

RELAY

FLORIDA'S ENERGY & ELECTRIC UTILITY MAGAZINE

Volume 55 • Issue 1 • Fall 2022

Feature

ADVOCATE CONTINUALLY USING WORDS AND DEEDS

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Effectively lobbying the Florida Legislature demands a rare set of skills and traits: a good reputation, mastery of the details and being on the right side of the issues. Sound easy? It's not, especially when you're working on complicated, confusing and sometimes controversial issues. But if you're well prepared and focused on serving the public, then money plays second fiddle to other factors, according to three longtime members of FMEA's general and legislative counsel.

23 Policy Makers' Perspectives: Advocating for Public Power in Washington

Recently, Florida officials serving on the American Public Power Association's Policy Makers Council were in Washington, D.C., to meet with their members of Congress on issues critical to public power. JEA Board Member General Joe DiSalvo and Lakeland City Commissioner Stephanie Madden share firsthand about their role on APPA's Policy Makers Council and experiences this summer advocating for their utilities and public power in Washington.

- **FMEA-Supported APPA "Fly-In": A Big Plus for Public Power Advocacy – by JEA Board Member Joe DiSalvo**
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FMEA's lobbyists in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., agree that grassroots advocacy from public power officials and Board members makes an impact on elected officials — and is a force multiplier for third-party government relations professionals.

FEATURE

18 Advocate Continually Using Words and Deeds

As the energy industry moves toward a lower-carbon future and electricity prices rise, it's more important than ever that your customer-owners understand that you are locally owned and why that's a distinction with a difference.



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Where in the world is RELAY?

Elaine and Howard McKinnon (Town of Havana, retired) remembered to pack a copy of RELAY magazine on a trip to Old Faithful in Yellowstone National Park! Don't forget a copy on your next trip! Send pictures to relay@flpublicpower.com.

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FMEA Is Celebrating Its 80th Anniversary!

Eighty years! In 1942, established by eight Florida public power utilities, FMEA — then known as the Florida Municipal Utilities Association (FMUA) — became the advocate and voice of Florida public power. For 80 years, FMEA has promoted and facilitated the exchange of information and ideas between Florida’s municipal utilities for the betterment of public power in Florida — and we will continue to do so for many more years to come.

In 1942, the country and the world were in the throes of World War II. The United States was reeling from the attack on Pearl Harbor and rationing was the norm. The individuals who created FMUA were motivated by the opportunity to work together to solve mutual problems created by wartime shortages.

The effects of the war were felt by everyone, and every business, and it created significant problems for our public power forefathers. Fuel shortages were abounding, as the federal government needed oil and gasoline for the war. While gas was only 20 cents a gallon then, “pleasure driving” was prohibited and gas was rationed to 3 gallons per week. Electric utilities were allotted only short-term, minimal purchases of oil or other fuels needed to generate power. Most utilities had only a few days of fuel on hand at any time.

By 1946, the original eight members had grown to 17, and the association formed its first committee to monitor legislative affairs that could negatively affect Florida’s municipal electric utilities.

Today, that focus has not changed. As Charlie Shreve, one of FMEA/FMUA’s three former executive directors, stated, “Protecting our (now 33) municipal members’ ability to control their own destiny, control their own rates, and set their own policy is our primary goal. It has always been.”

FMEA’s commemorative 80th anniversary logo contains a tree — not just any tree, but an oak tree. Oak is the symbol of an 80-year anniversary, and an association like FMEA is a lot like a majestic oak tree. Our member cities are like the tree’s branches — large, medium and small — they are the tree’s past, present and future.

When you look at a large oak tree, you first see the branches, reaching out and upward. Upon the outstretched branches are the leaves, representing the many individuals whose knowledge and energy are the basis for the association’s existence.

The trunk of the tree is FMEA’s headquarters and staff — it is the basic support of the association. The foundation or central point that bears the tree’s weight and serves as

the meeting place for the branches. Without a strong trunk, the branches would be scattered like a bush growing wild.

The roots of the tree are best represented by the association’s associate members, committees and the programs and services the association carries out. The roots take in vital nutrients from the ground and water, carry them up through the trunk, and distribute the nourishment to the branches such that they may grow and prosper. Likewise, our associate members, our association committees, and our conferences and events nourish the association with new ideas for programs that help member utilities prosper.

Today, FMEA continues to be the solid base for our members. We continue to carry the torch our public power forefathers established in 1942, now serving Florida’s 33 municipal electric utilities who collectively serve more than 3 million homes and businesses.

Advocating for Florida public power is, and always has been, one of FMEA’s primary roles. It’s the foundation of who we are and what we do, and what we will continue to do. ■



Advocacy Tips for Public Power Champions

by Nicole Albers and Amy Zubaly

For FMEA to effectively communicate its position on issues impacting public power, grassroots action by individual association members is necessary. Everyone has a role to play in the future of the state, of our cities and for our community-owned electric utilities.

The first step in effective grassroots lobbying is becoming acquainted with the legislators who represent your community. It's important to get to know them individually and build relationships with them. There are many ways to build these relationships:

- Write or call legislators on important issues.
- Make personal visits in their home district, the state Capitol and Washington, D.C.
- Organize group visits with other public power members.
- Invite legislators to tour your utility and meet with your team.
- Invite legislators to attend special events that might garner publicity.

Building relationships with legislative staff is just as important!

Let lawmakers know you work for a public power utility that serves members of the community they represent. Tell your utility's story as it relates to the issue. Have a firm understanding of the issue and be clear about what you would like the legislator to do.

Meeting with elected officials at the federal or state level is about sharing your perspective and being a resource for them in your areas of expertise. Here are some tips for how to get the most out of the meeting and leave the door open for building a relationship with lawmakers.

Do:

- Call to schedule a meeting well in advance.
- Know who you are meeting with: How to correctly pronounce their name, what they look like, what their key issues are, who their key staff are and what committees they serve on.
- Bring along or provide insight from local elected officials and constituents.
- Share how a policy affects you personally, or the direct impact it has on your community or utility.

- Provide data to back up your claims.
- Be honest and transparent.
- Admit when you don't know the answer to a question.
- Make reasonable asks.
- Think through your discussion and asks to make sure you can talk about the topics in a way someone outside the industry could understand.
- Follow up in a timely manner.

Don't:

- Insist on only meeting with the elected official instead of their staff.
- Interpret other stakeholders' positions.
- Try to hide or gloss over problems.
- Forget that you are the expert on utility matters — you're there to be a resource.
- Only reach out when you need something.
- Try to drop in without an appointment.
- Rely on jargon, acronyms or technical terms to describe an issue.
- Try to discuss multiple issues at once — it can confuse your message.
- Get into an argument — explain any opposing position respectfully.
- Forget to follow through on follow-up. ■

DID YOU KNOW?



FMEA tracks hundreds of pieces of legislation and policy proposals at the state and federal levels for members on annual basis? In the 2022 Florida Legislative Session, FMEA reviewed 3,685 filed bills for issues of relevance to FMEA members, and tracked and monitored committee stops, amendments, actions and developments related to nearly 100 separate pieces of legislation.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that FMEA has been producing a Legislative Hopper for members since 1979? The Legislative Hopper is published weekly during each annual legislative session with a goal to keep members informed about legislation with impacts to public power and the communities we serve.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that FMEA has a Legislative and Resolutions Committee? The L&R Committee oversees the legislative and regulatory activities of FMEA. The Committee meets on an as-needed basis, but it consulted often for legislative and regulatory feedback.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that FMEA hosts an annual Legislative Rally? Each year during the Florida Legislative Session, FMEA members convene in Tallahassee to meet with state legislators and discuss legislative proposals impacting Florida Public Power.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that FMEA produces a number of tools to support members' advocacy needs? From issue briefs to talking points, from visual aids and legal counsel, FMEA provides a number of supports to members as they make their voices heard in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C.





Odds and Ends *from Across the State*

Florida Public Power Receives National Awards

Congratulations to the Florida Public Power leaders who received national awards at the APPA national conference in June:

Mona Clark received the Spence Vanderlinden Public Official Award, which recognizes elected or appointed local officials who have contributed to APPA's goals. Clark has been active in public power, Keys Energy Services and APPA for 18 years. She has served on the Keys Energy Services Utility Board since 2004, was the first elected female Board member in the utility's history and is currently serving as its chairperson.

