

# Nebraska Power Association 2024 Annual Conference



## **Governor Jim Pillen**

Governor Jim Pillen was sworn in as Nebraska's 41<sup>st</sup> Governor on January 5, 2023.

He enters office with the goal of protecting, training, and keeping our kids in Nebraska, cutting taxes, growing agriculture, and defending our commonsense, conservative values.

Governor Pillen grew up on a farm in Platte County, Nebraska and raised pigs with his father, Dale. He graduated from Lakeview High School.

He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Animal Science from UNL, and married Suzanne Shreve. Governor Pillen then earned a doctor of veterinary medicine

from Kansas State. In 1983, he returned to Nebraska and opened a small animal practice and swine consulting practice.

Governor Pillen and his father, Dale, partnered together, raising 60 sows and 1,200 market hogs on a dirt lot on their home farm. In 1993, Jim started Pillen Family Farms. In 2003, he added DNA Genetics. In 2010, his two oldest children, Sarah and Brock, joined the business.

Pillen Family Farms and DNA Genetics are now a multigenerational family-run business, composed of over 1,100 team members. The family business operates by some basic core beliefs—do what is right, do the best you can, and treat others the way you want to be treated.

Jim and wife, Suzanne, have four children, Sarah, Brock, Polly and Izic, and seven grandchildren, William, Halle, Eloise, Henry, Harrison, Ava, and Thomas.



## **Carrie Hulse-Greene, Director of Reputation & Public Safety Communications, University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

Carrie Hulse is an award-winning journalist with more than 30 years of experience of responding to crisis events. She is recognized as the first journalist to report live from the scene of the Oklahoma City Bombing on April 19, 1995. As news director of KOSU Radio on the campus of Oklahoma State University, she led the station's coverage of the 2001 plane crash that killed 10 members of the Oklahoma State men's basketball program. For the last 15 years, Carrie has worked in various crisis communications and public information roles responding to, planning for and mitigating crisis communications and reputation management issues. Currently she works for the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as Director of Reputation Management and Public Safety Communications.

# Nebraska Power Association 2024 Annual Conference



## **Hunter Traynor, Executive Vice President of Legislation & Policy, NE Chamber**

Hunter Traynor is Executive Vice President of Legislation & Policy at the NE Chamber. In his role he leads policy research and analysis, as well as manages state and federal government affairs at the NE Chamber's chief lobbyist. Hunter also continues to assist with internal legal matters in the capacity of Associate General Counsel. Hunter has also been a part of the policy team and has made a positive impact on the NE Chamber.

Prior to joining the NE Chamber, he practiced law at Rembolt Ludtke LLP in Lincoln. His practice areas focused on business services, estate planning and administration, real estate, and government.

Hunter was born and raised in Elkhorn and received a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln before graduating with highest distinction from the University of Nebraska College of Law.

Outside of the office, Hunter enjoys reading, writing, music, exercise and nutrition, and traveling.



## **Michael Nolan, Federal Government Relations Consultant, MJN Consulting**

Michael J. Nolan ("MJN Consulting LLC") is a federal government relations consultant who has been working on behalf of the public power community for nearly 30 years, representing municipal electric utilities in both private practice and as a Washington Representative and lobbyist with the American Public Power Association (APPA).

For several years Michael served as senior government relations representative at APPA, a Washington-based national trade association of nearly 2,000 members, where he lobbied for public power interests on Capitol Hill. He also coordinated APPA's legislative strategy utilizing local elected and appointed officials, including organizing the Policy Makers Council, a group of elected municipal leaders from public power communities across the country. He served as APPA's liaison to several key

Washington organizations, including the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities, but his primary responsibilities included lobbying Congress on federal legislative matters important to municipal electric utilities.

As a lobbyist in private practice Michael has represented various public power entities and currently represents the Florida Municipal Electric Association, Florida Municipal Power Agency, TPPA, the Texas public power group, Manitowoc, WI, both MMUA and SMMPA in Minnesota, and Lincoln Electric System in Nebraska, as well as the Florida Electric Cooperative Association.

