



La Plata Electric Association, Inc.

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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# NEWS

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## **Candidates qualified for LPEA's 2021 director elections**

DURANGO, Colo. – The La Plata Electric Association's (LPEA) independent Election Supervisory Committee has qualified candidates for the cooperative's 2021 director elections. LPEA has four director districts, established geographically. LPEA directors serve rotating three-year terms, which are staggered so the term of one director from each district expires each year.

Qualified candidates for the 2021 director elections are as follows:

- District 1, Archuleta County: Incumbent Kirsten Skeeahan is being challenged by new candidate Veronica Medina.
- District 2, South and West La Plata County: Incumbent Kohler McInnis is being challenged by new candidate Mark Walser.
- District 3, City of Durango: Two new candidates, Ted Compton and Bill Waters, are vying to fill the seat to be vacated by retiring director Britt Bassett.
- District 4, North and East La Plata County: Incumbent Tim Wheeler is being challenged by new candidate John Purser.

In addition to the director elections, LPEA's Board of Directors has proposed, and recommends adoption of, two amendments to LPEA's Bylaws by vote of the membership in 2021. Both amendments were proposed amidst COVID-19 and aim to modernize LPEA's Bylaws to conform with current Colorado law on virtual meetings as may be necessary to conduct the business of the cooperative.

Ballots will be mailed to LPEA members in mid-May. To be counted, ballots must be received no later than 4 p.m. on Wednesday June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Ballots may be mailed using the provided envelope, or via drop box. Detailed submission instructions will be included in the ballots.

Given COVID-19 concerns, election results will be confirmed at a partial, virtual annual meeting on Thursday June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. Participants must pre-register for this meeting at <https://lpea.coop/annual-meeting>. Given this, there will NOT be an option to submit ballots the day of the LPEA Annual Meeting, as is done when the meeting is held live. The 2021 LPEA Annual Meeting will be scheduled at a later date when, and if, it is safe to do so.

Director candidate statements (as submitted by candidates):

Kirsten Skeehan - Incumbent candidate for District 1

Throughout 22 years in Pagosa Springs I have served our community on the boards of LPEA and Archuleta County Housing Authority. You may know me as co-owner of Pagosa Baking Company, but in addition to being a baker and small business owner, I have a deep technical background. I earned a BS from the Naval Academy and worked for Naval Intelligence on information systems and worldwide secure communications. Post Navy, I earned an MBA from George Washington and worked in operations and project management. My favorite projects included major construction, connecting campuses via fiber, and managing operations. The age of relying on single electricity sources is past. Increasing pressure on the grid by weather, aging infrastructure, and increased complexity requires complex and nuanced solutions. We need to diversify—and we need experienced leadership to ensure we diversify in smart, secure, and affordable ways. As a proud geek and data enthusiast, I use research and analysis to inform decisions in my business and at LPEA. In my time on the board, I've reached out to regional electrical coops to learn from others' successes and failures. Above all, I never lose sight of how your livelihood and daily life depends on electricity in the right place, at the right time, and at the right price. As LPEA members we are responsible to and for each other. As your director, I'll continue to work together with you to ensure we have the RELIABLE, SECURE, AFFORDABLE energy we need now and in the future.

Veronica Medina - New candidate for District 1

I am a candidate for the LPEA Board of Directors, District 1 representing Archuleta County. I have lived in Pagosa Springs for 7 years and I have been very involved in my community. My stepfather was born and raised in Archuleta County, with so much family here I feel I must stand up for Archuleta County. I have a master's in business administration and am currently a realtor licensed in Colorado as well as Nevada. I am committed to maintaining our quality of life in Archuleta County and that especially includes the quality of service we have come to expect from LPEA. In these days of uncertainty, it is essential that LPEA continues to maintain its high level of reliable service, to upgrade and maintain our grid system, and to provide affordable electric rates for all 40,000 LPEA members, especially the elderly, our families on fixed incomes, and those lower income residents. I feel strongly that members should have the opportunity to vote on the decision to maintain the Tri-State contract or to replace their source of power with alternative sources of energy. I will fight to keep rates low and to keep Archuleta County informed of what is happening in LPEA.

Kohler McInnis - Incumbent candidate for District 2

As the District 2 incumbent I stand strong for you, the members of LPEA and look forward to collaborating with my colleagues to lead LPEA forward. The future is bright; we have positioned ourselves for success. As a Director on the LPEA Board my actions will continue to be focused on: Keeping your electric bill as low as possible. Lower rates provide you more freedom to live a quality life. Electricity is a necessity, not a luxury; Knowing your health, safety, and security are dependent upon reliable electric power when you need it, 24/7. This includes everything you do: heating & cooling, communicating, food preparation, and more; Providing dependable power, which requires oversight of capital project budgets, power supply contracts, and operational needs; Using common sense to address the challenges and opportunities of the remarkable changes facing the electric power industry. This approach provides the ability to continue improving your local electric service; Expanding and improving current technologies which will lead to a cleaner environment, higher efficiency, and reduced costs; Staying engaged in research and strategy by working with the staff, directors, and members to make sustainable decisions about LPEA's future power supply; Working to keep LPEA financially strong and viable and returning your Capital Credits on a timely basis. I would appreciate your vote and look forward

to serving another term representing District 2 on the Board of Directors of LPEA. Thank you for your support.

