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# ADVANTAGE

## Written in the stars ECE's 90th Annual Meeting

The ECE Credentials & Election Committee met February 16, officially approving director candidates for Districts 1, 3, and 6 for the 2026 election.

If you're a member in a voting district, be sure to cast your vote online or by mail. Options include a traditional paper ballot, online voting via our website, scanning a barcode with your smartphone, or using the SmartHub app. Official ballots will be mailed April 1, with online voting opening that same day at 8 a.m. To ensure your vote is counted, all paper and online ballots must be received by Survey & Ballot Systems by 8 a.m. April 22. Please note that ECE does not handle the distribution or tabulation of ballots.

Don't miss ECE's 90th Annual Meeting on April 23 at the Braham Event Center. Join us as we shine a light on the 7 Cooperative Principles that guide everything we do. Enjoy hot appetizers starting at 5 p.m., then settle in for the meeting at 6 p.m. sharp. The evening features highlights from 2025, in-person voting on proposed Bylaw Amendments, director election results, and prize drawings to close out the night.

**MEET THE CANDIDATES ON PAGES 3-7**

## OFFICIAL NOTICE East Central Energy Annual Meeting

**April 23, 2026**  
**Braham Event Center**  
**655 8th St. SW, Braham, MN 55006**

Registration opens 5 p.m. • Business meeting 6 p.m.  
Appetizers & prize drawings

## Members to vote on proposed Bylaw Amendments at annual meeting

ECE's bylaws were last amended and restated in 2012. Since that time, significant changes have occurred. The board of directors has drafted proposed Bylaw Amendments that reflect current operations, including the launch of broadband internet services, and ensure ECE remains responsive to member needs while upholding cooperative principles.

In 2024, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association released a bylaw revision guide that provided new and alternative language options. Based on the guide, ECE included NRECA language and formatting suggestions in the bylaw revisions.

### Key updates

- **Membership class definitions:** Electric members retain full member rights, including voting, eligibility to earn capital credits, and the ability to run for the board. Broadband-only members can earn capital credits, but are not eligible to vote or run for the board.
- **Alignment with regulations and statutes:** Ensures consistency and compliance with current Federal regulations and Minnesota and Wisconsin statutes.
- **Inclusivity:** Replaces outdated language to reflect ECE's diverse membership.
- **General updates:** Addresses changes in programs, services, and technology since 2012.

A full copy of the proposed changes is available at [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com). Printed copies are available at our Braham Headquarters or by calling 1-800-254-7944.

Members will vote on the proposed Bylaw Amendments during the annual meeting on April 23, 2026.



**Arbor Day  
Foundation™**

**PLANT A FREE TREE THIS SPRING!**

We're teaming up again with the Arbor Day Foundation's Energy-Saving Trees program to offer free trees to ECE members. Choose from a variety of species and boost your energy efficiency using an easy-to-use interactive mapping tool, which helps ensure your tree placement avoids future conflicts with overhead lines.

Starting March 16, trees will be available on a first-come, first-served basis (one per member household), as supplies are limited. To place your order, visit [arborday.org/eastcentralenergy](http://arborday.org/eastcentralenergy) and have your ECE account number ready. All calls about the program should be directed to the Arbor Day Foundation at 1-855-234-3801.



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

**ALWAYS** have your underground utilities located three working days before digging to avoid making dangerous contact. If you damage buried equipment without calling for a locate, you will be financially responsible for the damage, as well as a fine up to \$2,000. Respect all markings and dig with care. It could save your life!

**(MN) Gopher State One Call**  
Call 811 or 800-252-1166  
or visit [gopherstateonecall.org](http://gopherstateonecall.org)

**(WI) Digger's Hotline**  
Call 811 or 800-242-8511  
or visit [diggershotline.com](http://diggershotline.com)

## **ECE FIBER - LOOKING AHEAD IN 2026**

As we head into year four of ECE Fiber construction, your cooperative continues expanding to bring reliable internet to the communities we serve. Each new mile of fiber we install helps close the digital divide by supporting community businesses, facilitating remote education, broadening telehealth access, and ensuring families stay connected.