Michael was raised by the U.S. Navy, counts Newport, R.I. as his home, lives on Capitol Hill, drinks a lot of wine and is a diehard fan of the Boston Red Sox, thus the wine.

# Nebraska Power Association 2024 Annual Conference



## **Russell Westerhold, Partner, Edwards Westerhold and Moore**

Russell Westerhold grew up on a fifth-generation farm outside Pender, Nebraska. Having held a lifelong fascination for politics, he graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan University in 1999 with a double major in English and Political Science before going on to graduate with distinction from the University of Nebraska College of Law in 2002.

After graduating, Russell actively practiced law for 15 years at the Omaha law firm Fraser Stryker. While there, his practice focused on the areas of energy and natural resources, construction, and telecommunications. Additionally, he was a member of the firm's litigation team and tried numerous cases to verdict in state and federal courts. Russell is a recipient of the Great Plains Super Lawyer Rising Star Award in Energy and Natural Resources (2013-2016). He has been admitted to practice before Nebraska's state and federal courts, the United States Courts of Appeal for the First and Eighth Circuits, and the United States Supreme Court. He has been a member of the Nebraska State Bar Association since 2002.

Russell joined Edwards Westerhold Moore on August 1, 2017.

At Edwards Westerhold Moore, Russell finds himself regularly working with rural-based clients as a result of his background. His professional experience also drives him to be involved with the energy and education sectors. Russell lives in Ashland with his wife, Caroline, and their children Cooper and Harper. The Westerholds are a community-driven family, and Russell has served on the Board of Directors for the Ashland Youth Baseball Association and other community-based organizations. He has also served on the Ashland-Greenwood School District Board of Education since 2019. In his free time, Russell enjoys golf, Nebraska athletics, and St. Louis Cardinals baseball.



## **Bruce Rieker, Senior Director of State Legislative Affairs, Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation**

Bruce Rieker is the senior director of state legislative affairs for the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation. He provides leadership in the development of public policy on issues affecting the ability of Nebraska's farmers and ranchers to thrive in today's environment. Farm Bureau's priority issues include energy, food safety, livestock, taxation, technology, trade, transportation, and natural resources.

Prior to joining Farm Bureau in 2015, Mr. Rieker was the vice president of advocacy for the Nebraska Hospital Association for nine years. Before that, he served as a congressional staff person for 16 years; first, as deputy chief of staff for United States Congressmen Bill Barrett and then as chief of staff for United States Congressman Tom Osborne.

Mr. Rieker graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1982 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in interpretive dance with a minor in poetry. In 1987, he received his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Nebraska College of Law and has been a member of the Nebraska State Bar Association since then. He practiced law in North Platte before entering the public policy arena. In his spare time, Mr. Rieker enjoys quilting, knitting, and watching Dancing with the Stars.



# Nebraska Power Association 2024 Annual Conference



## **Tony Leiding, President, Trenton Agri Products**

Tony Leiding is the President of Trenton Agri Products LLC in Trenton, Nebraska. Trenton Agri Products LLC is a 50 million gallon per year ethanol plant located near Trenton in Hitchcock County Nebraska. Prior to entering the renewable fuels industry, he was a Captain in the United States Army. During his time in the Army, he was a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter pilot and did tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

He holds a degree in Finance from Iowa State University, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Mary, and a Master of Science in Energy Management from the University of Colorado. He is currently the President of Renewable Fuels Nebraska and is a Board Member and serves on the Executive Committee of the Renewable Fuels Association.



