

January 31, 2019

Virginia General Assembly

Electric Cooperative Leaders Advocate for Two Key Bills

With skies threatening rain on a cold, blustery day, **more than 125** board members, CEOs and employees representing all **13 of Virginia's electric cooperatives** gathered in Richmond this past **Tuesday, Jan. 29** for **Legislative Day** activities sponsored by the **Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC)**. The Legislative Day event is held each year and gives electric cooperative leaders the opportunity to visit their state delegates and senators and **discuss pending legislation** of interest to VMD member systems.

Among pending bills discussed with legislators this year were **two of particular interest** to Virginia electric cooperatives. One bill is a **landmark net-metering compromise** developed through the "Rubin Group," which brings together representatives of utilities and of renewable energy and environmental interests, in particular the solar power industry. This bill would provide our member-consumers with increased access to renewables, while allowing **electric cooperatives to better recover and allocate their costs**. It's being sponsored on the Senate side by **Sen. Glen Sturtevant** (R-Richmond) and on the House side by **Del. Tim Hugo** (R-Centreville).



Southside Electric Cooperative CEO Jeff Edwards (r), Board Chairman Frank Bacon (2nd from left) and Board Member Kristie Martin-Wallace meet with House of Delegates Speaker Kirk Cox (R-Colonial Heights) on Co-op Legislative Day.



(At right) Del. Tony Wilt (R-Harrisonburg) visits with Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative Board Member Larry Howdyshell (l), SVEC Board Vice Chairman David Ferguson (c) and CEO Michael Hastings.

In addition, this same bill would provide Virginia cooperatives that **make their own power supply arrangements** with a mechanism to **recover the cost of acquiring generation resources**.

Both bills would benefit electric cooperatives across Virginia if they become law, and both **advanced unanimously** out of the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee on Monday evening, Jan. 28. During the cooperative visits on Tuesday, lawmakers expressed support for these two bills.



Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative CEO John Lee (l) and MEC Community Relations Coordinator Dustin Francis (r) are seen following a visit and discussion with Delegate Tommy Wright (R-Victoria).



Senator Jill Vogel (R-Warrenton) (2nd from left) meets with Rappahannock staff members Jeff Hinson(l) and Matt Faulconer (c), REC Board Chair Chris Shipe (r) and Shenandoah Valley Board Member Robbie Marchant (2nd from right).

“We had a very productive day on Capitol Hill in Richmond,” said **Andrew Vehorn**, director of governmental affairs for VMDAEC after the day’s activities. “As member-owned electric utilities, Virginia’s electric cooperatives have very strong support among our lawmakers. The Legislative Day visits allow co-op directors and staff to cultivate and reinforce the good working relationships that co-ops have always had with their legislators,” he concluded.

Thanks to all of the cooperative directors, CEOs and employees who made the trip to Richmond earlier this week to **represent the interests of the folks back home!**

-Report by Bill Sherrod, VMD Association Vice President of Communications & PR.

Legislative Day 2019

January Meetings Focus on Political Action

Over 125 cooperative board members and senior staff attended the **Association’s 2019 Legislative Day** activities on Monday, Jan. 28 and Tuesday, Jan. 29. The **Governmental Affairs Committee** and **VMD Board meetings** were held on Monday at the Omni Richmond, which is also where the group breakfast was held on Tuesday preceding visits of attendees with their delegates and senators.

During Monday’s Governmental Affairs Committee meeting, member system leaders focused on the **large array of bills** this session that **would or may affect electric cooperatives**. The primary focus of the committee’s discussions centered on the two bills that Virginia’s electric cooperatives are seeking to advance during this year’s session. **(Both bills are summarized in the previous story in this issue.)** In addition to the cooperative net-metering and regulatory-efficiency bills, the committee mapped out its support or opposition to several dozen other bills and reviewed a list of bills being monitored.

