



31st year 1st Issue

February 2020

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#### CO-OP CONNECTIONS LOCAL BUSINESS PARTICIPANTS

(CHECK WEBSITE FOR REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DISCOUNTS):

- **Herren Brothers True Value**
- **Same As It Once Was**
- **Country Corner Hair Shop**
- **Miller Soap Company**
- **Bloomers**

## RURAL Act Makes it through Congress.

As 2019 was coming to a close, the pressing topic of passing the RURAL Act was making head lines and grassroots action educating electric co-op members & encouraging them on the need to contact their legislators took place.

No more than 15 percent of a co-op's income can come from non-member sources if they are to maintain tax-exempt status. The 2017 tax law inadvertently categorized grants as non-member revenue, threatening to push co-ops beyond the 15 percent threshold. Now, with the passage of the RURAL Act, government grants will not threaten a co-op's tax-exempt status.

"We're grateful that Congress understands the importance of fixing a tax problem that threatens 900 electric co-ops and America's rural communities," said Jim Matheson, CEO at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. "This package preserves the electric cooperative business model, protects co-op members from unfair electric rate increases and provides certainty to co-ops that leverage federal and state grants to meet the needs of the communities they serve. In particular, we're grateful to Sens. Rob Portman and Tina Smith and Reps. Terri Sewell and Adrian Smith for leading the RURAL Act through Congress."

The package sent to the president to be signed into law includes:

- The bipartisan RURAL Act, which ensures that co-ops that accept government grants for storm restoration or broadband are not at risk of losing their tax-exempt status.
- The SECURE Act, which will lower the premiums that electric co-ops pay to the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation for low-risk defined benefit pension plans.
- Repeal of the "parking lot tax," which would have assessed taxes on about one-third of electric co-ops.
- Repeal of the 40% "Cadillac tax" on employer health plans that will help protect health care benefits for all co-op employees.

At the January Board Meeting, Nominating Committee members were appointed by the NEA Board. These individuals will meet on February 19th to fulfill their task of making nominations for candidates, in order for the membership to vote on them at Annual Meeting in May.

If you are interested in running for a position on the NEA Board, make sure your Candidate Interest Form has been received by the NEA office or a member of the nominating committee prior to this meeting. Call the NEA office and speak with Twyla if you have questions.



**Nominating Committee members are:**

**District No.1**      **Richard Ladwig, Ken Dixon, Denzel Coffey and Brad Reese (alt.)**

**District No.2**      **Cheryl Lund, Rod Nelson, Dan Hanson and Stan Rennard (alt.)**

**District No.3**      **Jon Woodrum, Rodney Gray, Donald Mack and Jack Buhr (alt.)**

The Notice of Nominating Committee is posted at the NEA office, is on the website, the NEA Facebook page and in the local newspapers.

Further nominations may be made as follows:

By any fifteen (15) or more Members acting together may make other nominations by petition. Nominations made by petition must be received by the Secretary at least thirty (30) days before the annual meeting date so that nominee(s) by petition may be included on the printed ballot.

Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 21st at the Sioux County High School.

**Reminder to have scholarship applications at the NEA office by 4:00 p.m. on Friday February 21, 2020.**

Mid-December 2015, on the first day of annual inventory, Doug Lytle began his duties as the new NEA Warehouse Coordinator.

It wasn't the first time Doug worked at NEA, as he had spent a summer in 1999 helping out the Electrician Department and doing general maintenance and ground crewman work for NEA after his junior year at Chadron College.

After Chadron, Doug went to Peoria, IL with the Peoria Pirates of the indoor football league. Then, moved up to the Arena Football League. AFL - Milwaukee Mustangs for 2 Years (team folded operations), Toronto Phantoms 1 year (team folded operations), Dallas Desperados 1 year (knee Injury), LA Avengers (camp only, not fully recovered from knee surgery), Indiana Firebirds 1 year, then retired following Indiana Season.

Next, Doug went into coaching in Green Bay, WI. with the Green Bay Blizzard of the AF2 (AFL farm teams) for 4 years. Started as the Fullbacks/ Linebackers Coach/Equipment Manager, moved to Defensive Coordinator/Director of Football Operations for 2 years, then moved to Head Coach/ Director of Football Operation for 1 year.

After football, Doug returned to Lusk and worked as a correctional Officer for 2.5 years. He married his beautiful wife Kayte Dean in 2011 and moved to Aurora, CO., where they had 2 amazing children and worked briefly for Southwest Airlines.

In 2012 Doug briefly returned to Milwaukee and Coaching as a Defensive Coordinator for 1 season. Then It was back to Lusk with his family. For the next 3 years, Doug served on the Lusk PD. He became Mayor of Lusk in June 2018.



The expanse of duties at NEA that Doug has taken on has grown each year. This January, Doug was promoted according to the additional tasks given to him. His new title is Technical Services/Staker, reflecting mapping and staking work he now performs, in addition to other responsibilities.

Doug now supervises the warehouse operations and by the time this is in print, will be training a new Warehouse Coordinator.

Congratulations to Doug on his new position and thanks for all your outstanding work!



nea@niobrara-electric.org

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"This institution is an equal  
opportunity provider and  
employer."



**Touchstone Energy<sup>SM</sup>**

### Office Hours

Monday—Thursday

7:30 am—5:00 pm

Fridays 7:30 am—  
4:00 pm

**Electrician Department**

6:00 am—4:30 pm (M-TH)

**Outages** ....1-800-322-0544  
or 307-334-3221

Phones are answered 24 hours a  
day. Phones will be answered by  
Niobrara Electric Association  
during office hours and the Nio-  
brara County Sheriff's office will  
take all other calls and dispatch  
NEA personnel.



### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

#### District

|                 |   |                 |                |
|-----------------|---|-----------------|----------------|
| John Hester     | 1 | Keeline, WY     | President      |
| Andy Barnette   | 2 | Lusk, WY        |                |
| David Keener    | 3 | Marsland, NE    | Sec./Treas     |
| Bill Wilson     | 3 | Harrison, NE    |                |
| Jack Hammond    | 1 | Lance Creek, WY |                |
| Jim Dunn        | 3 | Harrison, NE    |                |
| Neal Wurdeman   | 2 | Lusk, WY        |                |
| Andy Greer      | 1 | Lance Creek, WY |                |
| JD Wasserburger | 2 | Lusk, WY        | Vice President |

#### Board Minutes

- Line Superintendent Rick Bridge spoke on Operations and safety, metering project, ROW challenges, discussion on snow-blower for the skid steer and updates on contractor Ward Electric.
- General Manager reported on the proposed budget, changes in personnel and additional hiring, dispatch services, engineering and west load.
- Director Keener spoke on NREA business.
- Director Greer spoke on WREA business.
- Director Wilson spoke on Tri-State business.