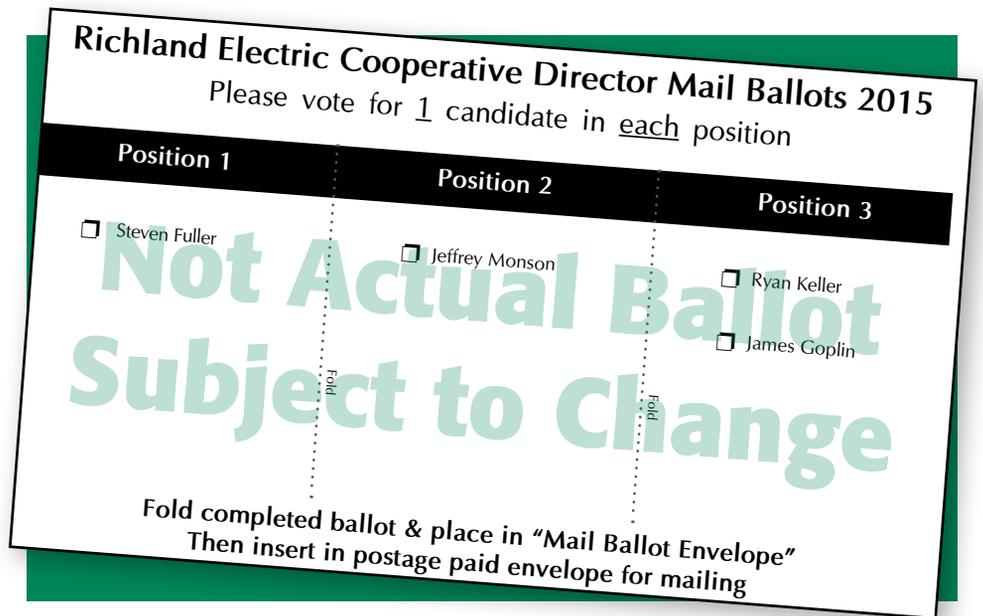


### Director Election Ballots Arriving Soon

Ballots for the upcoming director elections will soon be arriving in the mailboxes of Richland Electric Cooperative members. This year’s election will be the fourth election since the cooperative’s bylaws were changed to allow conducting elections by mail. Previously, elections were held in-person at the cooperative’s annual meeting, with only a few ballots submitted via the cooperative’s absentee ballot provision.

“Changing the director election process to voting by mail has definitely gotten more members involved,” said Calvin Sebranek, board president. “We used to have around 200 ballots cast each year, which is around 6 percent participation. For the past three years that number has hovered around 18 percent.”

Since implementing the change there has been a variety of questions raised each year about director elections. We’ve included some of the most asked questions and the answers in this article.



Shannon Clark, CEO & general manager, said, “The change in process has caused some members to spend a little more time thinking about director elections, and that’s a good thing. A transparent election process is an important principle of cooperatives, including open and democratic membership.”

#### When will my ballot arrive?

Ballots are typically mailed approximately 21 days prior to the date of the cooperative’s annual meeting; this year that date is March 6. When they are actually received by the member may vary based on the length of time they are in mail transit.

#### When do ballots have to be returned?

Ballots must arrive at the cooperative headquarters, located at 1027 N. Jefferson Street, Richland Center, by 4:30 p.m. the day before the annual meeting. This year, that date is Friday, March 27. Members need to put them in the mail soon enough to ensure they will be delivered by March 27. We include postage-paid return envelopes, which should be used to return ballots by mail.

#### What happens to ballots that don’t arrive by the deadline?

They are discarded, unopened, and are not counted.

#### The ballot instructions say I must sign the outer envelope to be valid. Why must I do that and what happens if I don’t?

Our bylaws specify the outer envelope containing the ballot must be signed by the member. The membership voted to require this as part of the bylaws, and it serves to certify the vote came from the actual member voting. In order to ensure secrecy of the ballot, we enclose an inner envelope in which members place the actual ballot—the inner envelope is unsigned. The unopened inner envelopes containing the ballots are what are provided to the third-party election tellers. Tellers do not see the signed outer envelopes. An unsigned outer envelope means the ballot is not certified and cannot be counted—it is discarded uncounted.

#### Who counts the ballots?

The entire process of handling ballots is overseen by a disinterested third party. We have relied on the Westby



Co-op Credit Union to oversee the process. They ensure that only certified ballots are counted and they do the actual counting. They keep the results secret until their staff announces the results at the annual meeting.

### Can I enclose my bill payment with the ballot, or send my ballot with my check?

No. Please do not include payments, letters, forms, or other items with your ballot. Our staff does not handle ballots or ballot envelopes, nor do they see what is inside the envelopes. Doing so could mean your payment won't be received by staff in a timely fashion and you could be charged a late fee. Correspondence, letters, forms, and other items enclosed with the ballot are ignored by tellers whose only job is to conduct the election.

### There are uncontested races on the ballot. Why do I have to vote for someone when there is no opposition? Why are these races even on the ballot?

You do not have to vote in uncontested races, but it does show support for the uncontested candidate if you choose to do so. All nominees must appear on the ballot regardless of whether they are contested or not. Our bylaws have no provision for unanimous declaration of uncontested candidates; therefore, any candidate must win by a majority of votes cast, even if only one vote is cast.

### Who nominates the candidates we see on the ballot?

Candidates are usually nominated by the Nominating Committee. The Nominating Committee is made up of five people drawn at random from people who have expressed an interest in serving and names submitted by board members. Board members may only submit one name to go into the random drawing. Candidates can also be nominated by petition. Persons interested in being placed on the ballot to run for a board seat can submit a petition signed by ten (10) or more members and they will be placed on the ballot, provided they meet the qualifications to serve as a board member (see related article on page 28).

