

Meet Your Cooperative Directors

This month, we are excited to continue the series that invites you to learn more about each of the nine members who serve on the Woodruff Electric Cooperative Board of Directors. The Board of Directors is the representative body of the members of the cooperative. It represents the cooperative member-owners and acts on their behalf. This month's feature is on the Board member that represents District 5, J. Byron Ponder.

MEET YOUR DIRECTOR

In 1975, Byron Ponder started his service on the Woodruff Electric Cooperative Board of Directors. While serving as a director, he has held positions as Woodruff Electric's board secretary-treasurer, chairman and is currently the vice-chairman.

Byron is a lifelong resident of St. Francis County and a graduate of Forrest City High School. He was active in the United States Navy from 1962 to 1966. Byron went on to later become a local postmaster for the United States Postal Service where he served the local citizens for 32 years until his retirement in 2005.

Byron and his wife, JoAnn, were married in 1970 and have three children. Byron has been an active member of the Forrest City Masonic Lodge for over 40 years. In 2018, he received the Grand Lodge Medal of Honor and is a 33rd Degree Mason. Byron has a passion for the outdoors and enjoys working in his vegetable and flower gardens.

Byron has completed all levels of the NRECA director education program including the Credentialed Cooperative Director Certificate, Board Leadership Certificate and Director Gold Credential.



WECC REFUNDS AN ADDITIONAL \$1.2 MILLION TO MEMBERS

Woodruff Electric is one of the 17 electric distribution cooperatives that collectively are known as the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas (ECA). The ECA has issued a special one-time "Covid-19 Relief Credit" with Woodruff Electric's portion amounting to \$1,236,907. The Woodruff Electric Board of Directors voted to pass this one-time special credit to current, active members that are facing the unique challenges caused by the novel coronavirus.

Members received two additional credits listed on their bill received in June, "COVID-19 RELIEF CREDIT" and "COVID-19 RELIEF KWH CREDIT." We feel this is an excellent demonstration of Cooperative Principle #7, "Concern for Community," being put to work for our members during these unprecedented times.

Woodruff Electric wants to do our part to ease concerns as we work together for the good of all members during these difficult times. The total refund to our membership with the 2020 capital credit refund and the special one-time "Covid-19 Relief Credit" brings the total credit to \$2,879,805 back to our members. Woodruff Electric hopes the retirement of capital credits and the special one-time "Covid-19 Relief Credit" will provide some financial relief to the membership. Woodruff Electric is proud to be your local energy partner!

Understanding solar quotes

Solar energy is a great energy source. However, a common-sense approach must be used when confronted with sales presentations that sound too good to be true. Understanding solar quotes can help you to make an informed decision. If you are considering solar, contact Woodruff Electric at 870-633-2262 for help calculating the impact a solar installation will have on your electric bill.

“Energy independence” and “taking control of energy costs” are phrases that sound empowering and attractive when used. Remember, the sun does not shine 24/7, and having utility power is still the most reliable source of energy you can utilize. Battery storage options do exist but are very expensive and have their limits.

FACT:

Most solar arrays being installed today require utility power to function. If utility power is off, the solar array DOES NOT continue providing energy to the home.

Many solar quotes apply a three to four percent annual increase to your current energy rate. This practice drastically increases estimated savings over time and is simply a tactic to create a sense of urgency in your need to go solar.

FACT:

Over the last 20 years (2000-2019), Woodruff Electric’s residential rates averaged a 1.3 percent annual rate increase. During the last 10 years (2010-2019), the average was 1.1 percent. *Arkansas has the seventh lowest residential price of electricity. *Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Form EIA-861M, Monthly Electric Power Industry Report for January 2020.

A tax credit is an allowance by the federal government. If you meet eligibility guidelines, the qualified amount can be subtracted from the amount of taxes you owe in a given year. A tax “credit” does NOT result in a cash-in-hand refund, rather it simply reduces the amount of taxes, if any, that you owe.

The ability to “eliminate your electric bill” is another claim often made. For as long as you have electric service from Woodruff Electric, there are costs associated with having that service available to you 24/7/365 that must be recovered.

FACT:

With solar, the minimum monthly electric bill will vary based on your rate classification. For example, if you are a residential member then you can expect your minimum monthly electric bill to be *\$26 plus applicable taxes. *NOTE: Subject to change.

BEST PRACTICES:

- Never sign a contract without taking the time to research every claim, promise and figure.
- If you choose to have solar installed, do not oversize your system. Excess production has little value and increases the time it takes to recoup your investment.
- Focus on energy efficiency improvements first. It can reduce your overall energy use, reduce the size of the solar system you need, and can potentially save you thousands of dollars.
- Grid-tied solar installations require utility approval.
- Make sure your property or homeowners association or city regulations permit the installation of solar.
- Contact Woodruff Electric and let us help you understand the impact installing solar can have on your electric bill.

See more from Woodruff Electric on page 26

Plan for a safe and festive Fourth

Normally the Fourth of July involves big get-togethers and boisterous gatherings. However, this year has been anything but normal due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We're celebrating everything from graduations to birthdays differently in these times of social distancing. And it's possible that we're having to rethink our usual Independence Day parties and plans.

Many of us will be observing our nation's birthday — as well as spending our summers — close to home.

We at Woodruff Electric Cooperative want to make sure our members focus on safety in addition to fun.

Nothing says "Fourth of July" like a spectacular fireworks display! Some big fireworks events around the state are still happening as scheduled.

If you want to put on your own show at home, first check local laws. Only use fireworks where and when allowed. (In Arkansas, fireworks may be sold and used from June 20 through July 10 and Dec. 10 through Jan. 5, but they cannot be used everywhere.)

Please heed these guidelines from the American Red Cross:

- Always follow the instructions on fireworks' packaging, and never give fireworks to small children.
- Keep a supply of water close by as a precaution.
- Make sure to wear protective eyewear when lighting fireworks.

- Light only one firework at a time, and never attempt to relight a "dud."
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from children and pets.
- Never throw or point fireworks toward people, animals, vehicles, structures or flammable materials.

When it comes to cookouts, make sure your feasts also come with a side helping of safety. The American Red Cross offers these tips:

- Keep children and pets away from the grill.
- Wash your hands before preparing food.
- Don't leave food out in the hot sun. Keep perishable foods in a cooler with plenty of ice or freezer gel packs.
- Always supervise a grill when in use. Don't add charcoal starter fluid when coals have already been ignited. Use long-handled tools especially made for grilling.
- Never grill indoors. Keep the grill out in the open, away from the house, the deck, tree branches or anything that could catch fire.
- Make sure everyone, including pets, stays away from the grill.

However you'll be celebrating this year, Woodruff Electric Cooperative wishes you a safe and festive Fourth of July!

HAPPY
INDEPENDENCE
DAY

4th of July