



news & views

from Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Board Approves District Changes SEEKS CANDIDATES FOR OPEN TRUSTEE POSITIONS

Lincoln Electric's By-Laws direct the Board of Trustees to adjust member districts each year. This allows the membership to be represented as equally as possible. Please see the accompanying sidebar for the By-Laws excerpt.

Over time, as services are installed and retired, trustee representation becomes skewed. Some districts become over represented and some under represented depending on the growth in that area.

As you can see on the following graphs, District 1 Flathead, District 2 Trego-Stryker, and District 4 Eureka-Tobacco Plains were all over represented. Conversely, District 3 Fortine-Glen Lake and District 5 Koochanusa Shores-Pinkham were under represented.

These two under repre-

sented districts have had the most growth without an adjustment to the number of trustees. This caused a shift in how

At the November board meeting, the Board of Trustees voted on new district boundaries to rectify this issue. They altered the number of trustees from each of these new districts so members would have more equal representation.

As shown on the map on page 6, there are now only two districts: North District with eight Trustees and South District with two Trustees. North District was created by combining the old Districts 3, 4, and 5. South District was created by combining Districts 1 and 2.

For members, this change will affect who can run for open Board positions and who can nominate trustee

By-Laws of Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.
Article IV. Trustees
Section 3. Trustee Districts
At the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees in January of each year, said board shall divide the project into districts with boundaries determined along natural geographical lines and the distribution lines of this project and shall specify the number of trustees that shall be elected from each district at the next annual meeting. As used here, the term "...trustee...from each district..." means an individual member (as contrasted with a corporate, partnership or similar entity) whose principal residence is within the district. The number of trustees to be elected from each district shall be determined by the board upon the basis of the Cooperative membership in said district and shall be so determined that the number of members per trustee to be elected in each district shall be as nearly equal as possible.

candidates at the Annual Meeting. Members can only nominate a fellow member from their district as a potential trustee.

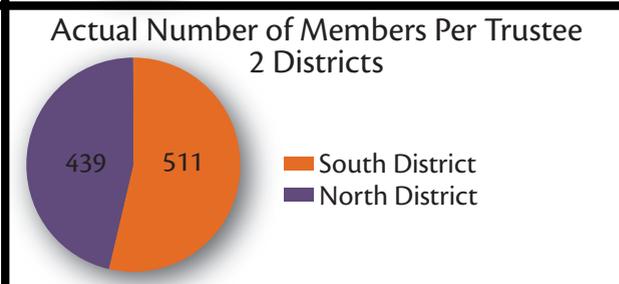
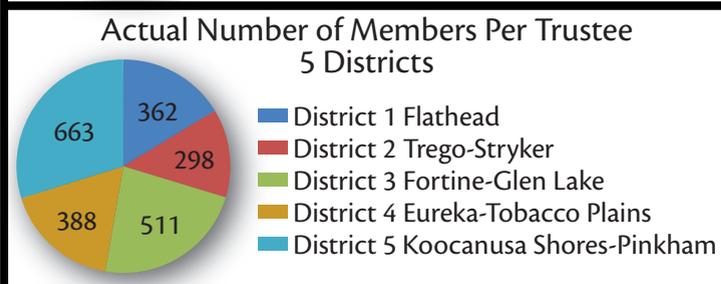
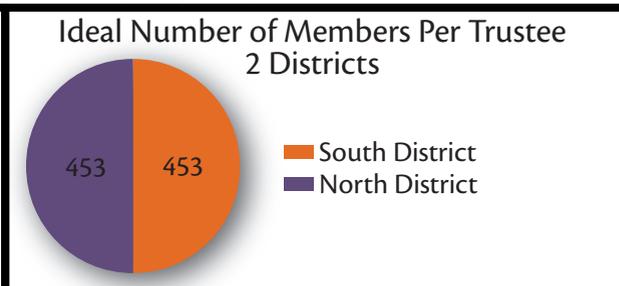
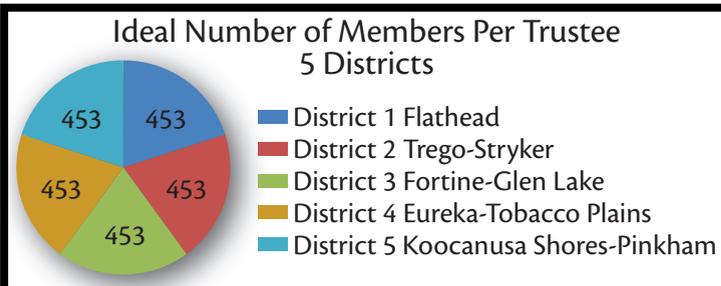
Your Annual Notice of Meeting, arriving the beginning of March, will indicate your district. This is based on the location of your primary

service.