Mark McCain received the James D. Donovan Individual Achievement Award, which recognizes people who have made

substantial contributions to the electric utility industry with a special commitment to public power. Recently retired from the Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA), McCain is a staunch supporter and advocate for public power, serving Florida's public power utilities and APPA for 35 years.

Kissimmee Utility Authority received the Sue Kelly Community Service Award, which recognizes utilities for their "good neighbor" activities that demonstrate commitment to the local community. KUA has supported local nonprofit organizations and activities through its Community Sponsorship Program for 26 years. The creation of its Good Neighbor Round Up Program in 2013 has provided emergency utility bill payment assistance to customers in need. The utility also provides free home energy audits.

FMEA Names Member of the Year, Associate Member of the Year



FMEA recognized members of the Florida Public Power community during its annual conference banquet held in July in Palm Beach. The 2022 FMEA Member of the Year award was presented to Kinn'zon Hutchinson, chief customer officer for Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU). Hutchinson oversees multiple areas, including contact center, billing, collections, new services, energy and business services, quality control, purchasing, warehouse, real estate, facilities maintenance and mail services. He currently chairs FMEA's Customer Connections Committee, frequently presides over FMEA sessions and represents Florida Public Power in numerous national organizations.



The 2022 Associate Member of the Year was awarded to Melissa Seitzinger, project development manager with LJA

Surveying. Seitzinger has spent the last 23 years managing, developing and designing projects for transmission and distribution, water/wastewater and civil/public service. Seitzinger has supported FMEA for more than a decade in multiple capacities,



1. Spence Vanderlinden Public Official Award Recipient Mona C. Clark
2. James D. Donovan Individual Achievement Award Recipient Mark McCain
3. Members of KUA's Board Receive the Sue Kelly Community Service Award

including attending and sponsoring the annual conference, exhibiting at Energy Connections Conference and Trade Show and volunteering her time on the scoring team at the association's annual Florida Lineman Competition.

Congressmen Receive Prestigious Friend of Florida Public Power Award



Congressmen Neal Dunn and Darren Soto were also recognized with the prestigious Friend of Florida Public Power Award during the August recess in their home district.

Introduced in 2020, the Friend of Florida Public Power Award is a high honor bestowed on an individual or organization whose efforts, support and leadership have significantly benefited Florida Public Power and Florida's Public Power communities, utilities and/or employees. The Friend of Florida Public Power makes significant contributions to the advancement of public power on a statewide level.

Congressmen Dunn and Soto played an instrumental role in passing the FEMA Loan Interest Payment Relief Act in the U.S House of Representatives, which provides financial assistance to local governments as reimbursements for qualifying interest on disaster-related loans.

Longtime Florida Public Power Lobbyist Bill Peebles Receives Highest FMEA Distinction

Congratulations to Bill Peebles, retired FMEA legislative counsel, who received FMEA's



an individual who has devoted a significant part of his/her career to the advancement of public power in Florida. Prior to Peebles, FMEA had bestowed Lifetime Achievement to only eight members since 2001.



Florida PSC Chairman Andrew Fay Experiences the Line Life

Chairman Andrew Fay learned the true meaning of #ThankALineman,

recently training with local lineworkers from the city of Tallahassee Electric Utility. Adhering to all safety measures, even donning steel-toe boots, Chairman Fay climbed poles, helped rescue an "injured" lineman, and learned what it takes to "live the line life!" Going forward, Lineworker Appreciation Day will have a new, very real meaning.

"I've always appreciated and admired our lineworkers for their dedication to a dangerous and very important job. Now, I have a deeper appreciation. Their safety-first mentality and commitment to their fellow lineworkers is to be admired and emulated," Chairman Fay said following his training experience.



New Smyrna Beach Unveils New Name, Logo

For more than 55 years, the City of New Smyrna Beach has proudly provided essential electric and water services to their community. On July 1, the city announced a name — New Smyrna Beach Utilities — and a new

logo, both reflecting their coastal community location.

Two years ago, New Smyrna Beach Utilities began a strategic, multiyear effort to invest in modernizing and improving the reliability, sustainability and operational efficiency of the electric and water systems, as well as the customer experience. NSBU launched a new website and will add features to make it easier to do business with the utility, including an enhanced customer portal with detailed outage information.

City of Wauchula Celebrates 100 Years of Electric Service



The City of Wauchula proudly celebrated its 100-year municipal electricity anniversary on May 26 in partnership with the local community at Main Street Wauchula Hometown Happy Hour. The City of Wauchula began providing electric to its customers in 1922 and has done so continuously ever since. This utility celebrated the significant anniversary with food, drinks, dessert and a special celebration cocktail.

Lake Worth Beach Invests in Reliability

Lake Worth Beach Electric Utility's newest switching station is complete and energized. The new switching station, designed to withstand Category 5 storms, replaces a 1970 substation and will serve up to 2,600 residential and commercial customers.

An element of the utility's System Hardening and Reliability Improvement Program (SHRIP), the project incorporates redundant feeders, R-MAG breakers,

voltage regulators and fault current limiting devices, and a hardened control house equipped with microprocessor relays and battery backup, with both radio and fiber communications options and a new systemwide SCADA system.

The city's electric utility is currently underway with upwards of \$60 million in system improvements to modernize its electric utility to meet the needs of the community, allow for implementation of new technologies and ensure adequate capacity for growth.

KUA Launches New Customer Portal



Kissimmee Utility Authority launched its new customer portal, my.kua.com, allowing customers to manage KUA services through a comprehensive set of tools in a user-friendly dashboard. The new portal gives customers the ability to view and pay bills, along with enhancements such as the ability to start, stop and transfer service, make and view payment arrangements, and go paperless.

Additionally, the portal enables customers to take complete control of their energy use through tools to help them stay on budget, such as setting up high usage alert notifications and creating historical markers to track how energy efficiency upgrades impact their bill. Customers also now have the ability to track consumption in weekly, daily or 15-minute increments. The portal is accessible from all desktop and mobile devices and can be

accessed in several languages through a translation tool.



Beaches Energy Services Installing New Lighting to Protect Sea Turtles

Beaches Energy Services is installing new lighting in Jacksonville Beach parking lots to protect sea turtles and continues its partnership with the Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol with its annual #CleanDarkFlat Public Awareness Campaign.

The lights, the first of their kind, will not attract the sea turtles on the beach during nesting season away from the ocean. The new lights, specially produced for Beaches Energy Services and approved by the Florida Wildlife Commission, were installed this summer throughout Jacksonville Beach. Sea turtles nest on Jacksonville Beach from May to October.

This is the third consecutive year this collaboration has come together to protect sea turtles. Called **#CleanDarkFlat**, the hashtag is an easy way to remember and share on social media what people can do to help the threatened species. In order for sea turtles to successfully build nests, hatch and return to the ocean, their nesting grounds on the beaches ideally are kept:

- Clean – free of litter, including trash, chairs, umbrellas and other debris
- Dark – free of artificial light
- Flat – free of holes or sandcastles that trap turtles

The awareness campaign builds on a longstanding collaboration between Beaches Energy Services and the Beaches Sea Turtle Patrol to be good stewards of our natural resources.

Florida Public Power Utilities Named Solar Leaders

Two FMEA members, OUC - The Reliable One and Lakeland Electric, have been

recognized as "Sunrisers" by Southern Alliance for Clean Energy. The Sunrisers designation comes in a new report that shows Florida is the leader in solar power in the Southeast. The designation as a Sunriser means they are among the national leaders in adding solar power to their portfolio.

KEYS Marks Milestone

KEYS marked its 35th anniversary of energizing its Transmission Line, or TIELINE, on May 8 — the day in 1987 KEYS customers were connected to the mainland power grid.

The story of the TIELINE began in the late 1970s when three engineering reports recommended interconnecting to the mainland power grid for greater reliability of electrical service. KEYS, operating as City Electric System at the time, worked with the Key West City Commission and Florida Keys Electric Cooperative (FKEC) to make the project possible.

After the first full year of operation, the TIELINE saved ratepayers \$3,932,209 compared to what they would have paid if the electricity had been completely generated locally by the utility.