## **Betsy Beck, Global Energy Markets and Policy, Google**

Betsy Rosenblatt Beck is a leader in the energy industry with nearly 15 years of experience in government and the private sector. For the past two years, she has led energy policy and market development for the central US at Google, where she is responsible for developing and executing Google's energy strategy in support of its data centers and carbon-free energy goals. In her previous role, she was the Senior Director of Energy Policy and Markets at Enel, where she led the organization's energy policy and regulatory work in the Central and Western US. Betsy is a passionate advocate for the use of carbon free energy and has successfully advocated for policies to promote its

development and deployment. She is also a strong believer in the role that technology can play in the modernization and decarbonization of our energy systems. Betsy is a frequent speaker on transmission and market design policy and renewable energy and holds a bachelor's degree in Engineering from the University of Pennsylvania. She lives in Minneapolis with her husband and two daughters.



## **Javier Fernandez, Chief Executive Officer, Omaha Public Power District**

Javier Fernandez has served as President and Chief Executive Officer of OPPD since 2021. He joined the utility in 2017 as Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

Fernandez came to OPPD from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), U.S. Department of Energy, in Portland, Oregon. He had been with the federal power marketing organization since 2012, most recently serving as executive vice president and chief financial officer. He previously served as senior vice president of Fixed Income Capital Markets for D.A. Davidson & Company and vice president of Public France for Seattle Northwest Securities Corporation.

He holds a bachelor's degree in economics from Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City, a master's degree in business administration from Yale University, and a Utility Management Certificate from the University of Idaho.

He currently serves as Board Chair of the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City, Omaha Branch, vice-chair of the Large Public Power Council, Board Chair of Habitat for Humanity Omaha, and is a board member for Ameritas, Bellevue University, the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and the Aksarben Foundation.

# Nebraska Power Association 2024 Annual Conference



## **John McClure, Executive Vice President of External Affairs & General Counsel, Nebraska Public Power District**

John McClure is Executive Vice President for External Affairs and General Counsel for Nebraska Public Power District. He joined NPPD in 1980 with undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Nebraska. During his more than 40-year career he has held numerous senior level positions at the utility including interim President and CEO. Currently, legal affairs, state and federal government relations, corporate communications, environmental, and water policy groups report to him.

McClure has testified frequently before committees of the Nebraska Unicameral and has also testified before subcommittees of the U.S. House of Representatives.

McClure serves on industry boards and committees at the state and national level. Regionally, he is a member of the Corporate Governance Committee of the Southwest Power Pool which operates the transmission grid and the real time energy market in all or parts of 14 states throughout the Central Plains, including all of Nebraska.



## **Emeka Anyanwu, Chief Executive Officer, Lincoln Electric System**

Anyanwu became CEO of Lincoln Electric System (LES) – the municipal public utility serving Lincoln, Nebraska and surrounding communities – in January 2024. Prior to LES, he served as Energy Innovation & Resources officer at Seattle City Light, one of the nation's largest community-owned, not-for-profit utilities. In that role, he was responsible for leading strategic functions that included utility technology (IT/OT), information security, electrification, grid modernization, and current and future power resource strategy. Earlier in his career, Emeka spent 16 years at Kansas City Power & Light (now Evergy) in various roles, starting out as a Distribution Engineer, moving into progressive leadership roles in T&D operations.

Emeka has been an active participant and contributor in industry discussions throughout his career. He has spoken at a variety of industry events and engaged with several technical and trade organizations. He has served on industry Boards including the Public Power Council, the Public Generating Pool, and Energy Northwest, as well non-profit Boards for Genesis School and The Family Conservancy. He has also served on the External Advisory Committee for the Electrical & Computer Engineering Department at Iowa State University. He is currently serving on the Board of Directors for GridForward and the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce. Recent awards for him include the Smart Electric Power Alliance's Individual 2021 Power Player of the Year and the Energy Thought Summit's 2023 Thought Leader of the Year.

Emeka has a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from Iowa State University and a Master of Business Administration from Rockhurst University. He and his wife Brandy have been married since 2015 and have 3 energetic kids.

# Nebraska Power Association 2024 Annual Conference



## **Rick Nelson, General Manager, Nebraska Rural Electric Association**

Rick Nelson serves as the general manager of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA). The 35 member-systems of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association provide electrical service to over 255,000 homes and businesses across rural Nebraska delivered on over 89,000 miles of distribution line.