Mark Walser - New candidate for District 2

As a teacher, I always have my eyes on the future. I'm proud to call La Plata County home, and I'm committed to defending and improving our way of life for future generations. The most important part of our co-op is you - the member. I am committed to helping our members easily and effectively engage with our co-op. Together, our community can thrive during its transition towards a more local, resilient, and cleaner energy distribution system. I value the freedom that comes from hard work and self-sufficiency. Unfortunately, these values aren't always upheld by our electric co-op. Unfortunately, LPEA is currently hamstrung by a restrictive contract with Tri-State Generation, which forces members to buy overpriced electricity from out of state. I support the board's current efforts to review this contract. As your LPEA Director, I will work to provide competitive rates, reliable electricity, and a clear vision for the future. Over the course of my career as an educator, I have demonstrated a thoughtful and analytical approach to leadership. I earned my master's degree from Fort Lewis College, and I honed my public policy skills as a Bill Archer Fellow in Washington DC. During Durango School District 9-R negotiations, I represented teachers while finding compromise as a trusted negotiator. I will bring these skills and experiences to LPEA in order to generate common-ground, common-sense solutions. I'm running to build a better future for all LPEA members. I look forward to the opportunity to serve you in this important job.

Ted Compton - New candidate for District 3

Reliability. Affordability. Sustainability. If these three things are important to you, please support me, Ted Compton, for the LPEA Board of Directors. I'm a career engineer with the skills and experience to provide oversight and ensure that our families never wake up to an energy crisis like Texas experienced this year. I am a committed community member that knows Durango needs to stay affordable with low-cost energy. Most importantly, I know we can achieve these things while protecting the beautiful environment that is essential to our local way of life. My family has five generations of history in La Plata County. I graduated from DHS as valedictorian in 1988. After obtaining a pair of engineering degrees from Stanford University, I came home to Durango to work, raise a family, and contribute to the community. My love of our town means I step up and volunteer when needed. This includes nine years on the board of La Plata Open Space Conservancy, seven years on the board of FastTrack Communications, and four years as a judge for Colorado's Advanced Industry Grants bringing over \$2M in state grant money into our region for small businesses. At this critical time, I am needed on the LPEA board, and I want to work for you. I will use my skills, education, experience, and broad community support to make the decisions needed to provide LPEA members with reliable and sustainable electricity at the lowest cost in Colorado. Power Ahead with Ted!

Bill Waters - New candidate for District 3

I am a 5-generation plus family in the Durango and Mancos area. I was born and raised in Durango. Graduated from Durango High School and went on to San Juan Vo-Tech School in Cortez. In 43 years of employment, my experience is in business, finance, sales, construction, leadership, customer satisfaction, and short and long-term investment with equitable returns. I understand the importance of customer satisfaction. Listen to all concerns. I believe in safe, reliable, affordable, and sustainable power to all members of LPEA. Renewable energy sources of solar, hydroelectric, and wind I support. Lowering our carbon footprint is essential. As a farmer and steward of the land, I understand the true value long term. It is truly important we supply affordable electric rates to elderly on fixed incomes, and those who need assistance. Will always look at keeping electric rates low and increases at a minimum. Employed in the construction industry, I understand the importance of proper equipment required by LPEA

personnel to safely repair the electrical power infrastructure during severe weather and power outages. Decisions made require facts and supportive data. It is imperative, the LPEA Board of Directors work together for the common good of all members. The board is a representation of members by election. It is their duty to represent them and not a personal agenda. Professionalism, safety, accountability, relationships, and quality are all part of LPEA Code of Excellence. I believe in all of these. "Electricity is a necessity, not a luxury" We need to keep it affordable.

Tim Wheeler - Incumbent candidate for District 4

Here in this wonderful corner of Colorado, we're writing the playbook for our future—a La Plata Way of Life. It's a vision for community-led solutions and self-sufficiency. As your LPEA Director, I'm honored to serve at the heart of this movement. Together we're working towards a triple win of affordable, local, clean energy resources. The current LPEA team has created one of the most professional, transparent, and publicly engaged electric co-ops in the country. It's been my privilege to serve as the Co-op's Treasurer, on the Broadband Committee, Finance and Audit Committee, and as LPEA's FastTrack Representative. I am proud to have voted for LPEA's commitments to reduce carbon emissions, pursue affordable local renewables, and provide greater transparency. But the work isn't done. Today's electricity market is changing quickly. LPEA is being called to tackle major issues with our electric supplier. To overcome these challenges and move forward, LPEA needs strong, experienced, and informed leadership. I joined this extraordinary community 27 years ago with my family, and I've brought a lifetime of business skills to my service as your board member, including work as Apple Computer Asia's Director of Marketing, a local business consultant, and owner of the Durango Coffee Company retail store. I am committed to giving back, serving locally on numerous non-profit boards. With your vote, I will continue using my skills and relationships to enlist the entire community in designing our La Plata Way of Life. Together we will build the system all LPEA members deserve.

John Purser - New candidate for District 4

VOTE like the future of LPEA depends on it. Traditionally LPEA has been an electric distribution cooperative. LPEA has a great tradition of providing service to its members. There is now a push to expand the role of LPEA as an electricity generator. I'm very concerned that this will not be beneficial to the membership at large and we'll lose focus on what LPEA has done well. The impetus for this change came years ago when the power provided to LPEA by Tri-State was produced by fossil fuels and had a large greenhouse gas footprint. Times have changed, and now Tri-State's goal for greenhouse gas reduction exceeds the strategic goal for LPEA. There is no longer an environmental justification for leaving Tri-State. This is a significant issue with many good points on both sides. One of the LPEA by-laws that I would advocate for changing is that contracts of more than a 10-year term would require a full membership vote. There should be full, robust and comprehensive debate in our community. We have a large diverse membership, with 10% living below the poverty line. Our full membership should have a direct voice on long term contracts. For a comprehensive discussion of policy please see [www.johnpurserforlpea.com](http://www.johnpurserforlpea.com). My economics degree, with studies in environmental economics, and security markets and financial institutions, provide me the academic background to evaluate solutions to long term infrastructure planning for LPEA. My 35 years working in the IT industry provides the practical experience in organization management.