OUC Earns Environmental Distinctions

OUC – The Reliable One has been named a 2022 Environmental Champion in Escalent's Utility Trusted Brand and Customer Engagement study. Only 31 utilities in the nation received the honor, with OUC scoring the most points for "environmental dedication" among electric peers. This is the fifth year in a row OUC has claimed Escalent's recognition for environmental stewardship.

In addition, OUC understands the importance of trees in the community and properly managing trees near power lines. OUC recently received the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree Line USA® award for the 23rd year. ■

Who's Who in the Florida Public Power Community

Florida Municipal Electric Association Announces New Executive Board



FMEA at its annual meeting in July elected a new slate of officers to preside over the organization's Board of Directors. Serving as the executive leadership team of the Board are President Brian Horton, president and general manager of KUA (Kissimmee Utility Authority); President-Elect Joe Bunch, general manager and CEO of New Smyrna Beach Utilities; Vice President Clint Bullock, general manager and CEO of OUC (Orlando Utilities Commission); and Secretary-Treasurer Ed Liberty, director of the City of Lake Worth Electric Utilities.

"The success of public power not only relies on a strong network of support, but also a leadership team that is dedicated to providing our members with the resources and expertise they need to ensure customers have clean, affordable and reliable power," said Amy Zubaly, FMEA executive director. "I am grateful to our new slate of officers elected today for agreeing to serve in this capacity, and I look forward to the accomplishments we will achieve together."

JEA's Karen Blutcher Selected as Volunteer of the Year by Junior Achievement of North Florida

JEA Community Engagement Coordinator Karen Blutcher received the Volunteer of the Year award at the Junior Achievement (JA) Hall of Fame Luncheon on May 11. This prestigious award is given to an individual who has been an exemplary volunteer and has worked to improve the organization.

Junior Achievement's mission is to inspire, equip and prepare the next generation of leaders with the knowledge, skills and capacity to be successful. The inspiration piece comes from community volunteers who deliver life lessons and share their experience. In the process, these volunteers serve as role models helping to positively impact young people's perceptions about the importance of education, as well as critical life skills. Preparation involves sharing proven lessons that promote financial capability, work and career readiness, and business ownership.

Congratulations, Karen — great job!





KEYS' DePhillips Receives National Manager Certificate

During the American Public Power Association's National Conference in June, Rob DePhillips, supervisor of transmission and distribution substations for Keys Energy Services, was recognized with APPA Academy's Public Power Manager Certificate. To earn this certificate, participants complete required courses and develop a plan that identifies and addresses an issue, challenge or opportunity within their organization. Congrats, Rob!

Kissimmee Utility Authority Employees Recognized

Congratulations! KUA recognizes these employees for reaching significant milestones in their careers with the utility. We appreciate your service!

- Jennifer Grieves, administrative assistant II, Cap, Finance and Administration, five years
- Shane Yarborough, apprentice lineman II, Operations, five years
- Christopher Kitting, apprentice lineman, Operations, five years
- Roxanna Passini, GIS technician, Operations, five years
- Ana Francis, administrative assistant I, Customer Service, 10 years
- Julia Sanchez, utility billing and collections representative II, Customer Service, 10 years
- Jennifer Gonzalez, assistant general counsel, General Management
- Larissa Hall, customer service representative II, Customer Service, 15 years
- Adam Smith, SCADA/communications technician II, Operations, 15 years
- Michael Surrency, PP mechanic/welder/operator, Operations, 20 years

- Mark Chabrol, PP mechanic/operator, Operations, 20 years
- Cheryl Mears, manager of network operations, Information Technology, 25 years

JEA Announces VP, Director



Congrats to Tim Hunt for being named JEA's vice president of customer experience insights & digitization. He first joined the JEA team in 1997 and has held numerous leadership roles, including director of customer & utility analytics.



Also, congratulations to Michael Corbitt, who has been named JEA's director of real estate. He brings more than 15 years of experience managing national public and private real estate portfolios, impacting business and economic development.



Wauchula's Pohl Recognized

Congratulations to the City of Wauchula's communications coordinator, Cheyenne Pohl, on her recent graduation from the Hardee County Chamber of Commerce Leadership Class. Kudos for her involvement with the class and dedication to bettering Hardee County for the future! ■



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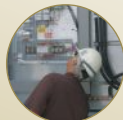
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FMEA: 80 Years of Advocacy

From Staff Reports



August 21, 1942

Florida Municipal Utilities Association (FMUA) Formed

FMUA is initially comprised of 8 utilities and headquartered in Lakeland, Florida.



1946

First FMUA Member Subcommittee Created

The goal of the Subcommittee was to monitor legislative affairs that could negatively impact Florida's municipal utilities. The Committee still stands today.

1948

First Official FMUA Legislative Resolution Created

This paved the way for Association members to establish a unified policy position on issues.

1953

FMUA's First Annual Conference

The annual conference would be held in Orlando through 1958 before rotating to locations around the state.



1957

FMUA's First Full-time Employee

Mac Cunningham (former mayor of Lakeland) will serve as the first Executive Secretary.

September 9-10, 1960

First Documented Municipal Mutual Aid Event

Initiated by Lakeland Electric following Hurricane Donna, communication was through a local HAM radio operator and City of Lakeland employees. Seventeen utilities responded – 14 munis, 3 coops; KUA was first on scene. The storm made landfall in the Florida Keys with sustained winds of 145 mph (modern Category 4).

1965

First FMUA Engineering & Operations Workshop

Held in Jacksonville, the E&O Workshop was the precursor to what is now FMEA's Energy Connections Conference & Trade Show.

March 1977

Florida Public Power News Changes Name to FMUA News

Communicating industry news and information remains one of the core functions of the association.

1977

FMUA Moves to Tallahassee

FMUA moves its headquarters to the then-Barnett Bank building across from Florida's Capitol Complex and establishes PO Box 10114 - still used today.

1978

New Executive Director Appointed

Edward Charlie Shreve becomes second Executive Director of the Association and is the namesake of FMEA's E.C. Shreve Lifetime Achievement award.

1979

FMUA Creates Associate Member Category

R.W. Beck joins FMUA as the first Associate Member. They would later be known as SAIC and now Leidos.

1979

Member of the Year and Associate of the Year Awards are Established

Joe B. Dykes, Jr. (City of Tallahassee) and James J. Berry (Smith & Gillespie Engineers) were the first recipients of the awards.

1979

FMUA Establishes FMPA

As an organizational offshoot of FMUA, the Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA) is formed by state statute for joint power and fuel projects.



1979

The FMUA Legislative Hopper is Established

Still produced today, the FMEA Legislative Hopper provides FMEA members with important state legislative actions and activities during each Florida Legislative Session.



1982

Municipal Utilities of Florida PAC (MUF PAC) is Established

The state's first municipal utility Political Action Committee is formed.



1982

FMUA Mutual Aid Agreement

The first municipal electric in-state mutual aid agreement is adopted by FMUA members.

Visit FLPublicPower.com/timeline for full interactive timeline.

June 15, 1988

FMUA Changes Name to FMEA & Moves to 417 College Ave

Focusing primarily on municipal electric utilities, the name was changed to reflect the Association's focus. FMEA also purchases and converts our current office space on College Avenue in Tallahassee.



July 1989

First FMEA Safety Seminar presented in Orlando

FMEA continues to offer forums, conference sessions and committee meetings on safety.

August 24, 1992

Hurricane Andrew

Category 5 Hurricane Andrew destroys Homestead. FMEA coordinates mutual aid response.

1996

New Executive Director Appointed

Barry Moline becomes the third Executive Director of FMEA.



1997

Community Telecommunications Council (CTC)

CTC was established to preserve municipal electric utilities' ability to provide telecommunications services. CTC later evolved to the Florida Municipal Broadband Alliance.

1997

Created Community Service Award Program

The award recognizes FMEA members that serve their communities with extra services above and beyond power supply and distribution.

1999

FMEA Congressional Staff Tours

FMEA hosts its first formally organized congressional staff tour of member electric utility systems.



2001

First Female FMEA President

Susan Frieden, Havana town manager, is elected as FMEA's 49th president, the first female to serve in this capacity.

March 2001

Florida Lineman Competition

FMEA's first-ever Florida Lineman Competition was held in Lakeland.



2008

Florida Lineman Assistance Fund Established

The fund financially assists Florida Public Power linemen and their families in time of emergency due to injury or fatality on the job.