The Association Board meeting later that day featured **operational highlights of 2018**, with much of the focus on the **construction last year** of the **Association’s Training Center in Palmyra**. VMD Association **CEO Richard Johnstone** reported that the training center had been built **within budget** and only slightly behind schedule, the latter due entirely to the **record rainfall last year** that cost the construction crews several weeks of time. Richard noted that the center would be “welcoming our first students there” during the **second week of February**, and that “a gala dedication ceremony” was being planned for **late May**.



(Center) Senator Mark Peake (R-Lynchburg) meets with Central Virginia representatives (l-r) Galen Creekmore, Gloria Vest, Melissa Gay and Roberta Harlowe.

The Association’s annual **Legislative Day** kicked off on **Tuesday morning** with Association **Board Chairman Herbert Patrick** welcoming about 125 attendees at a group breakfast at the Omni. After a hearty country-style buffet breakfast, renowned **political analyst Dr. Bob Holsworth** provided cooperative leaders with his views on the **changing landscape of Virginia politics**, implications on the General Assembly of a **contested redistricting plan**, and the dynamics affecting the **2020 Presidential race**, which he wryly noted, “**is already well underway.**” He answered numerous questions from attendees following his remarks, which have become an annual favorite during the Association’s Legislative Day.



Northern Neck CEO Greg White discusses co-op legislative priorities with Del. Margaret Ransone (R-Kinsale). Photo by Jay Garner.

After Dr. Holsworth’s remarks, Virginia ACRE Board Chairman, **Dr. Frank Bacon** of Southside Electric Cooperative, discussed the **importance of political involvement** and asked Association Chief Operating Officer **Brian Mosier** to review Virginia ACRE’s financial position. Brian reported that the ACRE program in the three states, at both state and federal levels, had **set a record in 2018 for total dollars raised**. Each system was then presented with a framed certificate outlining its ACRE achievements last year, and Brian reported that **13 VMD member cooperatives** last year achieved a **100% level of Board participation in ACRE**. He then announced that special recognition was being given to **Rappahannock Electric Cooperative** for having received the **highest amount of ACRE contributions** last year, and to **Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative** for having had the **fastest-growing ACRE campaign**.

The ACRE awards program culminated with **Richard Johnstone** announcing that **Community Electric Cooperative** was the **winner of the 2018 Virginia ACRE Cup** for having raised **more dollars per employee** than any other system in the Commonwealth, which included having **every CEC employee** joining ACRE at the **Century Club level**. **CEO Steve Harmon** and **Board Chair Jeannette Everett** accepted the award on behalf of Community.

Association Director of Governmental Affairs, **Andrew Vehorn**, then wrapped up the breakfast by providing attendees with a **legislative update**, including a review of the information sheets that cooperative representatives distributed later that morning during their legislative visits.

For more information on the Association’s Legislative Day activities, be sure to visit *Cooperative Living* magazine’s Facebook page to **view and share a video summary of the day’s events**.

-Report by Brian Mosier, VMD Association COO.



Accepting the Virginia ACRE Cup for its outstanding 2018 campaign are Community Electric Cooperative Board Chair Jeannette Everett and CEO Steve Harmon, seen with Virginia ACRE Board Chairman Dr. Frank Bacon (l) and VMD Association CEO Richard Johnstone (r).

Legislative Involvement

Virginia Agribusiness Banquet Draws Elected Officials, Electric Co-op Leaders

On Thursday evening, Jan. 10, the **Virginia Agribusiness Council** held its annual banquet, which draws almost 1,000 attendees including numerous **delegates, senators, agency** officials and **Gov. Ralph Northam** and **Lt. Gov. Justin Fairfax**. Over **100 electric co-op leaders** were in attendance, constituting the largest single group represented at the banquet.



Gov. Ralph Northam (second from left) shares a light moment with (from left) A&N Director Jim Belote, Prince George’s Renee Chapline, Prince George Director Herbert Patrick’s wife Doris Patrick, Craig-Botetourt CEO Shawn Hildebrand and Central Virginia’s Galen Creekmore.