Over the past three years, construction has spanned five counties, resulting in over 2,600 miles of fiber lines built. That progress has laid a strong foundation, and we're not slowing down. In 2026, we plan to continue our momentum by expanding into three additional counties in Wisconsin while also completing projects already underway in existing service areas.

If you'd like to follow our progress, visit the interactive map at [ecfiber.com](http://ecfiber.com) to see where service is currently available and which areas are coming next. Your co-op is looking forward to everything 2026 has in store. We're grateful for your continued support as we expand ECE Fiber's reach!



**LET'S CONNECT**

ECE Fiber now has a Facebook page! The page will serve as a hub for timely updates, project milestones, upcoming events, helpful tips, and more—all focused on connecting with the communities we serve.

Check it out and follow along. 



# District 1 Acclaimed Director

Since only one candidate has been nominated by the members in director District 1, no election will be held, and the candidate so nominated has been declared duly certified as co-op director by the ECE Credentials & Election Committee.



**Shelly Nault**  
Incumbent

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

I seek to serve on the East Central Energy Board because I care deeply about our cooperative's long-term strength. I value local control, transparency, and accountability, and I am committed to thoughtful, collaborative governance that balances reliability, affordability, and innovation for members.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

My healthcare career gives me a strong, member-focused perspective grounded in accountability, risk management, and balancing quality with cost. I value diverse viewpoints, clear communication, and ethical leadership, and I am committed to thoughtful governance that serves members and communities.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

Electric cooperatives like East Central Energy face major challenges ahead. They must maintain reliable service amid growing demand, aging infrastructure, and costly modernization, while keeping rates affordable. Policy changes and new technologies add complexity, requiring strong governance.

**Recent board/council experience:**

I am currently a Director on the ECE Board.

# District 3 Board of Director candidates

continued on pages 4-5



**Wayne Eller**  
Incumbent

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

As a 25-year ECE member and 10-year board member, I've seen employees consistently go the extra mile with courteous, professional service. ECE's positive culture and commitment to resolving concerns encourage my continued board service for fellow members to achieve successful results.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

Community skills focused with 10 years on the ECE board, including 2 terms as vice chair. Executive Director of ECM Habitat for Humanity for 22 years, 6 years on a homeless shelter board, Northwestern business degree, Army veteran, retired wildlife officer, and Salvation Army seasonal volunteer.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

Cybersecurity and emerging technologies like AI require ongoing attention to protect member data and support safe, reliable electricity. ECE leadership is developing strategies for EVs, broadband, technologies, and rising wholesale energy costs while protecting members' precious financial resources.

**Recent board/council experience:**

Served on budget, expense, audit, and bylaws committees. And I love to present ECE scholarships to graduating students.

**See page 5 for District 3 areas served**

**District 1 - Serving all or part of the following areas in Minnesota:**

*Arlone, Arna, Atkinson, Barry, Birch Creek, Blackhoof, Bremen, Bruno, Clear Creek, Clover, Danforth, Dell Grove, Finlayson, Fleming, Hinckley, Holyoke, Kerrick, Kettle River, New Dosey, Nickerson, Norman, Ogema, Park, Partridge, Pine Lake, Sandstone, Silver Brook, Sturgeon Lake, Twin Lakes, Wilma, Windemere, and Wrenshall, including the cities of Bruno, Denham, Finlayson, Hinckley, Kerrick, Rutledge, Sandstone, Sturgeon Lake, and Willow River.*

**Serving all or part of the following areas in Wisconsin:**

*Amnicon, Bennett, Blaine, Dairyland, Frog Creek, Gordon, Hawthorne, Highland, Lakeside, Minong, Oakland, Parkland, Solon Springs, Summit, Superior, and Wascott.*

# District 3 Board of Director candidates



**Adam Anthony Grobove III**

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

My passion for service led me to run for the board. I retired from a large police department, and owned a small business. I now serve as a township supervisor. Faith, family, and community are values I hold strong. Your voice is important, and I look forward to being responsive to you when elected.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

Honesty, integrity, great listening skills, skills to deal with difficult people, with crisis intervention experience, as well as energy to solve problems in an efficient and civil manner. I also have the passion and energy for learning new areas of expertise.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

I see working with and educating members on new and emerging technologies as a necessity as well as working with the business community on the profitability of technologies also. For instance, public education on AI and electric motor vehicle use and how it benefits the ECE membership and as owners.