October 2012

Florida Lineman Appreciation Day

FMEA led efforts to establish Florida's Lineman Appreciation Day through Florida legislative resolution.

September 10-11, 2017

Hurricane Irma

FMEA successfully coordinated Florida Public Power's largest-ever mutual aid response for Hurricane Irma.

October 2017

New Executive Director Appointed

Amy Zubaly becomes the fourth Executive Director of FMEA and the first woman to hold the position.

2017

Statewide Mutual Aid Compact

FMEA led efforts with state investor-owned utilities to establish a mutual aid compact and agreements to provide mutual assistance to each other if needed.



June 13, 2018

Florida Celebrates Public Power Lineworkers

FMEA's efforts garnered resolution by Florida's Governor and Cabinet recognizing Florida Public Power lineworkers.

October 10, 2018

Hurricane Michael


FMEA successfully coordinated large-scale mutual aid response for FMEA members in Florida's panhandle as they rebuilt from Category 5 Hurricane Michael.

March 15, 2020

Florida Lineworker Appreciation Tag

FMEA led a multi-year advocacy effort to establish the Florida Thank A Lineman license tag.





THROUGHOUT THE DECADES: FMEA'S GREATEST WINS ON BEHALF OF FLORIDA PUBLIC POWER

by John Egan

On FMEA's 80th anniversary, three individuals who have served in longtime legislative and legal counsel roles look back at the organization's greatest victories.

Effectively lobbying the Florida Legislature demands a rare set of skills and traits: a good reputation, mastery of the details and being on the right side of the issues. Sound easy? It's not, especially when you're working on complicated, confusing and sometimes controversial issues. But if you're well prepared and focused on serving the public, then money plays second fiddle to other factors, according to three individuals who have served in longtime FMEA general and legislative counsel roles.

"When it comes to lobbying, the investor-owned utilities have deeper pockets, but we've still been very successful because public policy — not profits — is what we're all about," said Bill Peebles, who served as legislative counsel to FMEA from 1985 through 2020, and who recently received FMEA's prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award.

"Public power truly is about the public, and many legislators go into their line of work to implement good public policy." FMEA seeks to lobby in a way that is informed, strategic and takes advantage of the sound public policy arguments that support the value of public power.

"Since public power doesn't have a bottomless wallet, we had to be thoughtful and creative with the assets we did have, which included public power leaders who lived in a legislator's district." FMEA's members are the organization's most valuable assets.

Over the years, Peebles, his colleague Fred Bryant, and FMEA's current General and Regulatory Counsel Jody Finklea, have battled — and beaten — investor-owned utilities like Florida Power & Light and Gulf Power, the electric cooperatives, and the telephone and cable industries in committee rooms and hallways in the state Legislature and the courts.

Those wins sometimes come in the form of defeating bad ideas, and sometimes they come in the form of hard-fought compromises. And those compromises cannot be achieved without adversaries knowing that FMEA will stand up for the interests that it represents.

Playing David to these industry Goliaths, Bryant said, "When you meet a bully on the playground, you don't have to beat him. Just pop him in the nose and most times he'll go away."

Bryant served as general counsel to FMEA from 1973 to 2019.

In addition to the need to be on the right side of public policy issues, success comes from a keen sense of your opponent's weaknesses.

Peebles said, "Nobody likes to be called out in public in a bad light, particularly when the TV cameras were rolling or in a committee hearing room. But in one legislative battle with the phone and

cable companies, we highlighted their monopolistic ways when they tried to pass legislation prohibiting cities from offering broadband. It was us versus two entire industries. The first time we stopped them in their tracks. The second time we fought to a draw in the state Senate."

After FMEA negotiated a compromise with the phone and cable companies on their third go-around, Peebles recalled speaking with a lawyer from one of the phone companies who said, "I never thought the phone industry would be defeated by a bunch of cities in Florida."

Going into that fight, Peebles didn't think it was a winner either, but he simply out-worked the other side.

"I always aspired to be the most informed lobbyist in the room," he said. "Often, it wasn't that difficult."

Issues That Refuse to Die

You can think of them as perennial flowers or zombies that refuse to die. Some issues come back again and again, and may come back yet again in the future. Electric utility industry restructuring is one of those issues.

Peebles said industry restructuring, aka "deregulation," was probably the most significant issue he worked on in his 35 years of lobbying. "Every time someone comes up with what might be a good

idea, it all goes to hell," he said, citing the Enron scandal, which turned off the lights in California in 2000-01, as well as Winter Storm Uri in February 2021, which caused the Texas energy and water systems to seize up, killing an estimated 200 Texans and leading to about \$200 billion in property damage in the Lone Star State.

"I don't know that any state that restructured its electric market did it exactly right, but someone will somewhere. Restructuring will not go away. It's all a function of technology and economics."

Florida didn't want to be seen as behind the times when it came to potentially transformative change, so the state took several looks at restructuring, most recently in 2019.

Finklea picked up the story: "There was a citizen's petition to amend the state constitution to allow each customer to choose their provider of electric generation. The amendment also would have prohibited cities from owning electric generation."

The measure was sponsored by a company that has significant interests in the natural gas industry and interstate pipelines that serve the state. About three-quarters of Florida's electricity is generated from natural gas. Passage of that initiative would have patterned the Florida electric market after Texas', Finklea said, but without keeping the obligation to serve all customers or setting up a "provider of last resort" in case rural or exurban customers found themselves without electricity. Electric generation, and by extension the use of natural gas in the state, would have been far more open to manipulation that could hurt consumers.

"Fortunately, we defeated this flawed policy at the state Supreme Court," Finklea said.

Below is a combined list of FMEA's other biggest successes, according to Peebles, Bryant and Finklea:

2010s

- FMEA provided information to leaders in the community and City Council of Jacksonville that helped scuttle the effort to privatize JEA.

- FMEA twice defeated attempts to deregulate Florida's electricity markets through the Florida Legislature's Constitution Revision Commission and via citizen petition at the Florida Supreme Court.

2000s

- FMEA challenged the state's interpretation of a sales tax law that would have eliminated the ability of cities to purchase transmission and distribution equipment without paying sales tax. The matter went to the state Supreme Court and FMEA won.

1990s

- Efforts by the phone and cable industries to limit the ability of Florida cities to offer broadband services were defeated. This issue was discussed and defeated again in the 2000s and 2010s.

1980s

- FMEA helped exempt all but the largest locally owned utilities from the jurisdiction of the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) when it came to energy conservation.

1970s

- FMEA helped defeat proposed legislation that would have made municipal utilities jurisdictional at the FPSC. This victory allowed locally owned utilities to set their own rates, but "rate structures" had to be approved by the FPSC.
- A bill that would have frozen municipal service territories was defeated in the state Legislature. This issue would come back three times in the 1980s and 1990s, and FMEA won all three times.
- The Florida Legislature passed the law that allowed FMEA's members to create the Florida Municipal Power Agency (FMPA), an organizational offshoot of Florida Municipal Utilities Agency (now FMEA), as a statewide joint-action agency that enabled smaller members to own electric generation.

1960s

- This was the decade when the state Legislature tackled the "home rule" issue. Many powerful lawmakers in Tallahassee

didn't believe cities should be in the electricity business. Although FMEA was successful at defeating this measure, it came back several times in the ensuing decades, and the Legislature has limited home rule on several occasions.

Looking back over his 46 years as a lawyer and lobbyist, Bryant said, "Many ideas get pitched to legislators. Some ideas are good, some are bad. We're engaged in a constant battle to keep legislators and their staffs informed so that bad ideas cannot take root, and, if necessary, defeating those bad ideas that make it through FMEA's defenses. Sometimes we were able to defeat bad ideas at the legislature, and sometimes we had to go to court to defeat them."

But with a twinkle in his eye, Bryant said lobbying in Tallahassee "used to be more entertaining — and riskier — before there were computers and livestreams." He recalled instances where a sentence or two was added to a bill in the final hours before passage and it was weeks before anyone knew what happened. That worked for and against FMEA over the years.

Looking forward, Finklea predicted the next iteration of "deregulation" will center on rooftop solar power, which will raise numerous issues at the distribution level.

