



A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



PRECorp News

OCTOBER 2024

Youth Camp, Tour, scholarships available

As part of the cooperative “Commitment to Community” Powder River Energy facilitates a variety of student scholarships to its members’ dependents.

The following are capsules on other scholarships available through PRECorp, deadlines, and online application resources. Scan the code at the right, or go to www.precorp.coop/student-scholarships for complete details.

Youth Leadership Camp

PRECorp sponsors a week-long cooperative leadership experience for local high school students age 16 and up. The camp is held in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, July 12-17, 2025, with other students from Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma. All expenses are paid for students selected. The student’s parents/guardians must be PRECorp members. **The application deadline is January 15, 2025.**

Youth Tour

Local PRECorp juniors or seniors might also qualify to attend an all-expense paid Cooperative Youth Tour of Washington, DC, with 2,000 other students from across the United States. The student’s parents/guardians must be PRECorp members. **The application deadline is January 15, 2025.**

Basin Electric Scholarship - \$1,000

Applicant’s parents or legal guardians must be PRECorp members. One student from the PRECorp membership service territory may be chosen. Another is nominated for consideration for the Members 1st selection. **The filing deadline for the Basin Electric Power Scholarship is January 31, 2025.**

R.O.S.S. program

The Rising Opportunity Student Scholarship (R.O.S.S.) will award up to four \$2,000 R.O.S.S. scholarships for students entering tuition-based training, certification, and degree programs in 2024.

The program is made possible by a fund established by Campbell County native Perry Ross.

The deadline for filing the R.O.S.S. application is February 28, 2025.



Powder River Energy Corporation Scholarship - \$2,000

Open to qualifying seniors and post-secondary students from 14 high schools and up to 5 college students in its service territory. Applicant’s parents or legal guardians must be active PRECorp members. **The deadline for filing the Powder River Energy Corporation Scholarship is February 28, 2025.**

PRECorp Lineman Scholarship

The PRECorp Lineman Scholarship is available to qualifying applicants who plan to attend an approved line-worker training program. Awards can be up to \$7,000. **The deadline for filing the PRECorp Lineman Scholarship is February 28, 2025.**

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BRIAN MILLS,
CEO

For many members with whom I have visited, the change of season to fall this year is a welcomed hope for a better chance of moisture to begin healing the land left so parched from this past summer. The fall of the year brings the change in colors and the harvest of seeds planted and maybe even the planting for next year's crop. In any case, it is a sign of changes coming. This month I will talk about some

of the changes that we see happening that could impact you as member owners of PRECorp.

One change I want to provide is an update on the **rate increase** we have been talking about since July. This rate increase is a passthrough of the Wholesale Power Supply Cost increase that Basin will be applying starting in January 2025. While a cost increase is not ideal, given the cooperative model PRECorp is a part of, the cost increase was ultimately approved by all 141 member utilities that make up Basin Electric.

It comes down to what is the best long-term decision we can make for all of the respective members of our utilities. Building new generation, managing the impact of governmental policies being enacted, and simply the cost of doing business that, frankly, we all have experienced in other facets of our lives, have created the need for this cost increase. While there were initial talks of 9-10% as the cooperative family came together and had more direct conversations amongst the member utilities, the number of 5% was ultimately decided on. For our average residential member that will look like an \$6 to \$8 increase on your monthly power bill. We will continue to spread the word this as we know the change will have an impact on everyone.

Another change that we talked about at our Annual Meeting in August was the narrative and direction that we are seeing coming out of "Cheyenne." In fairness the state is looking at how to replace the diminishing tax revenue being provided by fossil fuel industries into the state coffers. The electrical utilities in the state have come under scrutiny because of the large cost profile that electricity has on existing industries within the state and the projected impact on industry that the state is courting to locate in Wyoming. The state's effort to look at all variables to find efficiencies and opportunity is noble, but the short-sightedness of a quick fix could have long lasting consequences.

Currently the Wyoming Public Service Commission is considering a change in the rule that defines what qualifies as a public utility. As it stands now, anyone who generates, sells, or otherwise provides electricity is considered a pub-

lic utility. The proposed rule creates a carve out for new loads that are not currently being served by an existing utility to be served by a **Third-Party**, which could ultimately serve up to a total of two entities. This is in direct conflict with the host utilities obligation to serve that was issued when they established the certificated territory for public utilities.

In sharing why I feel this is dangerous, let me first share how you are being served by a member-owned cooperative versus another type of utility.

The reason cooperatives were created is because early industrialization did not find it economical to electrify rural America. The Rural Utility Act of 1936 created a structure for folks to work together to get low interest loans to buy and build the infrastructure needed to serve electricity to the rural areas of America. PRECorp came to be out of a merger in 1996 of two of those coops: Sheridan-Johnson Rural Electric Association that started in 1944; and Tri-County Electric Association that began in 1945. The power of this model is that those ultimately being served the electricity were the ones responsible for its management, and the cooperative model provided for a "one-member, one-vote" structure ensuring all voices were valued.

For this model to work there had to be some certainty provided so that assets could be purchased and capital invested free of the risk of stranded investment. The economics were not great, but the cause was noble and members just like you and I worked together to electrify territories that industry otherwise would have never touched because of the poor economics.

The power of working together was harnessed to create a not-for-profit, member-owned structure from generating and transmitting electrons (Basin Electric) to delivering it to your light switch (PRECorp). While there are other cooperatives in Wyoming that have even less meter density than PRECorp, we currently have just over two meters per mile of line we maintain. Put simply, it takes all of us to make PRECorp work.

What this proposed rule change amounts to is that new load would be exempt from participating in this model, to achieve a lower cost option for their energy in producing their respective product, ultimately to provide more tax revenue to the state.