**Recent board/council experience:**

As a Township Supervisor, I use my "people" skills and experience to deal with people on various situations for problem resolution concerning governance of a community. Some examples are conducting yearly budgets, employee performance reviews, and answering tax questions during evaluation meetings.



**Judith Kissner**

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

I was honored to represent District 3 on the ECE Member Resource Council and on the Credentials and Elections Committee. Those experiences and the knowledge gained have prepared me to take the next step as an effective board member working on behalf of our members.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

I am passionate about the mission of ECE and its cooperative business model which places the best interests of members above maximizing profits. I am a flexible thinker who enjoys listening and working with others in a group, respectful of differing opinions, yet willing to ask tough questions.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

Minnesota's ambitious goal of 100% carbon-free energy by 2040. Adapting to the new mix of energy sources and increasing demand for electricity, while strengthening our grid to ensure reliability, and addressing rising costs that may adversely affect our members will be the challenge and focus.

**Recent board/council experience:**

ECE Member Resource Council  
ECE Credentials & Election Committee  
Isanti County Law Library, Board Member  
Anoka Ramsey Community College Foundation, Board Member  
Isanti County Historical Society, Board Member  
MOMS Food Co-op (City Center Market), Board Member



## APPLIANCE REBATES

Whether you're in the market for a new refrigerator or simply want to upgrade to a new smart Wi-Fi thermostat, ECE is sure to have a rebate for you. Visit [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) > Programs & Rebates for a full list of residential appliance rebates.

# District 3 Board of Director candidates



**Rick Olseen**

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

As a forty-year member, I have watched ECE grow and innovate—from cutting back the trees by our power lines, to bringing broadband to our rural community. I would be honored to continue to bring reliable, dependable service and reasonable prices throughout the cooperative.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative’s Board of Directors?**

Over 30 years of leadership positions in the East Central community. Elected official—North Branch School Board, Chisago County Board and MN State Senate (served on Energy Committee). Staffer for Congressman Rick Nolan—covering much of ECE district. President of Let’s Go Fishing East Central.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

Demand for more electricity and expanding broadband are the biggest challenges while keeping costs as low as possible. Adapting to change as more power comes from renewables like wind and solar, and other new technologies.

**Recent board/council experience:**

President of the East Central Chapter of Let’s Go Fishing. In 2025 we took over 1,600 guests on 235 no-cost trips, led by 100 volunteers. Current Chisago County Citizen Rep of the East Central Regional Development Commission—economic growth, regional transportation, community development, energy.



**Tracy SanNicolas**

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

As a cooperative member, I value ECE’s role in providing reliable, affordable power. I bring experience and fresh perspective, with a strong interest in governance, long-term planning, and sharing cooperative knowledge to help represent and prepare our community for the future.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative’s Board of Directors?**

I bring a collaborative mindset, strong listening skills, and a commitment to good governance. I value strategic planning, financial stewardship, and clear communication, and I’m motivated to represent members thoughtfully while helping prepare the cooperative for future challenges.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

Balancing reliability and affordability while adapting to rapid changes in energy technology, regulation, and infrastructure needs. ECE must plan thoughtfully to invest for the future while keeping costs manageable for members.