"Customer expectations around energy are increasing and becoming more sophisticated," he said. "As rooftop solar becomes more popular and distributed generation more prolific, we're going to run into situations where there is no precedent and new public policy will be needed. FMEA will need to be even more engaged with Florida's public power utilities to make sure that wise choices are made."

That's why FMEA needs to remain proactive and engaged, Finklea urged: "We can't wait until a problem materializes. People who are served by locally owned electric utilities feel a tie to them. We continually work to preserve and protect that." ■



ADVOCATE CONTINUALLY USING WORDS AND DEEDS

by John Egan

“The best time to make friends,” actress Ethel Barrymore once observed, “is before you need them.”

Barrymore’s quip from the prior century has particular relevance today for FMEA members: As the energy industry moves toward a lower-carbon future, and as electricity prices rise, it’s more important than ever that your customer-owners understand that you are locally owned, and why that’s a distinction with a difference.

Sometimes having friends can help a locally owned utility survive a life-or-death moment, such as attempts by outside parties to privatize it. On a more everyday level, it’s always nice to have members of the community publicly advocate for a utility during power outages, price increases or other operational challenges.

In the utility business, the best way to make friends is to provide superior service, charge a fair price, communicate frequently with your customers, employees and other stakeholders, and always be transparent.

Florida publicly owned utilities Lakeland Electric and JEA in Jacksonville recently survived privatization efforts because their public power communities stood up for them and defeated profit-driven attempts to privatize their local utilities.

“The more informed and engaged our customers are, the more likely they will become advocates for us,” said Cathryn Lacy, utilities marketing manager for Lakeland Electric, which serves about 135,000 customers.

That advocacy became critical in 2019 when a ballot initiative that would have made it easier to privatize the utility was voted down 65 percent to 35 percent. “That showed the value of community support in a big way,” she said.

First Things First: Provide Excellent Service

Building a utility’s reputation and performance level over the long term is a collection of actions that happen every day. For utilities, that has to start with excellent service, specifically around providing highly reliable electric service and fast power restoration after a storm or other events.

Poor reliability by an investor-owned utility helped create the conditions for the City of Winter Park to municipalize in 2005. Dan D’Alessandro, director of the electric utility, had a front-row seat for that battle, though he was seated in another part of the arena.

D’Alessandro, at the time an employee of Progress Energy, recalled the incumbent investor-owned utility (IOU) provided its Winter Park customers with low reliability and poor customer service. When Progress Energy’s franchise came up for renewal, the IOU’s leaders expected it would be approved, as it had been several times before. When the first signs of resistance arose, he said, “employees started going door-to-door to scare people” about what a municipal electric utility could mean to them.

The scare campaign failed because, in one retelling, Winter Park residents simply got tired of having to reset the clocks on their

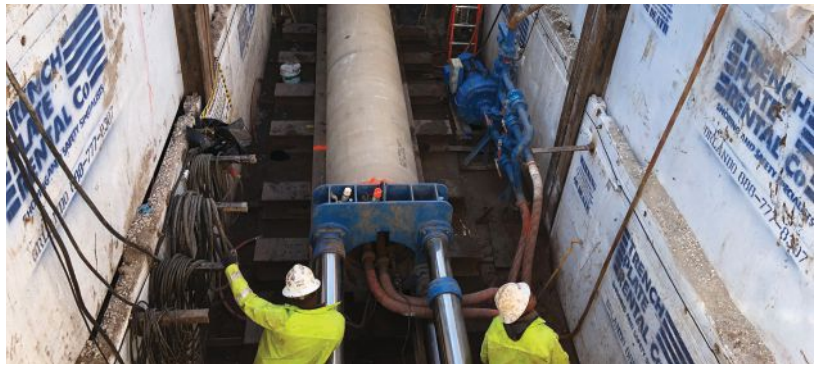
VCRs after yet another Progress Energy power outage.

Although Winter Park’s retail electric prices are far less than neighboring Duke Energy’s, and the statewide average, D’Alessandro said price comparisons are easy to make. “Where we really hang our hat is on reliability and customer service.” Shortly before the city municipalized, its customers experienced an average of three hours of power outages per year. Now, that number is down to 41 minutes, and he’s working to push it lower.

Sometimes service shows itself in the little things. Winter Park lineworkers unfurl flags at restaurants and community events. The utility’s website shares D’Alessandro’s name and contact information. He doesn’t play hide-and-seek with those who pay his salary. And when he gets customer calls, he jumps into action.

The Winter Park leader recalled he took a call at home on a Sunday from a customer who said power was out in parts of his home. Knowing that meant there was a bad neutral at the customer site, he called the on-call troubleman and asked him to assist the customer.

In a similar vein, downtown Park Avenue is restaurant row in Winter Park, and all the restaurants on that street have his home and cell numbers and email address in case they need to alert him to power outages or service problems. It’s part of what he called “providing concierge service, a level of service you’d never get from an IOU.”



D'Alessandro began his utility career as a lineworker at Progress Energy. Many times, he said he worked through the night to restore a power outage, only to come to work the next day and hear that customers had complained about long restoration times.

"Communications is critical," he said. "I believe we would have gotten far fewer complaints if we provided customers with more timely updates so they could make decisions. Should I pack up the family and go to a hotel? Should I order a bunch of pizzas? Or should I wait 30 minutes until the power comes back on?"

"Most customers will be patient and understanding if you communicate with them," he said.

Make Sure Your Customers Know They Are Owners

In 2015, when Lakeland Electric established a marketing department separate from the city's, one of the first things it learned was that a significant portion of its customers thought the utility was privately owned by investors.

"That really stood out for us," recalled Lacy, the utilities marketing manager. "Before we tried to do anything else, we

needed to inform our customers that we were locally owned, locally controlled and locally operated. We went to a lot of homeowner's association meetings, Rotary Club meetings, Kiwanis Club meetings to strategically inform customers that we were owned by them.

"If customers don't understand that you are locally owned and responsive to them, they won't appreciate the other things we do."

Lakeland Electric reoriented its marketing materials to highlight local businesses, energy efficiency rebates and employees.

Another way the Winter Park Electric Utility delivers on its pledge to provide concierge-level services is their current undergrounding project.

The utility polled residents about undergrounding service lines to the home as a way to increase electric reliability and resilience, particularly during the hurricane season. About 50 percent said they were interested. Most of those who were less interested cited the expected cost of burying electric lines into the home.

So the utility, acting on a suggestion from its Utility Advisory Board, offered to underground the lines at no cost. It is using its net revenue to pay the estimated \$7 million annual cost.

"Given the circumstances that led to the creation of a municipal utility, reliability and resilience are special issues for our customers," Dan D'Alessandro said. "We offer lower prices, better reliability, and we're undergrounding lines to customers' homes at no cost. What's the likelihood you're going to get that from an IOU?"

The overriding message, she said, was that “at the end of the day, we’re your neighbors.”

Showing the public power flag once a year, during Public Power Week recognized annually each October, is not enough, she emphasized. “We need to talk about the benefits of public power continuously.”

Once their customers understood Lakeland Electric was locally owned, Lacy said, “things kind of made more sense to them.” Now, more than 50 percent of the utility’s customers know Lakeland Electric is owned by the community.

When those numbers shifted in the utility’s direction, she continued, other messages about community involvement and energy efficiency naturally got greater traction.

The “acid test” of local ownership, she continued, was what came to be known in 2019 as the “115 Campaign,” when a ballot initiative came up that would, if passed, have made it easier to sell the utility to an outside party. That came as the utility was celebrating its 115th year of service, so the utility decided to respond to the ballot initiative by emphasizing its long history of local ownership and local control.

Using local artist designs on T-shirts, highlighting successful relationships with local businesses and using the “Locally Owned By Me” slogan to help customers feel like stakeholders were their big wins from this campaign, she said.

“I don’t think we would have succeeded in that campaign if we had not worked to inform our customers that they owned the utility,” she said. “Once people learn how public power supports the community, they tend to become big supporters.”

In terms of advocacy, Lacy advised other Florida public power utilities to “consider every conversation and every interaction



as another opportunity to creating a utility advocate.”

Lacy said opposition to the ballot initiative came spontaneously from the community with no named group to organize it.

“We work hard to connect with our community on macro and micro scales,” she said. “We are telling our story through news media, advertisements, and owned media like our website and social media platforms. We are speaking at neighborhood meetings, visiting students in the classroom, attending community events and supporting sports, arts and culture organizations. We support students in S.T.E.A.M. education through scholarships and local nonprofits through grants.