Sen. Rosalyn Dance (D-Petersburg) was honored at the Virginia Agribusiness Banquet for her positive impact on Virginia agriculture. Shown after Sen. Dance (2nd from right) received the honor are (from left) Doris Patrick, Prince George Director Denya Hankerson and Prince George Secretary/Treasurer Herbert Patrick, who is the VMD Association Board Chairman.



Craig-Botetourt Electric Cooperative Director James Huffman (left) speaks with Del. Terry Austin (R-Buchanan) during the 2019 Virginia Agribusiness Banquet.



NOVEC President and CEO Stan Feuerberg (r) visits prior to the Virginia Agribusiness Banquet with Craig-Botetourt CEO Shawn Hildebrand.

Eastern Shore's Wayde Fowler Earns Electric Cooperative Unsung Virginian Award

Wayde N. Fowler of Onancock has received the 2019 **Unsung Virginian Award**, presented by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC).

In its 51st year as a statewide honor, the **Unsung Virginian Award** recognizes outstanding citizens for services rendered to the Commonwealth **without thought of personal gain**.

Wayde, a longtime Elks member and resident of Virginia's Eastern Shore, received the award in a **surprise ceremony** held during a fundraising dinner at the **Onancock Elks Lodge** Saturday night, Jan. 26. He is a member of **A&N Electric Cooperative**, which serves all of Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Wayde was nominated for the 2019 Unsung Virginian Award by **Charles Parks**, a neighbor and fellow Elks Lodge member who noted that "Mr. Fowler selflessly donates countless hours in the Elks fundraising for families or persons in need and has been the driving force behind a variety of fund-raising efforts that have enabled the Onancock Elks to donate **more than \$100,000 per year** back to local Eastern Shore families and organizations."

Mr. Parks added, "He is a very humble person, but the impact he has had on the Eastern Shore is immeasurable."

As he presented Wayde with the Unsung Virginian Award, VMDAEC President & CEO **Richard Johnstone** said, "This award has a long, distinguished history dating back to 1968. Wayde is richly deserving of this honor and he joins a long list of outstanding Virginians who have quietly but effectively made a very positive difference in the lives of their communities and the Commonwealth as a whole."

On hand for the surprise award presentation were **Belvin "Butch" Williamson, Jr.**, president and CEO of A&N Electric Cooperative, as well as A&N directors **Addison W. Nottingham, Jr.**, **Robert L. Nock** and **E. Garrison Drummond**. Speaking on behalf of A&N Electric Cooperative, Butch said, "We're very excited that Wayde won the Unsung Virginian Award this year. Wayde is one of those treasures you find in every community. We're proud of him, and proud of what he does for the community. He is very much deserving of this high honor."

VMDAEC Board Chairman **Herbert Patrick** added, "Mr. Fowler embodies the 7th cooperative principle of 'concern for community.' His selfless contributions to improving life on the Eastern Shore through his work with the Elks define the very spirit of this award made on behalf of Virginia's electric cooperatives."

After receiving the award, Wayde noted that he was "really surprised and honored" by the award. He noted that credit should go to the Onancock Elks for the good work that the organization does on behalf of the community, including support for organizations such as a local Boy Scout troop and for individuals who have had **health or other challenges**.

-Report by Bill Sherrod, VMD Association VP of Communications & PR.



Under the watchful eye of the club's namesake, Wayde N. Fowler of Onancock received the 2019 Unsung Virginian Award in a surprise presentation during an Onancock Elks Lodge fundraiser Jan. 26. The award, in its 51st year, is presented by the Virginia, Maryland & Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives (VMDAEC). Wayde is a member of the Onancock Elks Lodge and A&N Electric Cooperative (ANEC). Shown above are (from left) Addison W. Nottingham, Jr., chairman of the ANEC board of directors; Richard G. Johnstone, Jr., CEO of VMDAEC; Herbert R. Patrick, chairman of the VMDAEC board of directors; Wayde N. Fowler, 2019 Unsung Virginian; F. Bob Jones, vice chairman of the VMDAEC board of directors; Belvin "Butch" Williamson, Jr., president and CEO of ANEC; E. Garrison Drummond, member of the ANEC board of directors; and Robert L. Nock, member of the ANEC board of directors.