### I don't know the candidates. How can I be expected to choose the best one?

We include some biographical information along with the ballots when we mail them to members. It details some of the candidates' views and helps you get to know who they are. We also conduct video interviews and post them to our website. Visit our webpage at [www.rec.coop](http://www.rec.coop) and you'll find more information about each candidate. More recently, candidates have also chosen to utilize local print, radio, and social media to reach out to members. ■

## Richland Electric Cooperative 2015 ANNUAL MEETING

**Saturday, March 28**

Richland High School • Richland Center, WI

Enjoy a complimentary breakfast including biscuits & gravy, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, cheese, cinnamon rolls, and more.

Breakfast will be served from 7 to 9 a.m. to the music of the Jim Gorman Band.

Meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. in the auditorium.

**Door prizes • Attendance Gifts**

**Electric cart transportation from breakfast area to auditorium and back after the meeting**



# Directors Now Serve in a Fast-Paced World

The bylaws of Richland Electric Cooperative (REC) list five qualifications to serve as one of the cooperative's directors: candidates must be members and bona fide residents of the service area, they cannot be employed by or financially interested in a competing company or a business selling energy or supplies to REC, they must not be or have been employed by REC in the previous five years, they cannot be delinquent on any obligation owed to REC nor can they have pursued any claim or litigation against the cooperative in the previous five years, and they must not have ever been convicted of a felony or other crime of dishonesty.

Simply meeting the qualifications outlined in the bylaws does not

necessarily mean a person is cut out to be a director. The most qualified directors will often be uniquely interested in the cooperative way of doing business and have some interest in

the energy business. Directors must now be able to adapt to new technologies in order to keep up with the fast pace of information.

Directors hold each other accountable. The board regularly discusses how to ensure that each director is well-informed and how directors will keep up with the training necessary to do a good job representing our members. Technology has changed how directors receive information as email and computing tablets are now the standard forms of communication. Paper board packets sent by mail are no longer used, and directors may receive new information requiring their review on a daily basis. There is a constant barrage of information to digest.

Serving as a director is a time-consuming yet rewarding responsibility. There are always new and exciting things to learn, and the challenges the board faces are often converted to opportunities. ■

*REC Board Secretary Judy Murphy reviews her digital board packet.*

## Get to Know the Candidates

Want to know more about the candidates for Richland Electric Cooperative director positions? Included with the ballot members should receive in early March will be complete biographies for each candidate. There you get to know the people vying to serve on your board of directors. Also, like last year you can visit our website at [www.rec.coop](http://www.rec.coop). There you will find video interviews with each candidate in which they tell you a little bit about themselves as well as their views on some of the important issues surrounding electric cooperatives.





## Valentine's Day at the Country School

With Christmas a distant memory, we settled in for the long month of January and half of a dreary February at our country school as we looked forward to the annual Valentine's Day party. After we had cut silhouettes of President Washington and Lincoln, and talked about these presidents on this, their birthday month, we began cutting out red hearts from construction paper. We hung them up around the school-room, which made the place a little more cheery on these long, cold days of winter.

We also each made valentines for our mothers. From the Sears Roebuck winter sale's catalog, I ordered inexpensive little valentines, one for each of my schoolmates. For the years that I attended the Chain O' Lake country school, we seldom had more than 20 or 25 students attending in eight grades, so it was not a great expense. As I remember, the cards were about 5 cents each, if bought in bundles of 20.

With the teacher's help, we made a huge valentine box that sat on a little table in front of the room and into which we stuffed our valentines, carefully selected for each student. The box was covered with white paper, and little red hearts were pasted all over it. For the couple of weeks leading up to the Valentine party, we all stared at that colorful box, wondering what fine valentines were in it, and which ones had our name on it.

By the time I was in eighth grade I discovered that girls weren't just annoying and boring persons, but for

some strange reason, almost overnight, they had become a whole lot more interesting. I wondered what kind of valentine I might be getting from the cute little seventh-grade girl who was very shy but seemed to be glancing at me every so often.

On Valentine's Day, our teacher, Mrs. Jenks, invited all the mothers to the school for an afternoon party, which began at 2 p.m. and continued until the school day ended at 4. The mothers all walked to the school of course—I didn't know one mother who had a driver's license, and even if she did, walking always took precedence over driving. The mothers brought valentine cookies, and cakes of several kinds. Our teacher prepared a big bowl of Kool Aid.

After everyone had arrived, Mrs. Jenks opened the big valentine box and distributed the valentines. Each of us got a valentine from every other student. Many were homemade; some were like the ones I had gotten from the Sears Catalog. We also each got a valentine from Mrs. Jenks—and each of the mothers got the valentines we had made for them.

From the shy little seventh grader, I had gotten a store-bought valentine—of a cupid with a bow and arrow. It contained no message, just the girl's name. ■

Go to [www.jerryapps.com](http://www.jerryapps.com) for information about Jerry's writings and TV work



### Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



Source: [EnergySavers.gov](http://EnergySavers.gov)

Your home works hard for you. Consider giving it an energy checkup. Hire a professional energy auditor to diagnose where your house could be losing energy and where you can start saving money. Auditors check for air leaks, inspect insulation, survey heating and cooling equipment, and more. After making efficiency upgrades, you could save 5–30 percent on your energy bills!



## Richland Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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Manager/CEO P.O. Box 439  
Richland Center, WI 53581

(608) 647-3173 • [www.rec.coop](http://www.rec.coop)

### Your Board of Directors

Calvin Sebranek, President	Don Huffman
Gerald Wendorf, Vice President	Jim Lewis
Judy Murphy, Secretary	Tim Tiller
Daniel Hillberry, Treasurer	Steven Fuller
	Jeff Monson



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