There are currently two open trustee seats on Lincoln Electric's Board. Both will be chosen from candidates from the North District.

The Board is currently seeking candidates for these vacancies. Any member who

Continued on page 6



BPA Wholesale Rate Increase Forces a Retail Rate Increase

On October 1, 2017, Lincoln Electric was the recipient of another wholesale power increase from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). We were aware this increase was on the horizon. I have mentioned it in previous articles, though we did not know the full details.

Even now we still do not know what exactly it will cost for Lincoln Electric and our members. The factors in the uncertainty are the usual culprits. Rising fish costs. Poor secondary sales for BPA. Continued litigation and the intervention of an activist Judge.

We had hopes that all the efforts by so many to try to find a better resolution would be successful, but it was to no avail. But we will continue to support legislation and organizations that fight for reasonably priced electricity.

So far our numbers indicate a wholesale power cost increase of about 7 percent. Since wholesale power costs account for roughly 50 percent of our

total expenses, this increase should equate to a 3.5 percent increase on the retail side for Lincoln Electric members.

However, we just completed our 2018 budget and we were able to reduce this number. By taking measures to control our other costs, it looks like the overall revenue requirements for 2018 will increase by about 2 percent across all rate classes.

As mentioned at last year's Annual Meeting and Community Meetings, the rate adjustments will go into effect on May 1, 2018. The exact impact of the increase will vary for each service depending on your individual electric usage - how much electricity you use and how you use it.

While we have worked hard to minimize the impact of this wholesale rate increase, we realize that any increase is difficult. Both for Lincoln Electric and our members.

As always, we will continue to look for efficiencies in our operation to try and keep the electricity Lincoln Electric provides our members

as reasonably priced as possible.

If you may have difficulty paying your electric bill, please contact us as soon as possible. We can discuss with you ways to be more energy efficient so you can better control your cost of electricity. We can also advise you of available resources to help pay for your heating costs and determine if you qualify for any of the available programs.

As more rate details become available, we will provide updates for you here in the *Rural Montana* and online at www.lincolnelectric.coop. We will also discuss rates at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, March 24, 2018 in the LCHS Auditorium. In the meantime, please call me if you have any questions.

Thanks for your membership,
Ray



Manager's Notes
by Ray Ellis

News & Views

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Lincoln Electric's Board of Trustees hold regular meetings monthly at the Eureka office. These are typically scheduled on the third Monday of each month at 7 pm. All members are encouraged to attend. If you have any items of interest, please contact the general manager prior to the meeting.

Next Meeting Date:

Monday, January 15, 2018

Board of Trustees

- **Mike Workman** - President, North District
- **Wesly Loughman** - Vice President, North District
- **Courtney Pluid** - Secretary, North District
- **Myra Appel** - South District
- **Joel Graves** - North District
- **Marianne Roose** - North District
- **Tina Taurman** - South District
- **Ethel White** - North District
- **Open Seat** - North District
- **Open Seat** - North District

General Manager Ray Ellis

**In case of power outage:
Always call 406-889-3301**

312 Osloski Road
PO Box 628
Eureka, MT 59917
www.lincolnelectric.coop
info@lincolnelectric.coop

BUSINESS AND BOARDROOM BRIEFS

The regular meeting of the board of trustees was conducted on November 20, 2017. A quorum of trustees was present and the board took the following action:

- Approved changing the Board Districts to balance Trustee representation per member as instructed in the By-Laws. Districts 1 and 2 are combined into South District with two Trustee positions. Districts 3, 4, and 5 are combined into North District with eight Trustee positions.
- Approved seeking qualified candidates from North District for the two open Trustee positions.
- Approved a \$500 donation to Open Hearts and Open Arms.

	Year to Date 10/30/2017	Year to Date 10/30/2016
Year to Date kWh Sales	94,185,767	81,616,375
Year to Date Revenue	\$ 8,572,347	\$ 7,782,306
Year to Date Cost of Power	\$ 4,163,454	\$ 3,655,973
Year to Date Operating Exp	\$ 4,416,904	\$ 4,054,116
Year to Date Margins	\$ 86,023	\$ 137,652
Number of Members	4,544	4,486
Number of Meters	5,886	5,797
Miles of Line	959	953
Total Utility Plant	\$ 32,347,129	\$ 32,985,847
Member Equity	\$ 8,880,828	\$ 8,794,027
Oct. Average Residential Use (kWh)	1,184	1,156
Oct. Average Residential Billing	\$119.47	\$119.72

Virtual Home Energy Audits

By Tom Tate

Is your home using energy efficiently? Unless it was built quite recently to stringent energy efficiency standards, there are bound to be areas of your home where you can improve efficiency, save money and reduce your carbon footprint.

