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**FEBRUARY
2026**

Embodying American Legion



PHOTO BY NDARECKENNEDY DELAP

A LIFE OF SERVICE:

Dobitz embodies American Legion

BY SAMANTHA VANGNESS

The American Legion was founded in 1919 by Congress as an organization which focuses on providing service to U.S. military veterans, service members and their communities.

February is celebrated as Americanism Month by the American Legion. The American Legion values civic participation, selfless service to community, integrity and respect to personal and family values. A shining example of someone who embodies these values is Bowman resident Ken Dobitz.

Lessons lasting a lifetime

Dobitz and his 14 siblings were raised by their parents on a dairy farm near New England. After attending Assumption College in Richardson for one year, Dobitz transferred to the University of Providence in Great Falls, Mont. While in Montana, he met and married Dee.

In 1973, Ken enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and was stationed at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls, where he worked on minuteman missiles. Upon completing his enlistment in 1979, Ken returned to New England with his family. He joined American Legion Post 66 in New England shortly after his return.

"It's important to me to honor those who have passed with a ceremony at their gravesite," Ken says. "It was my biggest focus at the time."

In the spring of 1980, Ken began his career as an apprentice lineworker for Slope Electric Cooperative. Veterans and lineworkers both share a deep sense of duty and answer the call when needed. Ken enjoyed being employed by the cooperative. He worked for 12 years out of the New England office and 25 years from the Bowman outpost, from which he retired in 2017.

Commitment to community

Retirement for Ken was an opportunity to commit his life to serving others in a new capacity.

"Before I retired, I knew what I was doing every day, getting up and going to work," Ken says.

He now finds himself busy in the best way, lending a helping hand to the community of Bowman through various events and programs.

Ken volunteers with Best Friends Mentoring Program as a mentor for local youth; assists with Hope and Healing, an equine therapy program; presides over the senior center and its card games; officiates sporting events; serves on his township board and



Ken Dobitz, Wayne Narum and Cal Klewin
represented southwestern North Dakota on the
Western ND Honor flight in September.

PHOTOS BY NDAREC/KENNEDY DELAP

more. But Ken has been loyal to one particular organization for 47 years – the American Legion.

As a member of the American Legion, Ken has been able to advocate for veterans and service members in the southwestern North Dakota communities. There are four American Legions in the area, including Bowman Post 48, New England Post 66, Scranton Post 151 and Rhame Post 188. Ken is currently a commander for the Bowman post. Over the years, he has focused on the community aspect the American Legion

"Being involved doesn't have to be doing everything at once. It can simply start with a small gesture, which can lead to having a big impact on someone else in your community. There are little things we can do in our community. We don't have to go far to help out"

provides for veterans and service members.

"I'm committed to seeing that veterans receive the benefits that they earned as well as provide them with a community of their fellow vets," Ken says.

His wife, Dee, says he doesn't have trouble visiting with people and he can make friends with anyone, which Ken admits is true. He thinks keeping in touch with other veterans is one of the most important aspects of their monthly meetings.

"We don't necessarily need a meeting every month, but we do need to see each other and visit a bit. The half hour or 45 minutes after the meeting is very important, as is checking in on each other's lives," Ken says.

One of the initiatives Ken has worked on through his local post is increased transit services for veterans. Southwest Transit offers rides to veterans for appointments, but Ken and others thought it should be expanded. Now the American Legions in southwestern North Dakota are working to offer rides to veterans to other locations, including grocery stores, the post office or to run errands in town.

N.D. Honor Flight

Recently through the American Legion, Ken had the opportunity to participate in the Western ND Honor Flight to Washington, D.C., an experience that brought a lot of emotion to Ken.

He wasn't expecting to go, but he was proud to be a part of the recent flight in September. He credits the Western ND Honor Flight organization, its amazing volunteers and all the incredibly generous donors who make this trip possible for so many veterans.

During the two-day trip, he was able to connect with other veterans from western North Dakota, including Wayne Narum and Cal Klewin. Additionally, Gerald Jahner and Paul Schwartz from Hettinger County took part in the recent flight.

Ken was blown away by the meticulous detail that went into every part of the trip, including the warm welcome they received when landing in



Ken Dobitz embraces a Western ND Honor Flight volunteer at the conclusion of the trip.

