



WFEC Trustee talk

Meet District 3's Ben Floyd

Since 1975, William Ben Floyd has District 3's representative on West Florida Electric Cooperative's board of trustees. A son of charter WFEC members, he farms in northern Jackson County, his life-long home. He and his wife, Shirley, have three sons and seven grandchildren, and attend Friendship Baptist Church in Malone, where he is a deacon.

As WFEC's members prepare to cast their first mail ballots for District 1, 2 and 3 trustees, Floyd discusses what it takes to be an effective board member and what he has learned along the way.

You're the longest-serving current member of WFEC's board. How is your experience valuable for the Co-op's members?

"This election and the next election are going to be most important because of deregulation of the electric industry. I think Florida's going to be one of the last states to deregulate, but eventually, it's going to happen. If you get six new trustees, you're going to have a problem getting through deregulation.

You'd better have somebody who knows about what's going on. If you don't, you're going to get left behind."

What are the most significant changes that have taken place at WFEC during your 25 years on the board?

"When I came on the board, there was nothing to govern the board except the bylaws; there were no board policies. Since then, we've established board policies for almost everything. Also, computers have made a big difference in how the Co-op does business and conducts transactions."

What critical challenges does the Co-op faces today?

"Now we have to deal with deregulation, and we need to keep looking at getting into other areas, diversifying into the gas business, Internet, and so forth. It's a good opportunity."

In addition to serving WFEC's members on the Co-op's board, you are one of two WFEC representatives on the board of its power supplier, Alabama Electric Cooperative. What insights has that experience given you?

"I've gained a tremendous knowledge about their costs and our costs for electricity, and it's been interesting to see how AEC is diversifying. Also, after talking with managers

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and trustees from other co-ops at AEC, I'm convinced we've got the best employees overall that any co-op's got."

What does the future hold for WFEC, and how are you ensuring the Co-op is prepared?

"I can see where the co-op can get into different things – provide services for our members – that could help us be more cost-efficient. The number one priority's got to be electricity and serving our customers as cheaply as we can. Other services can help offset the cost of providing electricity.

I think a co-op that sells electricity, and that's it, is going to die. But I can see where a co-op can come out ahead if it's run right."



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