“You can’t build any relationship without listening. For us, this means feet on the ground at community events, collaborating with local nonprofits, conducting surveys and participating in interest-based forums and focus groups. By listening to our customers’ changing needs, concerns and successes, we can be a better partner in our community.”

“I love technology and the amazing ways it is changing how we communicate,” she said, “but word-of-mouth and third-party endorsements are still hugely important. Those personal experiences shared at soccer practice drop-off or in line at the local coffee shop carry tremendous credibility.”

Finding the Most Effective Channels in Your Community

Most Effective

Face-to-Face Interaction with Employees

Customer Word-of-Mouth

Social Media

Video Content

Digital ads

Customer Newsletter

Community Sponsorships

Locally owned utilities are continually experimenting to find the most effective communications channels, with the understanding that a diverse portfolio is necessary to reach all customers.

Ocala Electric Utility (OEU), which provides electric service to about 54,000 customers, is celebrating its 125th year of service in 2023. It has a core value of astonishing, not just satisfying, its customers.

One way it does that is through the philosophy of “C.A.R.E.” — Communities Are the Responsibility of Everyone.

“OEU employees want to be part of Ocala,” Director Doug Peebles said in an interview. “We are our community. We live here. Our kids go to school here. Treating each other, and our customers, with respect is part of how we operate.”

Peebles, a 22-year Ocala Electric Utility employee, became director in January 2022.

“Doug plays a large role in promoting a positive organizational culture,” said Tyler Puckett, the utility’s supervisor for public education, outreach and administration. “We’ve always encouraged employees to volunteer and be active members of the community, but there has been an increase in participation in the last year.”

Delivering on its C.A.R.E. program, OEU participated in 298 community events and presentations in 2021. Ocala Electric Utility prides itself on being Ocala’s “Hometown Public Power Provider.”

The utility also logged 122,300 social media impressions that year. All told, the utility counted a total of 510,374 contacts in 2021. Not bad for a community of about 62,000.

The utility has an expansive view of who should be involved in community outreach. In a word, everyone.

“Outreach is not the sole responsibility of the community relations staff,” Peebles said. “Of course, they lead the charge, but they do it with members of line crews, metering crews, substation, relay, engineering, resource management, finance and beyond. Retirees get involved too at in-house events.

“Everyone is part of the outreach — that’s how we roll.”

Peebles urges others to “own your message as a public power provider. Stay connected — in-person and virtually. Be a champion for your team.”

The utility has amplified its social media efforts over the last 12-18 months, added Puckett. But she said, “word of mouth is still the preferred method of communication in our community.”

“You have to be diverse in your communications, but face-to-face outreach has the greatest impact,” she commented.



The utility's annual customer appreciation day, held each October during Public Power Week, celebrates customers and thanks them for their support, Puckett continued. "Customers are our best advocates," she added.

Past customer appreciation days have featured face-painting, shaved ice, bucket truck rides and a raffle for a total of \$5,000 in credits to customers' electric bills.

"We feel we have a high level of customer engagement, but we can do more," Peebles said. "We're always seeking more effective ways to communicate with customers. We want to be smart in how we expand our communications."

Peebles said in the past, it's been particularly challenging to fill open lineman jobs. Previously, an externally

posted position went unfilled for several months. Recently, OEU opened a lineman position and got several qualified candidates within three weeks. "That tells me we're doing something right," he said.

Like any utility, Ocala has dealt with employee turnover. Sometimes employees retire but other times they leave to "chase the money" offered by other utilities and the private sector. Peebles said that six of those former employees who left to work at contracting firms came back to Ocala over the last eight months. "We want Ocala to be a career destination," he said.

The strength of Ocala's relationships with its customers may get tested this year, as sharply rising natural gas costs are translating into higher

customer electricity prices in the form of a PCA or Power Cost Adjustment. But the utility is going into that challenge with a strong base of community support. "High fuel prices are everywhere and unfortunately we are all experiencing the impact," said Peebles.

Laurie Zink, development and community outreach director of the Ocala Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC), explained: "OEU has continually been open to and supportive of innovative ideas that focus on education, community engagement, arts and culture and lifelong learning. Their support assists many organizations in providing services and programs which make [our] community a dynamic and creative place to live and work. We at IHMC, thank OEU for their continued support and look forward to many more initiatives together in the future." ■



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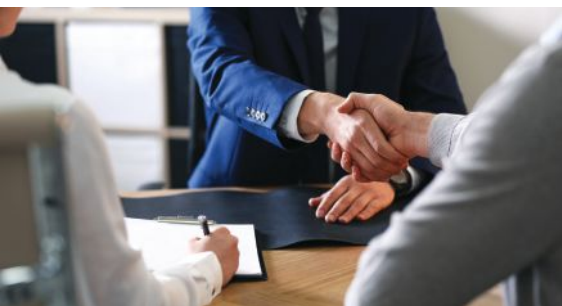
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POLICY MAKERS' PERSPECTIVES: ADVOCATING FOR PUBLIC POWER IN WASHINGTON

by Nicole Albers



Recently, Florida officials serving on the American Public Power Association's (APPA) Policy Makers Council (PMC) flew to Washington, D.C., to meet with their members of Congress on issues critical to public power. The PMC, which normally gathers twice a year in the nation's capital, is composed of 45 elected or appointed officials on the

governing bodies of public power communities from across the country.

JEA Board Member General Joe DiSalvo and Lakeland City Commissioner Stephanie Madden share firsthand their role on APPA's Policy Makers Council and their experiences this summer advocating for their utilities and public power in Washington. ■

FMEA-SUPPORTED APPA 'FLY-IN' A BIG PLUS FOR PUBLIC POWER ADVOCACY

by Joseph DiSalvo, JEA Board Member, Member on APPA's Policy Maker Council

As a member on APPA's Policy Makers Council (PMC), I had the pleasure of participating in the association's July 2022 "Fly-In." This was a terrific opportunity to engage Congress and advocate on the key issues confronting public power utilities, and to detail what we are already doing to meet these challenges. APPA CEO Joy Ditto and her team were outstanding in getting all the council members smart on the state of play related to supply chain constraints, sequestration of Build America Bonds (BAB) credit payments, grid security and public power tax credits. APPA's extensive outreach and rapport with Congress, national and state government agencies, and the broader utility industry is very impressive and effective.

Here are a few Fly-In highlights that I took away from my advocacy engagements with some congressional staff and fellow PMC colleagues: (1) Supply chain issues appear to be the most significant challenge for utility services all across the nation. All stakeholders are looking at innovative solutions to mitigate the severe shortage of distribution

transformers, but Congress, the Department of Energy (DOE) (and other agencies), industry and utility representatives must collectively collaborate to find effective and innovative mechanisms to lessen the impact on our customers and the economy. In other words, continue — as we have been — to collaborate as a collective body and not as separate entities. (2) The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) is funding significant grants to DOE, the Department of Transportation and other agencies that public utilities can potentially tap into, so knowing how to engage at the national and state levels is important. (3) At all of the congressional offices I visited, I found them to have a genuine interest in all of the above issues after we highlighted our concerns. They clearly understand the negative impact these issues are having on their constituents and are receptive to continued dialogue to stay abreast of the issues. (4) There is no secret sauce out there to fix these issues. All stakeholders must be persistent in finding solutions. (5) Without question, the most significant highlight was interacting with fellow council members and hearing about

the innovative measures they are pursuing, and contributing to the genuine team play they all displayed.

So, this all gets back to the importance and value that national and state organizations like APPA and FMEA have with their ability to keep stakeholders current on all the trends and to provide venues where everyone can collaborate and work toward effective solutions. I witnessed this firsthand and look forward to participating in future advocacy events sponsored by both of our public power flagships and others. ■



JEA Vice President of Government Relations Kurt Wilson, Sen. Rubio staff member Connor Tomlinson, Sen. Rubio's Legislative Director Lauren Reamy, and JEA Board Member General Joe DiSalvo

FMEA, APPA OPPORTUNITIES: ELECTED OFFICIALS ADVOCATING FOR PUBLIC POWER IN WASHINGTON, DC

by Stephanie Madden, Lakeland City Commissioner, Member on APPA's Policy Makers Council

"In discussing electrical power, the speaker, like a ship sailing in dangerous waters, must avoid not only unseen shoals and rocky reefs, he must also be on his guard against false lights on the shore. His only protection against all of these dangers is to set squarely and fairly before him the course that he must steer." This quote, by Franklin D. Roosevelt on September 21, 1932, during his first presidential campaign in Portland, Oregon, on Public Utilities and Development of Hydro-Electric Power, highlights the benefits our public power trade associations deliver to their members. Candidate Roosevelt knew both the complexity of providing electricity and the necessity of making it available to everyone in our country.