Virginia, to the mail call and especially their welcome home in Bismarck.

He is urging other veterans to apply for the Honor Flight experience.

"It's an experience that you'll never forget," Ken says.

Anyone who meets him can tell Ken has a giving heart. He credits his parents for leading by example, as they were heavily involved in the New England community.

"I've been given a lot, and sharing that is easy to do. Being involved doesn't have to be doing everything at once. It can simply start with a small gesture, which can lead to having a big impact on someone else in your community. There are little things we can do in our community. We don't have to go far to help out," he says.

Ken hopes through his service to Bowman, his county and the members of Slope Electric, he inspires others to get involved.

"I hope it encourages someone to get involved. Say hi to a neighbor. Don't just walk by," Ken says. ■

MANAGER'S MESSAGE: **We want your feedback**



Jason Bentz

Co-General Manager/CEO

Instructions for both options will be included. Whether you choose to respond by mail or online, your voice will be heard, and you will not receive a follow-up phone call asking for survey participation.

Those who participate in the survey and provide their name will be entered in a drawing to win two Medora Musical tickets.

The short survey gives you the opportunity to tell us how we're doing and where we can improve. The survey only takes a few minutes, but the impact is

At Slope Electric Cooperative, everything we do begins with you, our members. Your feedback helps shape the way we serve you and plan for the future. That's why we're inviting you to take part in our member satisfaction survey.

We encourage you to take a few minutes to complete the survey, which will be included in your February billing statement. If you prefer, you can also complete it online.

long-lasting. We use this data to guide improvements in areas that matter most to you. It also helps us make smart, member-focused decisions.

One example of how your feedback makes a difference is based on the 2024 member survey. We have implemented a newsletter, which was indicated as a preferred method of communication from our membership.

We also want to remind you the survey also includes four questions that help us measure our performance through the American Customer Satisfaction Index, which is used across the industry as a benchmark for member experiences.

The better we understand your needs, the better we can serve you, not just today, but in the years ahead. We truly value your time and your input. By sharing your thoughts, you're helping us shape the future of our service. ■



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU, OUR MEMBERS!

Your voice, your impact! Participate in our member satisfaction survey and play a vital role in shaping the future of our services. Complete the survey by filling out the paper copy included with your February bill, visit our website, slopeelectric.coop, or scan the QR code.

**Paper and online surveys will be accepted
through March 1.**



MESSAGE FROM MEMBER SERVICES: **Nominating and resolution information available**



Brooke Waltner

Chief of Staff/Manager
of Member Relations

As we prepare for our 2026 annual meeting, we would like to share information about the board positions up for election within Slope Electric Cooperative.

At the 2026 annual meeting, the following positions will be elected:

- District 1, currently held by Angela Carlson, Hettinger County
- District 1, currently held by Charlotte Meier, Hettinger County
- District 2, currently held by Steve Wegner, Adams County

The bylaws of Slope Electric Cooperative state in Article IV, Section 4, directors can be nominated one of two ways:

1. Through the Nominating Committee. The committee's first meeting was held Jan. 20 to review procedures, responsibilities and qualifications for directorship. The second meeting will be held Feb. 26 to nominate candidates and to approve resolutions.
2. Members can also be nominated by filing a petition with 15 signatures. Filing must be done 90 days prior

to the annual meeting on June 4 and posted at the office of Slope Electric.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity or know someone who might be a perfect fit, we invite you to attend our upcoming membership appreciation event from 4:30-6:30 p.m. on Feb. 26 in Reeder. This event will provide an excellent platform to meet with our current board of directors, ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of the responsibilities and expectations associated with serving on the board.

Your engagement and participation are vital to the success and representation of all communities within Slope Electric. Join us in making an impactful difference for our cooperative and community.

For more details or inquiries, please contact Brooke Waltner at 701-579-4191, the Nominating Committee or current board directors. ■

Nominating Committee

Hayden Evans, Lemmon
Wendy Bartholomay, Bowman
Kevin Remington, Regent
Lynn Homelvig, Amidon
Gerald Lambourn, Bowman
Lane Miller, Hettinger
Dan Maychrzak, Scranton
Barbara Farber, Reeder

Join us MEMBER APPRECIATION OPEN HOUSE

Come enjoy a delicious meal on behalf of Slope Electric and visit with our board of directors, CEOs and staff as well as other members. Members will also receive a FREE gift.