**Recent board/council experience:**

East Central Energy Operation Round Up

**District 3 - Serving all or part of the following areas:**

*Amador, Chisago Lake, Fish Lake, Franconia, Lent, New Scandia, North Branch, Oxford, Shafer, and Sunrise, including the cities of Chisago City, Center City, Harris, Lindstrom, North Branch, Scandia, and Shafer.*



## WATER HEATING REBATES

Water heating can account for 25% of your energy use. Reduce your monthly water heating bills by selecting the appropriate water heater and by using energy-efficient water heating strategies. Rebates up to \$600 and 0% financing may be available. Call or visit our website for details and requirements.

# District 6 Board of Director candidates



**Charlie Bemis**

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

I want to gain a better understanding of how the energy sector works and, hopefully, do what I can to keep costs down currently. I also want to look for future opportunities that could help ECE members benefit from advancements in technology that will help their bottom line.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

I have been a small business owner for 25+ years. I have an accounting degree from St. Cloud State University with a focus on auditing and taxation. I think my background and bringing a slightly younger perspective to the board could be beneficial.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

I believe keeping energy costs down will undoubtedly be the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years. People are really hurting financially with the large jumps year after year from property taxes, insurance, energy bills, etc., all of which look to continue to rise significantly.

**Recent board/council experience:**

Milo Township Board, Supervisor, 2023-2024  
Milaca Golf Course Board of Directors,  
Director, 2003-2005



**Chad Erdmann**

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

I want to serve my community in a director capacity to assist in guiding future operations including power production and distribution while keeping costs to members affordable. The cost of basic service and cost of power continue to rise and need to be controlled so it's affordable for all patrons.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

With my experience in construction and agriculture, I have strong leadership capabilities and financial oversight. I am eager to serve on the ECE Board, guiding the direction of the co-op to ensure access to reliable and environmentally conscious electricity for current and future generations.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

The biggest challenges facing ECE in the future include hiring and retaining an efficient, experienced, and productive workforce while maintaining a safe and affordable commodity for patrons. The co-op also needs to remain vigilant in complying with ever-changing regulations and service demands.

**Recent board/council experience:**

Rice Contracting and Development Services Inc.,  
Vice President  
Benton Economic Partnership, Member  
Benton County Solid Waste Advisory Board,  
Board Member  
Benton County Board of Adjustments,  
Board Member



## HEATING AND COOLING REBATES

Combined with ECE's low off-peak rates, rebates up to \$1,000 make electric heating and cooling more affordable. Incentives, current rates, criteria, and guidelines for residential members can be found at [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) > Programs & Rebates or by calling 1-800-254-7944.

# District 6 Board of Director candidates



**Rick Stevens**

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

I want to help serve the cooperative's members with my knowledge, management and banking expertise to make the cooperative a strong and vibrant electric association.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

My 40+ years of banking have given me a well-rounded background to serve as a director. I have served on previous bank boards and know the behind-the-scenes requirements and decisions needed in order to assist management in running a successful business. I have insurance and real estate experience.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

Government regulations and fiscal financial hurdles.

**Recent board/council experience:**

Bank of Maple Plain, board advisory role  
Security State Bank of Maple Lake,  
Board Member and Chief Credit Officer



**Ron Volker**  
Incumbent

**Why do you want to serve as an ECE Director?**

My name is Ron Volker and I have been your East Central Energy District 6 Board member for the past four years. I would appreciate your vote for the next term.

**What strengths would you bring to the Cooperative's Board of Directors?**

My two goals are to keep your electricity rates as low as possible while striving to keep our cooperative financially healthy.

**What is the biggest challenge facing ECE in the coming years?**

I was a solo dairy farmer my entire life, and I served on many local agricultural boards. That experience gave me a down-to-earth perspective that I bring to ECE. I will continue to listen to all of our members as I make careful decisions that affect the co-op's bottom line.

**Recent board/council experience:**

Mille Lacs County American Dairy Assn., Treasurer  
Milo Township Board, Director

**District 6 - Serving all or part of the following areas:**

Alberta, Blue Hill, Buckman, Gilmanton, Glendorado, Graham, Granite Ledge, Greenbush, Haven, Langola, Mayhew Lake, Maywood, Milaca, Milo, Minden, Morrill, Palmer, Sauk Rapids, St. George, Santiago, and Watab, including the cities of Foley, Foreston, Gilman, Glendorado, Milaca, Pease, Rice, Ronneby, Royalton, Santiago, Sauk Rapids, and St. Cloud.



## ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGER REBATE

Already own an electric vehicle or thinking of buying one? We offer a \$400 rebate to install a Level 2 charger on either the time-of-use rate or off-peak storage rate. Rebate available for primary residence only. Contact our Energy Services Electricians at 1-800-254-7944 for details.



## Your vote. Your voice. Your cooperative.

Justin Jahnz, President/CEO

At this year's annual meeting, you will be asked to consider a proposed bylaw update. Bylaws are the foundational governing document of your co-op. They define membership, voting rights, and governance processes, while ensuring ECE operates fairly and consistently.

Unlike investor-owned utilities, cooperatives are not driven by outside shareholders. We are guided by the needs of the communities we serve. When you receive service from ECE, you are not just a passive customer at the end of the line. You're a member and an owner, with involvement in key decisions.

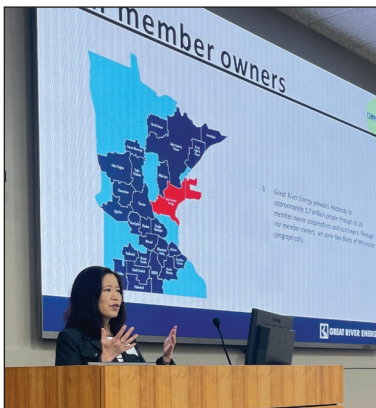
Membership carries both benefits and responsibilities. You have the right to vote on key matters (including this year's bylaw changes and director election), share in the cooperative's financial success

through capital credits, and help shape our long-term direction.

As the electric and fiber industries continue to evolve, it's important that ECE's governing documents remain clear, legally sound, and aligned with current operations. As a result, these proposed changes reflect our entrance into the fiber internet business, along with guidance from our national representatives. Over the last year, bylaw changes were carefully reviewed, discussed by your board of directors, and are ultimately being brought forward for your approval.

Please be sure to review the proposed changes and take part in the live, in-person vote at our annual meeting on April 23. Your engagement is what keeps this cooperative accountable, resilient, and built to last.

## Bringing member voices to the policy table



ECE's second annual Legislative Reception was held in Braham January 21, bringing together Representative Jeff Dotseth, Representative Nathan Nelson, and Senator Jason Rarick. Updates were shared by ECE, Great River Energy, and the Minnesota Rural Electric Association, with discussion focused on net metering, the nuclear moratorium, wildfire mitigation liability, data center growth, carbon free planning, and other major regional projects.

Read the full recap, including detailed policy issues and discussion highlights, on our website.



Email: [info@ecemn.com](mailto:info@ecemn.com)

East Central Energy  
PO Box 39, Braham, MN 55006

Braham Service Center  
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

1-800-254-7944

General business calls are answered Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

Emergency and outage calls are answered 24 hours a day.

The ECE Board of Directors meets monthly. Please call 1-800-254-7944 and ask to talk to our Executive Administrator to confirm meeting information. Monthly board meeting minutes and board operating policies can be found on SmartHub.

The Co-op Advantage newsletter is published by East Central Energy, your not-for-profit, member-owned, local electric cooperative.

ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Website:  
[eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com)



Email: [info@ecfiber.com](mailto:info@ecfiber.com)

Website: [ecfiber.com](http://ecfiber.com)





# East Central Energy Annual Meeting

## "Guided by Principles"

**April 23, 2026**

**Braham Event Center**

**655 8th St. SW, Braham, MN 55006**

**Registration opens 5 p.m. • Business meeting 6 p.m.**  
**Appetizers & prize drawings**

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*Members will vote on proposed Bylaw Amendments during the meeting.  
Visit [eastcentralenergy.com](http://eastcentralenergy.com) for proposed bylaw changes and annual meeting details.*

*ECE is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*