We all benefit from the miracle of Edison's first lightbulb, but the reality is, even after Edison's discovery, some people used gaslight and candles for another 50 years. It is hard to imagine that, in 1925, only half of American homes had electric power. I am grateful to say, as a citizen in Lakeland, Florida, our leaders decided to get in the public



Lakeland City Commissioner Stephanie Madden and Congressman Scott Franklin

power game early, to provide electricity to their residents before FDR's Rural Electrification Act of 1936.

In 1902, Lakeland Electric illuminated our city, and we have benefited from that decision by having affordable, reliable power for more than 100 years! And millions of dollars come back into our community in the form of a dividend each year, keeping our property taxes low. Our citizens know that our quality of life in Lakeland is due in large part to the additional revenue stream we receive from Lakeland Electric. Our citizens are



Lakeland City Commissioner Stephanie Madden and Congressman Greg Steube

passionate about continuing that legacy, so it is imperative that our utility committee and city commissioners stay informed and apprised of industry best practices, as well as state and federal policies that affect the way we deliver that power. It is a complex business, and the unseen shoals and rocky reefs we face can be

everything from hurricanes to federal climate policy mandates. In order to navigate these dangerous waters, we rely on the collective efforts of the Florida Municipal Electric Association and the national American Public Power Association based in Washington, D.C., which are continually watchful of policies coming our way that could threaten our ability to serve our customers.

I have the honor of serving on the APPA Policy Makers Council. The members of the PMC are briefed on the major issues affecting our industry and have the opportunity to meet with our representatives in Congress to advocate on behalf of public power. At this summer's D.C. Fly-In, we were tasked with addressing climate change and CO2 emissions as our No. 1 priority; other issues, such as supply chain concerns, were also discussed. Although each utility is unique, there is much common ground. We tell our stories as elected officials whose communities benefit from public power.

This summer, we expressed the importance of having economy-wide efforts and a technology-neutral approach when tackling the climate crisis, keeping affordability and reliability

paramount. We added to that the importance of having industry parity, such as comparable tax incentives like direct payment tax credits when we make investments. We also need to be at the table when discussing grid security, so that we don't receive redundant reporting mandates. Thankfully, APPA and FMEA are monitoring various federal rulemakings that are going on now, because these need to harmonize with the reporting that we already do.

Advocacy keeps us front of mind, and is a part of the equation, when determining things like the rollout of EV charging infrastructure. Public power should be consulted when considering DC Fast charging stations, both as partners and as a consideration of capacity and loads in each utility's territory. In Florida, if we experience mass adoption of EVs, how will that affect our evacuation routes? Storms are always a daunting threat to our business, but this season we have a supply chain crisis. Thankfully, both FMEA and APPA engaged in information sharing, surveying our members' supply of distribution transformers, to brainstorm ways we can avoid the toilet paper phenomenon. Collectively mitigating the hoarding of transformers

is a must, since we cannot predict the next disaster — will it be wildfires on the West Coast, a tornado tearing through the Midwest or a hurricane blowing across our state? The bottom line is that our members of Congress need to know the importance of having a healthy supply of critical electric grid components and enact policies for more domestic production, and with this current shortage of distribution transformers, relaxing the EPA's efficiency standards may be key to bolster supply.

In a day of rapidly changing technology, we need to be on guard for those "false lights," the shiny objects that tempt us off course, but there are some exciting emerging technologies. Through FMEA's and APPA's educational sessions, I have learned about many of them, projects like NuScale's nuclear small modular reactors and the electrolyzers that can be paired with solar resources to create green hydrogen, both possible opportunities that could help us solve the renewable equation. FDR was right, this sea is fraught with potential storms, but I believe that together we are up to the challenge, and APPA and FMEA are two of the lighthouses that will help us steer our ships safely to shore. ■



OEU LEGISLATIVE VISITS

Ocala Electric Utility (OEU) is passionate about the community and is dedicated to fostering an open line of communication between the electric utility industry and state elected officials. One way that OEU fosters these relationships is by hosting elected officials to showcase OEU's impact on the community as Ocala's hometown public power provider.

In June, Florida State Rep. Joe Harding (R-District 22) visited OEU to learn about the electric utility and participate

in demonstrations at the training yard. During the visit, Rep. Harding engaged in invaluable discussions with the OEU leadership team, as well as transmission and distribution staff.


In addition, OEU hosted Florida State Sen. Keith Perry (R-District 8), where the leadership team connected with the Senator on various topics within the electric industry. Sen. Perry later returned to the utility to participate in a pole change out with OEU crews in the field.

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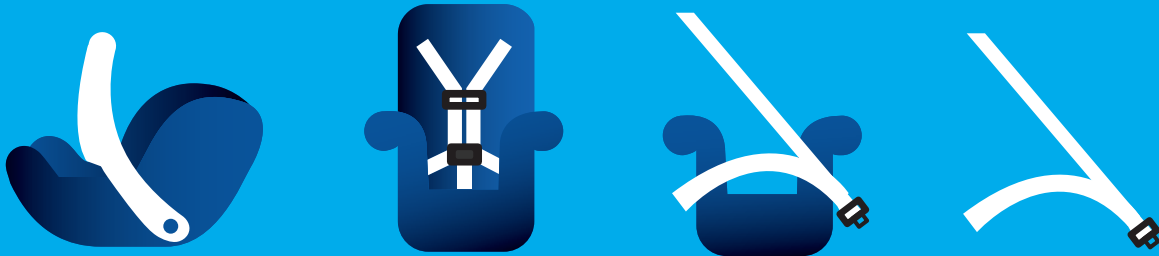


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READY, SET, LOBBY!

A 5-STEP, HOW-TO GUIDE
FOR FMEA MEMBERS

by John Egan

Florida
FACTS

LENGTH NORTH & SOUTH
447 Miles Long
St. Mary's River to Key West

WIDTH EAST & WEST
361 Miles Wide
Atlantic Ocean to Perdido River

ACQUIRED BY UNITED STATES
From Spain by Treaty
ADMITTED TO UNION AS STATE
March 3, 1845
RANK AMONG STATES OF ADMISSION
27th



FMEA's lobbyists in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., agree that grassroots advocacy from public power officials and Board members makes an impact on elected officials — and is a force multiplier for third-party government relations professionals.

"If a picture is worth a thousand words," FMEA Congressional Lobbyist Michael Nolan said, "a face-to-face visit with an elected official is worth a million."

Members of Congress and their staff are spending more time in their district offices than they once did, he continued, which is the perfect opportunity for Florida public power leaders and Board members to reach out and make sure the voice of their community is heard by lawmakers.

Nolan urged FMEA members to advocate this advantage: "We're not large, for-profit corporations from someplace else. We provide a critical service to our communities and their constituents. We reflect the voices of our communities that vote for elected officials."

Because of its not-for-profit status, public power typically is unable to write big checks to lawmakers' election campaigns, but the wallet is only one way to convey a utility's viewpoint to an elected official. "People power," the secret weapon of locally owned utilities, can level the playing field. Grassroots activism from people in the district helps offset the deeper pockets of investor-owned utilities, lobbyists said.

"The relationship between a constituent and a legislator is different from that of a lobbyist and legislator," commented Ryan Matthews, FMEA's lead state lobbyist and a shareholder at GrayRobinson, a legal and public affairs firm that has represented Florida public power in Tallahassee for more than 25 years. "The stories and connections public power officials bring from their community are so important to lawmakers. Legislators need to hear how laws they pass directly affect people in their districts."

"Public power leaders are a force multiplier for lobbyists," said Dean Cannon, a former speaker of Florida's House of Representatives and current GrayRobinson president and CEO. "We are more successful when FMEA members join us."