 **4:30- 6:30 P.M. ON FEB. 26**

 **DAKOTA PRAIRIE ENRICHMENT CENTER, REEDER**



MESSAGE FROM OPERATIONS: **Navigating rising infrastructure costs**



Andrew Sonsalla
Operations Manager

to order and secure materials for upcoming projects. Along with cooperatives across the country, Slope Electric has not been excluded from the supply chain and material challenges. For instance, the cost of transformers and regulators has increased 30% in the last three years, and lead times were anywhere from one to three years. Uncertainty in the supply chain causes the operations team to step back and reevaluate projects to ensure time and money are

The past five years have been a period of rising costs for everyone, including the electric utility industry. Increased costs are as a result of soaring demand for electricity, government regulations, supply chain challenges and increased labor costs. The impact beyond increased infrastructure costs includes more unpredictable timelines.

Slope Electric Cooperative uses a multi-year work plan, which allows for ample time

efficiently utilized.

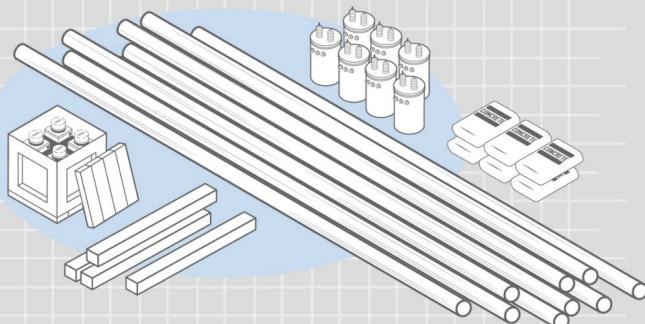
Impacts can be seen all the way down to equipment and materials used by crews every day. Bucket trucks have seen around a 50% price increase since 2021 with lead times of one and a half to three years is not unusual. The price tag on utility poles have increased around 60% over the last five years. Underground cable and wire prices have fluctuated over the years, and lead times are expected to be six to seven months.

Due to the increase in price and lead times, we know it is important to plan and adapt to changes. Thankfully, we have an effective team of operations personnel and engineers who work efficiently to ensure co-op projects continue, so we can deliver reliable electric services to our members.

We understand prices for essentially everything are rising, which puts a strain on everyone. As Slope Electric navigates rising industry costs, we work closely with our CEO/Co-General Managers and board of directors to explore ways to manage costs for you, our members, while ensuring the reliability of your electric service. ■

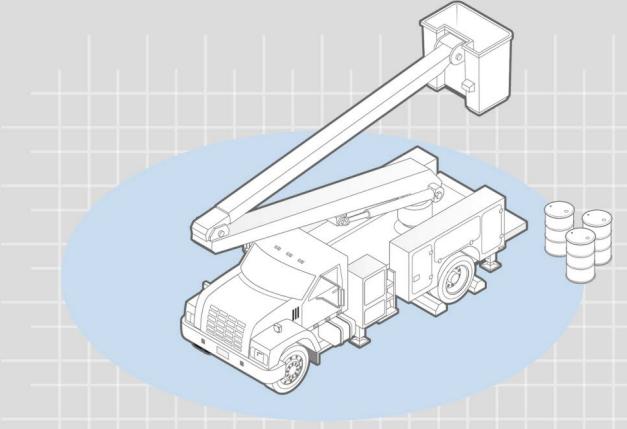
Infrastructure Costs

Utility poles (wood, steel, composite)	+25-40%
Crossarms & braces (steel/wood)	+20-35%
Conductor wire (aluminum/copper)	+30-50%
Transformers	+70-100%
Grain-oriented electrical steel	+80-100%
Circuit breakers/reclosers	+20-35%



Fleet Costs

Light trucks	+25-40%
Bucket trucks, digger derricks	+20-50%
Fuel costs (especially diesel)	+20-30%
Maintenance	+15-25%



SAFETY STARTS WITH ME:

Snow removal around electrical equipment



Jon Lawhead

Journeyman Lineworker

near snow removal sites such as homes, shops and businesses.