Mecklenburg Welcomes Dustin Francis

All **6 feet 7 inches** of **Dustin Francis** started employment with **Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative** on **November 30** as **community relations coordinator**. He will be **creating and maintaining marketing**, demand-side energy and conservation programs, developing the key accounts program, and **representing MEC in governmental, community and professional organizations**. He will also be seeking out **economic development** opportunities and ways to **promote Mecklenburg’s positive role in the community** as well as providing articles for MEC’s local *Cooperative Living* pages.

For the **past seven years** he has been employed with the **Halifax County Sheriff’s Office** where he served as **road deputy** and **crime prevention officer**. He enjoyed making presentations on safety and other topics to various civic organizations, senior citizen groups and classroom students.

Dustin, who earned a degree from **Liberty University** in **Lynchburg**, also serves his community as **assistant pastor** at **Dan River Baptist Church in South Boston, Virginia**. He and his wife, Liz, live in Nathalie and have two sons, Gerald, age 3 and Joey, age 1.

Welcome to the VMD co-op family Dustin!



Dustin Francis

Daisy Stone Retires from Community



Community CEO Steve Harmon and Jennie Barrett (r), VP of Finance and Accounting, pose with Daisy Stone on the day of her retirement party.

Daisy Stone recently retired from the **Accounting and Finance Department** of **Community Electric Cooperative (CEC)**. Daisy started her tenure with Community in **1995** as a **custodian**, transitioned to a **member service representative**, and ultimately advanced to an **accountant** role, where she remained until her **retirement**.

Steve Harmon, president & CEO, said “I want to express my deep appreciation for the opportunity to work alongside and benefit from the talent and dedication that Daisy has shown to Community Electric Cooperative. We have been honored and humbled by having her as part of our team for so long. Along with the entire Board of Directors and our management staff, we’d like to wish Daisy a happy and healthy retirement.”

“Daisy has exemplified the cooperative spirit in the many positions she has worked at CEC. She is an inspiration, demonstrated by her eagerness to learn and to teach, having a positive attitude, and promoting an overall team effort. We will miss Daisy as a wonderful employee and as a good friend. CEC wishes her all the best,” said **Jennie Barrett**, VP of Finance and Accounting.

Best wishes for a long, happy retirement Daisy!

Kirk Johnson Named Senior VP at ODEC

Old Dominion Electric Cooperative (ODEC) has named **Kirk Johnson** as **senior vice president of member engagement** effective **February 25, 2019**. Kirk served for years as the **senior vice president of government relations** at the **National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA)**, where he was responsible for **leading its legislative and regulatory advocacy** efforts before **Congress** and **federal agencies**. He also headed up **NRECA's grassroots program, coalition development, and political action committee**.

"We're **very excited** that Kirk is **joining the ODEC team**," said **Marcus Harris, ODEC president and CEO**, "He has an **outstanding reputation** throughout the industry and will be a **fantastic asset** as we plan for our member-owners' immediate needs and strategize for the future."

As senior vice president of member engagement at ODEC, Kirk will lead the teams responsible for the cooperative's **internal and external communications, legislative strategies**, and will also **proactively engage** with members on **strategic issues**. He brings more than a **quarter-century of energy policy, advocacy, and association leadership experience** to ODEC.



Kirk Johnson

Kirk said, "I am thrilled to be joining the **terrific team** at ODEC and look forward to **making a difference** in the lives of people served by electric co-ops on a more local level."

Personals

News About Members of the VMD Cooperative Family

- ❖ We are very sad to report the passing on Jan. 23 of **James Ivan Howdyshell**, 88, of Bridgewater. His brother, **Larry Howdyshell** is a Board member at Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative, former Board Chair at the Association and long-time Chair of the Association's Governmental Affairs Committee. Notes of sympathy may be sent to Larry at 697 Timber Ridge Road, Mount Solon, VA 22843.

Help Us Keep You Informed!



If you have story ideas, news or information of interest and benefit to other members of the electric cooperative community in our three-state area, please contact

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