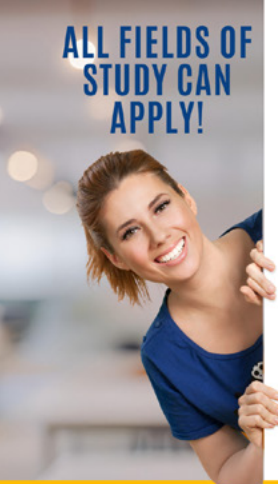
Western Cooperative Electric is proud to announce the recipients of its 2026 scholarship program, recognizing outstanding local students for their hard work, leadership and future goals.

This year's \$1,000 scholarship recipients include **MARY (LIZZY) VAJNAR**, graduate of Hays High School, who plans to attend Kansas State University and major in agriculture; **GRACE SMITH**, graduate of Otis-Bison High School, who will attend Fort Hays Tech North Central in Hays and major in business, and **NICHOLAS ROBBEN**, graduate of Hoxie High School, who plans to attend the University of Kansas and major in pre-pharmacy.

LUKE ZERR, graduate of Wheatland High School, was awarded the \$250 Darrell Brown Memorial Scholarship. He plans to attend Fort Hays Tech North Central in Hays and pursue a career in construction-related studies.

Western congratulates each of these students and wishes them continued success as they begin the next chapter of their educational journeys.

**ALL FIELDS OF
STUDY CAN
APPLY!**



WESTERN W.O.R.K. SCHOLARSHIP

WORKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL KANSAS

\$1,000 POST GRADUATE:

To two individuals who have received post secondary education and live & work in Western's service area! This money will be directly payable to their student loans or school debt.

HOW TO APPLY:

- Fill out Western W.O.R.K Scholarship Application Online
- Provide proof of residency, employment or volunteer status, schooling debt or need & company, address and account number of where to make the payment.

2026 APPLICATIONS Due:

AUGUST 1, 2026



For More Information & Check Eligibility:

www.westerncoop.com/work-scholarship



Western's Systemwide Pole Identification Project

Western Cooperative Electric has completed a systemwide pole identification project designed to improve outage response, maintenance efficiency and member communication across the cooperative's service territory.

Every pole on Western's electrical system now features a unique identification number that directly corresponds with the cooperative's mapping and operational systems. The multi-year project serves as another tool to help Western respond to outages and service issues more quickly and accurately.

When members report an outage, damaged equipment or another concern, providing the nearest pole identification number can help crews pinpoint the exact location faster — especially in rural areas where addresses or landmarks may be difficult to identify. Because every pole is mapped within Western's system, the identification numbers allow dispatchers and crews to locate issues with greater precision, helping reduce response time and improve service restoration efforts.

"Having an accurate pole identification system helps us locate outages and respond more efficiently across our entire territory," said Western Cooperative Electric Staker Jeff Mattheyer. "In many rural areas, a pole number can be the fastest and most accurate way for our crews to identify a location and restore power safely."

Safety remains the top priority when reporting outages or damaged equipment. Western reminds members



Every pole on Western's electrical system now features a unique identification number that directly corresponds with the cooperative's mapping and operational systems.

to never approach a downed power pole, low-hanging line or any electrical equipment that appears unsafe. If a pole is damaged or power lines are touching the ground, members should stay far away and instead provide the safest pole number nearest the affected area.

The pole identification numbers are typically displayed on tags attached to the pole and can be extremely helpful during emergencies, storm restoration or even routine service questions.

Western encourages members to become more familiar with the new identification system and just be aware of nearby pole numbers around their homes, farms or businesses. Knowing where and what the numbers are can make a significant difference during an emergency situation.

This completed project reflects Western's ongoing commitment to improving reliability, safety and service for cooperative members across western Kansas.

FARM SAFETY STARTS WITH AWARENESS

As planting, irrigation and harvest activities continue across western Kansas, Western Cooperative Electric reminds farmers and ranchers to make electrical safety part of every workday.

Large equipment, grain augers, irrigation pipe and sprayers can easily come into contact with overhead power lines if operators are not paying close attention. Before moving equipment, always look up and maintain a safe distance from power lines.

If equipment accidentally contacts a power line, stay inside the vehicle if possible and call 911 and Western Cooperative Electric immediately. Exiting equipment involved in an electrical contact can be extremely dangerous.

Western also encourages producers to locate underground utility lines before digging or installing fence posts by calling 811 before beginning any excavation project.

A few extra moments of awareness can help prevent serious accidents and keep Kansas farms operating safely throughout the busy agricultural season.



WITH HARVEST SEASON UNDERWAY, WESTERN REMINDS ALL FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS TO STAY SAFE AROUND POWER LINES AND ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT.

Always be aware of overhead power lines when operating tall equipment like grain augers and combines.

What Are Capital Credits and Why Do They Matter?

Western allocates \$3,647,817.31 in capital credits for 2025

As a member of Western Cooperative Electric, you are more than just a customer — you are a member-owner of the cooperative. One of the unique benefits of being part of an electric cooperative is the opportunity to earn capital credits.

Capital credits represent each member's share of the cooperative's margins, which are the revenues remaining after operating expenses are paid. Unlike investor-owned utilities that return profits to shareholders, electric cooperatives operate on a not-for-profit basis. Any margins are allocated back to the members who purchased electricity during that year.

Each year, Western's Board of Trustees carefully reviews the financial health of the cooperative and determines when capital credits can be retired and returned to members while still maintaining the reliability and stability of the electrical system. These retirements are one of the many ways cooperatives fulfill the mission of serving members first.

Even if capital credits are not immediately paid out (Western is on a 25 year rotation for returning capital credits, specific years to be determined by board approval), annual allocations are important because they track your ownership share in

HOW CAPITAL CREDITS WORK



the cooperative. Your allocation is based on the amount of electricity you purchased during the year.

Western will soon mail important 2025 capital credits allocation information to members. Be sure to keep an eye on your mailbox for a letter from Western that will include your individual allocation details.

It is also important for members to keep their mailing addresses and contact information updated with the cooperative to ensure future capital credits retirements and important notices can be delivered accurately.

Capital credits are one of the key differences that set electric cooperatives apart. They reflect the cooperative principle of member ownership and demonstrate how Western continues to invest in both its system and the members it serves.



STORM SEASON SAFETY: BE PREPARED AND STAY ALERT

Storm season in Kansas can bring high winds, lightning, heavy rain and power outages with little warning. Western Cooperative Electric encourages members to stay prepared and practice safety before, during and after severe weather events.

Members should always stay away from downed power lines and assume every line is energized. Never drive over downed lines or attempt to move debris tangled in electrical equipment. If you see damaged poles or power lines, contact Western immediately.

Having an emergency kit with flashlights, batteries, bottled water, medications and backup phone chargers can help families stay prepared during outages. Members are also encouraged to monitor weather conditions closely during severe storms and have multiple ways to receive emergency alerts.

Western crews remain ready to respond during storm events and work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power when outages occur. Safety remains the cooperative's top priority for both employees and members.