"Keeping areas like your meter and pad-mounted transformers on your property clear of snow and ice helps us act quicker in the event of an outage," says Jon Lawhead, journeymen lineworker. "But it is important to do so safely."

Here are a few tips to keep in mind this winter as you remove snow:

Winter is here. As wind, snow and ice conditions continue, members break out their shovels and snowblowers once again. While removing snow and ice, it is important to keep any electrical equipment Slope Electric Cooperative may have on or near your property in mind.

Equipment, such as meters, pad-mounted transformers, commonly known as the big green box, or even overhead lines, are typically located

- **Locate electrical equipment:** Before a heavy snowfall, mark the location of electrical equipment with flags to easily see it when removing snow.
- **Be gentle when clearing snow:** Always use a shovel to clear snow around electrical equipment. Never use a snowblower or plow directly against it.
- **Maintain clearance:** Ensure a safe distance is carefully cleared around pad-mounted transformers, which is typically at least 10 feet in front and 3 feet on the sides.
- **Be aware of overhead lines:** Be mindful of overhead power lines, especially when removing snow from roofs. Never attempt to remove ice from power lines.
- **Report damage:** If you notice any damage to electrical equipment due to snow removal, contact our office as soon as possible. Do not try and fix the damage yourself.

Keeping these tips in mind will help Slope Electric ensure safe and reliable electrical services continue to power your homes and businesses. Please remember, if you notice any damage to electrical equipment, contact our office as soon as possible at 800-559-4191. ■

**JOIN SLOPE ELECTRIC FOR THE
CAREER TOUR JUNE 24-25**

**FROM COAL MINES TO POWER PLANTS AND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
DIVE INTO THE HEART OF NORTH DAKOTA'S ENERGY SECTOR**

Limited spots available. Learn more by scanning the QR code or visiting: www.slopeelectric.coop.

The application deadline is May 1.

**SCAN
ME** 



SLOPE ELECTRIC BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS NOV. 20, 2025

The regular meeting of the board of directors of Slope Electric Cooperative, was held on Nov. 20 at the cooperative's office in New England. President Angela Carlson called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. A quorum was present. Slope Electric's General Counsel Jennifer Grosz was appointed recorder for the meeting. Also present were Slope Electric's co-General Managers/CEOs Travis Kupper and Jason Bentz, Chief Financial Officer Alex Craigmire, Chief of Staff/Member Relations Manager Brooke Waltner, Operations Manager Andrew Sonsalla and Assistant Board Liaison Samantha Fischer.

Consent agenda: Amendments were proposed to the consent agenda. The consent agenda was approved as amended.

Strategic items: Bentz and Kupper presented the co-general managers' report, which included updates on the strategic plan, Upper Missouri Power Cooperative and other items. Several additional Basin Electric reports and board documents were available for review.

Department reports: Craigmire provided a financial report, which included an executive summary

and other items. Sonsalla provided an operations report that included updates on current crew projects, such as tree trimming, line maintenance, underground locates and other related tasks. Waltner provided a member relations report on cooperative programs and communications. Waltner also provided a chief of staff report, which included staff training, job openings and project progress. Chief Information Officer Charlie Dunbar provided a written information technology report. Grosz provided a legal counsel report on the status of projects.

Action items: The board reviewed and resolved various items.

Discussion/general information: The board discussed the preliminary operating budget, bylaw amendments, director training and other items.

Executive session: The board entered an executive session during the meeting.

The meeting concluded with adjournment. Secretary Charlotte Meier certified the accuracy of the minutes.

Next meeting date: The next meeting is at 1 p.m. on Feb. 26 in Reeder. ■



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SLOPE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Angela Carlson, President
Anthony Larson, Vice President
Charlotte Meier, Secretary
Chip HJ Fischer, Treasurer
Ryan Jacobson, Director
Kevin Thompson, Director
Cheryl Van Daele, Director
Steven Wegner, Director

MANAGEMENT

Jason Bentz
CO-GM/CEO

Travis Kupper
CO-GM/CEO

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