We all know that change is inevitable, and I happen to believe that those that are best at managing change will find success. Creating holes or "carve-out" pockets begins to erode the power of the model that was relied upon to get us where we are today. Exempting energy load from participating, when member participation is the strength of the cooperative model, seems a little short-sighted given the

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Utility bill relief program available

Do you anticipate problems making ends meet with your electric bill? Contact PRECorp to confidentially discuss options as soon as possible.

Our member service representatives can present options that may alleviate some financial stress. Call 1-800-442-3630 to start the conversation.

A primary option for those in need is the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP). This program is administered by the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS).

The purpose of the LIEAP program is to help low- and fixed-income families and individuals pay their heating bills during the winter months. Priority is given to households that include elderly (age 60+), disabled, and/or young children (age 5 and under).

Seasonal LIEAP benefits must be applied to a household's main heat source (the fuel your heat system uses to heat the home; not the power source needed to turn on the furnace). Additional assistance may be available through the

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) for repairs to inefficient or broken heating systems.

LIEAP is federally funded through a block grant administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Anyone applying for LIEAP is also applying for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) and will be considered for this one-time benefit to assist families and individuals with boosting energy efficiency in their homes to reduce home energy costs.

If an applicant needs assistance with utility deposits, propane tank sets, have received disconnect or shut-off notices, are out of propane, heating oil, wood, pellets, or coal, a request for special situation assistance can be made on the application.

Applications for seasonal heating benefits are accepted online only from October 1, 2024 through March 31, 2025. To complete the application through the secure member portal or for more information go to www.lieapwyo.org or call 1-800-246-4221.

Please note our office closures

Powder River Energy Corporation offices will be closed for these upcoming Holidays and events:

Veterans Day:

Monday, November 11

Thanksgiving:

**Thursday and Friday,
November 28-29**

Christmas:

**Tuesday and Wednesday,
December 24-25**

New Year's Day:

Wednesday, January 1, 2025

All Employee Meeting:

Monday, March 3, 2025

To report an outage call 1-888-391-6220 or use the SmartHub app on your mobile device.

Have a medical necessity?



In an effort to better serve our members with special home health care needs, PRECorp is requesting information from our members who may have electricity-dependent residential medical equipment such as oxygen or dialysis machines.

Typically this information is gathered when members join the Cooperative and sign up for PRECorp electrical service.

However, if members have obtained the medical equipment since joining the Cooperative or have updated contact phone numbers, members are advised to share that information with PRECorp.

The purpose for knowing this information is to notify members with medical necessities of scheduled outages that might impact their service.

Members will need to provide a doctor's note for our files explaining the medical necessity.

For more information or to update your information, contact PRECorp Member Service at 1-800-442-3630.

Powder River Energy Corporation will make every effort to restore electrical service as soon as possible during an outage. There is no guarantee the power will be restored within a given time frame.

Individuals are responsible to have an alternative plan if power cannot be restored before any condition becomes critical.



Pirtz appointed to PRECorp Board seat

Campbell County rancher and Bitcoin miner Tyler Pirtz has been appointed to the vacant Campbell County seat on the Powder River Energy Board of Directors. Pirtz will fill out the remainder of a three-year term which expires in August 2026.

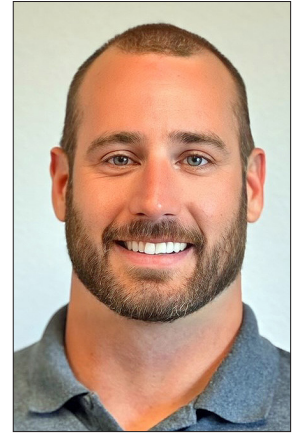
He has an Associate Degree in Process Plant Management. He is the site operations manager on a bitcoin mining data center in Campbell County. He and his fiancée Toni Swartz run a small cattle herd on the Swartz Ranch in northern Campbell County with their three children.

"PRECorp provides electricity for our home, shop, water well, and soon our greenhouse.

We also have a heat rate meter," Pirtz said. "I believe we are going through some major changes as we enter the digital age, and energy plays a big role in that change. My past experiences as a power plant operator and now a professional Bitcoin miner put me in a good position to help the Cooperative build a stronger more reliable power grid."

After Campbell County Director Dustin Martinson stepped down in May, the Board solicited letters of interest and interviewed four candidates in August.

The PRECorp Board selected Pirtz during its September meeting and he was seated at the October Board meeting.



Tyler Pirtz

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long-term impacts it could have on you and me as existing members.

At this point the rule is still being considered with a public hearing scheduled for November 14th. PRECorp along with the other utilities in the state are providing comment and working to inform the regulatory decision-makers of the ill-intended consequences this may have for you and I.

So, change is in the air, whether it is fall-time air or in our state-house. Talking about it and ensuring we provide the information to make great decisions is our job at this point. And just like there is the hope for moisture to come in the fall, the hope I continue to hold fast to managing any change that PRECorp will face is in the PRECorp Team that I have the pleasure to serve. They are strong, resilient, innovative, and most of all they take great pride in serving all of you, and it shows in their work. I am blessed.

Join CEO Brian Mills for a telephone town hall meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 21. We will call members at 6:30 p.m. to join, or dial in toll-free to 888-886-6602. Hear the latest news from PRECorp and get answers to your questions!



PRECorp photo

Mick Wolf of Gillette, left, is the winner of the 2024 Polaris Ranger side by side in the PRECorp Apprentice Lineman Scholarship fundraiser. PRECorp VP of Operations Rich Halloran presents the keys to Mick. Other winners in the drawing are Bernard Weinhardt, Monty Norris, and Roxie Taft.