"If it was about money, we would have lost a long time ago," added GrayRobinson shareholder Joseph Salzverg.

Step 1: Why Lobby?

Florida's term limits mean there is a fresh new crop of lawmakers each year. In the House, members can serve four two-year terms, while in the Senate, they are limited to two four-year terms.

"In an era of term limits and member turnover in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C., our opponents do their best to undermine public power," commented Cannon.

"It is essential that we are proactive, not reactive," said Salzverg. "It's more difficult to play defense when a contentious issue arises."

"If something sudden happens and you haven't already laid the foundation, there is insufficient time to do so," added Cannon. "That is why public power needs to continuously plant the flag year after year, renewing resources and relationships, and maintaining those connections."

"When the legislature is not in session, our job is to educate elected officials, their staff and committee staff," said Matthews. "For much of 2022, that has meant explaining why natural gas prices are rising, which affects each utility's prices. We're also explaining how supply chain issues are leading to the extreme shortage of transformers and other

critical electric components, where there's a two-year backlog for new orders. And, of course, in advance of the Atlantic Hurricane season, we discuss what locally owned utilities have done to become more resilient."

"Our work has to start with safety and reliability of what FMEA members provide," said Salzverg. "That's the true North for FMEA members. There is no real conversation about anything until elected officials understand that public power provides safe, reliable and affordable service to their constituents."

"At the end of the day, it is our job to deliver the message to lawmakers that public power is in our communities and providing low-cost, highly reliable electric utility services," Salzverg continued.

While lobbying is inherently a political act, it should not be conducted on a partisan basis.

"Stay away from partisanship," advised Nolan. "Our job is to make friends. We need friends on both sides of the aisle, so it's best to emphasize that our customers are a lawmaker's constituents. We're true believers for public power and our communities, let them know that."

Step 2: Know the Legislative Calendar

Becoming familiar with a legislature's calendar is a critical first step for those public power policymakers and local utility officials who want to work alongside FMEA and their lobbyists in Tallahassee or Washington, D.C.

The Florida House of Representatives consists of 120 members, while there are 40 state senators. Currently, Republicans are in the majority in both chambers: 78-42 in the House and 24-16 in the Senate.



U.S. Congressman Neal Dunn (Florida-02) on a tour of the city of Tallahassee's acclaimed airport-based solar farm with members of the city's leadership team and FMEA representatives.

Florida's current congressional delegation consists of 27 members of the U.S. House and two Senators: There, too, Republicans predominate. Following the 2020 U.S. Census, Florida gains one new House seat for the new Congress that will be elected in November 2022, growing the total delegation to 28 members.

Step 3: Come Prepared

"When trying to influence lawmakers, come prepared," recommended Nolan.

Nolan suggested coming with two or three key messages and ending by reiterating them. "You don't have a lot of time with members of Congress. Stay focused. Perhaps a bill is having or could have a negative unforeseen consequence. Our job is to work with FMEA members to help them make sure lawmakers understand the consequences

of proposed or actual legislation and the impacts locally."

Since members of Congress are spending more time in their home districts than was once the case, the best time to schedule an in-person visit is when a member or their staffer is in the district office.

Knowing the legislative calendar, and members' travel schedules, is critical to securing a face-to-face meeting, lobbyists said.

"During the legislative session, it's not unusual for a member to reschedule a meeting with a lobbyist to accommodate a meeting with people who have traveled from the home district to Tallahassee to share an issue of concern," said GrayRobinson's Cannon. "Elected officials care what people from their district think.

"That is even greater when it comes to public power because we have to capitalize on the nobility and the public nature of what we do and how and why we do it," he continued. "Nobody is better equipped to deliver that message than someone whose business is a municipal electric customer from the district. There is a different level of significance when the message comes from someone who is doing it on a volunteer basis vs. a hired advocate."

Step 4: If You Have an 'Ask,' Don't Beat Around the Bush

Salzverg recalled a "really big fight" over broadband in Florida where public power leaders "helped turn the tide" against restrictive draft legislation.

"These three communities that came together and met with their elected officials really helped turn the tide in a contentious moment," Salzverg continued. Their involvement helped amend the bill and preserve the ability for local utilities to control their power poles as it relates to pole attachments.

Nolan recalled when a member of Congress visited the City of Tallahassee and a separate occasion when a key staffer recently visited Beaches Energy Services in Jacksonville Beach. Both visited areas of the electric utility critical to the provision of electric service — a control room and a substation — and came away knowing much more than they did before.

Tallahassee's large solar project at the airport was particularly interesting — the member had never seen so much solar in one place — and he came away with a deeper appreciation of renewable resources and what it could mean to his constituents. Visits like these are important and can make a lasting impression.

"Electricity is a business unlike any other, and it's harder than it looks," Nolan said.

“That’s why it is so important to meet with your elected officials to make sure they understand your commitment to safety, reliability and affordability.”

If your community has a specific request, lobbyists say it is best to be forthright with the lawmaker or staffer. “Maybe you want them to sign a letter or cosponsor a bill or vote a certain way,” said Nolan. “Let them know right away. But sometimes you don’t have a specific ‘ask,’ and that’s OK too — use it to your advantage. I have seen members and staff visibly relax when we tell them we don’t have a specific request. Immediately the mood changes. Those can be some of the best meetings.

“Remember, our job is to inform and make friends; informing them is paramount, making friends is an added bonus.”

Step 5: Don’t Burn Bridges

The GrayRobinson Government Affairs and Lobbying Team has a few tips for FMEA members as they advocate for their utilities and public power:

- Be concise.
- Stay focused on the issue.
- Be respectful.
- Come with an ask.
- Seek to leave with a result.
- Don’t burn a bridge.
- If you must criticize, fight the policy, not the people.

Nolan agreed that burning a bridge can doom future lobbying efforts. “Today’s Capitol Hill scheduler can become a chief of staff someday. You need to have a personal touch when you interact with people in the legislative process: Where did they come from? What are they interested in? How did they get into politics?”

Asking those kinds of questions can lead to an invitation to play softball on a team organized by Capitol Hill staffers or a

round of golf with a staffer. All of that off-the-clock interaction has kept doors open or opened doors that had once been closed, he said.

Top Legislative Issues for Florida Public Power

There is no shortage of issues where public power would be strengthened by FMEA members’ hands-on involvement in the lobbying process, lobbyists agree:

- Preserving the existing state regulatory structure where city councils and public power governing bodies set retail electricity prices.
- Protecting the public power business model and preserving local control and local operation.
- Three-quarters of Florida’s power is generated from natural gas, so anything involving natural gas is important to lawmakers and FMEA because gas prices affect electric prices.
- Last year’s federal bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is a once-in-a-generation, \$1.2 trillion legislative smorgasbord with about 350 program areas administered by more than a dozen federal agencies. Billions of dollars are being distributed to states to support utility grid modernization, resiliency, cybersecurity, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, transmission

upgrades, hydroelectric projects and transportation electrification.

- Municipal bonds are the financial lifeline for public power utilities, and that lifeline must be protected from encroachments by profit-seeking utilities. Lawmakers need to understand what could happen if that lifeline is cut.
- Resiliency and power restoration: Florida has extreme weather, and lawmakers at the local, state and federal levels need to know that locally owned utilities work hard to restore power safely and quickly.
- As concerns rise over global climate change, it is important that legislators know FMEA members are individually, or collectively through the Florida Municipal Solar Project, bringing more and more megawatts of solar power online throughout the state.

“Nearly every energy or environmental issue is a public power issue,” Nolan said.

Nolan shared two longtime lobbyist truisms that, he hopes, will get executives out of their offices and into the offices of lawmakers:

- If you don’t have an agenda, someone else will, and you need to be prepared for that.
- If you’re not at the table, you will be on the menu. ■



“Meeting with Congressional staff in our district, rather than in Washington D.C., is hugely beneficial in highlighting the key issues that face our city, our utility, our citizens and our customers. These in-person visits further enhance Congressional staff’s understanding [of] the challenges as they can see for themselves what constituents are dealing with back at home. It also gives us the opportunity for one-on-one discussions, which are rarely possible in D.C. due to their hectic schedules.”

– Allen Putnam, Director, Beaches Energy Services on recent visit with Katie Heffernan from Congressman John Rutherford’s office

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