Nelson manages the statewide's efforts with state and federal legislative representation, grassroots coordination, job training and safety, communications, and leadership development. Nelson represents NREA at various industry events and meetings at both the state and federal level. Nelson also represents NREA members on the board of directors for the Nebraska Power Association (NPA) – a consortium of over 160 power utilities across the state. Additionally, Nelson serves on the board of directors for the Nebraska Rural Electric Association Credit Union.

Nelson also serves as the general manager for Custer Public Power District, in Broken Bow, Nebraska. He began his career in Nebraska at Custer Public Power District in 2001 and was named General Manager in 2004. Custer PPD employs 44 people and covers about 8,000 sq miles in the sandhills of Nebraska serving about 11,000 meters with 4,500 miles of distribution and 380 miles of sub-transmission lines from 34 substations across its service territory.



## **Stephen Fotis, Partner, Van Ness Feldman**

Stephen has worked extensively on air and other environmental policy, regulatory, and transactional matters for over 30 years under the Clean Air Act and other major federal environmental statutes. He is a leading authority on the regulation of stationary sources under the Clean Air Act, including the New Source Review permitting, state implementation plans, interstate air transport programs, air toxic control requirements, regional haze, and greenhouse gas regulation. He regularly advises clients on federal and state environmental policy developments through legislation and administrative rulemakings.



## **Chad Thies, Founder and President, Zelle**

Chad's midwestern roots taught him good ole' fashioned values of hard work, sacrifice, and determination. This – paired with his first-class HR expertise – has led him to champion organizations to achieve first-class cultures and reach their business goals. As Founder and President of Zelle, Chad oversees all divisions. Zelle's unique business model is devoted to building impactful relationships with clients to ensure healthy organizational growth and development – an area Chad and his team are proud to implement every day. Chad's experience in the telecommunication space has been instrumental for broadband organizations – implementing new recruiting and HR processes to allow them to grow and thrive. Chad and his team are proud to help businesses that are delivering essential services to our communities.



# Nebraska Power Association 2024 Annual Conference

Chad has Bachelor's degrees in Exercise Science and Sports Management and a Master's degree in Human Services with an emphasis in Multicultural Studies. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his wife and children, exercising, reading, and watching movies. He lives in Lincoln, NE.



## **Lanny Nickell, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Southwest Power Pool**

Lanny Nickell is Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Southwest Power Pool, a FERC-approved Regional Transmission Organization. He leads engineering, operations, markets, and information technology teams and is responsible for overseeing reliable operation of the bulk electric power system, administration of wholesale energy markets, development of transmission expansion plans, and administration of resource adequacy policies within the SPP region.

Mr. Nickell has also served as Vice President of Engineering, Vice President of Operations and in various management and engineering roles since joining SPP in 1997. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Tulsa and is a graduate of Harvard Business School's Advanced Management Program.



## **Jim Matheson, Chief Executive Officer, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association**

Jim Matheson is Chief Executive Officer of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), the national service organization that represents the nation's more than 900 private, not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, which provides service to 42 million people in 47 states. Jim joined NRECA in July 2016 following distinguished careers in both the public and private sectors.

Prior to joining NRECA, Jim served as Principal, Public Policy Practice for the international law firm Squire Patton Boggs, based in Washington, D.C.

From 2001 to 2015, Jim was elected to serve as a United States Representative from Utah for seven terms. During his tenure on Capitol Hill, Jim was known as a legislator who was able to work with colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

He was Chief Deputy Whip for the House Democratic Caucus and served as co-chairman of the Blue Dog Coalition. Jim also was a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, as well as the Financial Services, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Science Committees.

Prior to entering government service, Jim worked in the energy industry for several years.

Jim was born and raised in Salt Lake City, Utah. He received a Bachelor's Degree in Government from Harvard University, and an MBA in Finance and Accounting from UCLA. Jim's wife, Amy, is a pediatrician, and they have two sons, William and Harris.