In a perfect world, your best option is to hire a trained professional to conduct a full-blown, in-home energy audit. This usually involves a detailed inspection of your home's insulation levels, HVAC system, lighting, appliances and exterior space.

A professional energy auditor will typically conduct a blower door test to check pressurization and spot hard-to-find leaks in the exterior. In addition, a professional may use a duct blaster to identify leaks in your home's ductwork.

One drawback to the in-home energy audit is finding a time that works with your

busy schedule. An energy audit can take several hours when done correctly, which means you might have to take time off from work, farm out the pets, get help with the kids and their after school activities—and so forth.

Luckily, there is a viable alternative: the online or “virtual” home energy audit. These online tools have come a long way over the last 10 years. Today's online energy audits are user-friendly and take only a few minutes to complete.

An online energy audit can provide an assessment of your home's energy efficiency and typically provides helpful tips on how to reduce energy waste. The audits utilize sophisticated computer models that typically use local housing types—factoring in the age, size, flooring and construction materials of the home—and local weather data.

I have used several of

these audits and found they typically come within a dollar or two of my actual energy bills when fed the correct information. Amazing! True, the audit won't provide a pressurization test of your home and ductwork, but it is a convenient start.

You can find a good online energy auditor tool through the Department of Energy: <http://hes.lbl.gov/consumer/>

A word of caution: Be careful when using online energy audit software provided by organizations other than utilities, government agencies or universities.

Unfortunately, some companies may try to obtain information to sell their own products and services. If you see phrases like, “Learn what your power company does not want you to know” or the site looks like a marketing page, I'd suggest moving on. Unless you are dealing with a local electric co-op or your trusted fossil fuel provider, do not provide any personal information outside of your physical address (for data accuracy) or an email address for receiving a full report.

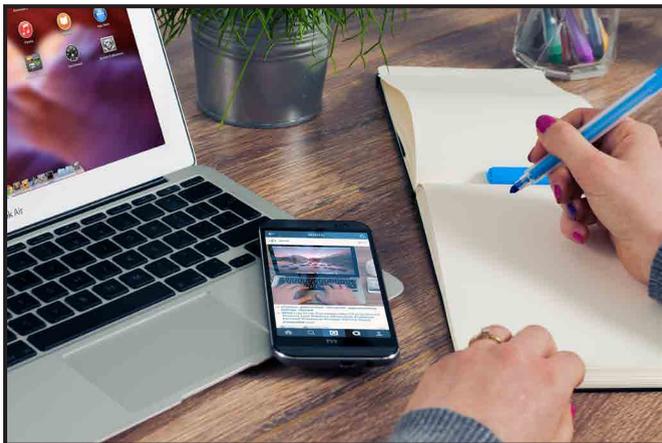
If an online energy audit doesn't interest you, fear not. The Department of Energy offers a DIY energy audit section on their website at <http://energy.gov/energysaver/do-it-yourself-home-energy-audits>

The bottom line? Choose the energy audit that works for you, then implement as many of the recommenda-

What you'll need for an online audit

Each audit is a little different, and the information required may vary. Below is a basic list of what you'll need. Be as accurate as possible without creating so much work for yourself that you regret taking the audit.

- Your home zip code – for weather and housing data
- Your average monthly electric bill
- Your electric rate
- Your average monthly fossil fuel bill(s) – oil, propane and gas
- Your fossil fuel rate(s)
- Age of your home and general characteristics (size, floors, exterior materials)
- Age and number of appliances
- Type and age of heating and cooling systems
- How many incandescent, CFL and LED lights you have



tions as you can. Even taking small steps can add up to significant results and you'll see the benefits in your utility bills for years to come.

Tom Tate writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

MECA Memorial Scholarships Available

- Four \$500 scholarships will be awarded to students of MECA electric cooperative members
 - Student must be attending college Fall 2018
- Student's parent or guardian must be a member of Lincoln Electric

Applications Available:

- Lincoln Electric's office at 312 Osloski Road in Eureka
 - Online at www.lincolnelectric.coop
 - Your school's guidance counselor's office

Applications Due to
Lincoln Electric by
January 31, 2018



Board

Continued from page 3
 has their principle residence in North District is eligible to apply for the positions.

The Board will accept resumes from interested

members until January 8, 2018. They plan to review applicant information and conduct personal interviews prior to their January board meeting. The plan is to seat the new trustees at the regular

board meeting on January 15. The appointed trustees will serve the unexpired terms of Tom Klyver and Terry Utter. They will be up for election at the 2019 Annual Meeting.

If you are interested in filling one of these vacancies, you can get an information packet from our office at 312 Osloski Road, by calling us at 406-889-3301 or visiting www.lincolnelectric.coop.

