

# BOARD ELECTIONS

Sangre de Cristo Electric Association is a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative that provides electric service to more than 14,500 homes, businesses, farms, and ranches in five counties. SDCEA is self-regulated and governed by a seven-member Board of Directors elected by and from our membership. Five board members are elected from Director Districts and two are elected At-Large.

This year, two board seats are up for election. One board seat from Rural Chaffee/

Lake County is unopposed. Incumbent Charlie A. Abel is running for the seat.

The At Large seat is currently vacant with the passing of Dan C. Daly in November 2023. Sandra (Sandy) D. Long and Edward H. Simmons, both of Chaffee County, are candidates for the At-Large seat.

Ballots were mailed to consumers April 24. Deadline for votes to be cast electronically or ballots to be returned and received to Survey & Ballot Systems to be counted is 1 p.m. June 3, 2024. Ballots will not be accepted by

SDCEA, they must be mailed in or you must cast your vote online. If you mail your ballot and it is not returned in the envelope provided by SBS, your vote may not be counted.

## **Chaffee/Lake County**

*Vote for one candidate:*

Charlie A. Abel

## **At Large**

*Vote for one candidate:*

Sandra (Sandy) D. Long  
Edward H. Simmons

## CHAFFEE/LAKE COUNTY BOARD CANDIDATE



### **CHARLIE A. ABEL** **CHAFFEE/LAKE COUNTIES**

#### **1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?**

I have been a member of SDCEA for 30 years and have lived in the service territory for over 50 years.

#### **2. What insights do you feel you could bring to the board that would increase their understanding of all members?**

I have been, and continue to be, a “student” of the electric utility industry and my role as a cooperative board member since my election in 2015. I believe the important aspects of striving to be an effective board member are grounded in 1) having a curious, open mind, 2) listening and seeking knowledge to facilitate sound decision-making, 3) acting in the best interests of the entire membership, and 4) communicating decisions clearly and timely.

#### **3. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?**

Board members should be accessible and listen to members’ concerns and comments. Board members should also strive to communicate facts clearly and timely and respect that the board “speaks” as one voice in matters of policymaking.

#### **4. What education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?**

I have over 20 years of experience as a Certified Public Accountant and small business owner. I have served on the Buena Vista School Board, and was a founding member and Treasurer of the Chaffee County EDC. I have earned the respect of our communities as a thoughtful leader and trusted confidant by acting with integrity, confidence, and purpose. I have the capacity and competence to grasp the “big picture” while maintaining a watchful eye on the details.

#### **5. What are the three most important issues to members that SDCEA should focus on?**

I firmly believe the future of energy in all of Colorado and the West must consider an appropriately balanced “all of the above” approach to ensure both reliability and affordability. SDCEA’s primary responsibility is to deliver reliable and affordable electricity safely to the members of our beautiful mountain valleys.

#### **6. How do you view the future of energy in central Colorado (i.e., affordability, renewable energy, electric vehicles, battery storage, micro-grids, etc.) and what is SDCEA’s primary responsibility moving forward?**

I firmly believe the future of energy in all of Colorado and the West must consider an appropriately balanced “all of the above” approach to ensure both reliability and affordability. We can and should continue to pursue resiliency projects that enhance electric reliability locally and must continue to encourage and support Tri-State efforts to advance purposeful additions in the West. SDCEA’s primary responsibility is to deliver reliable and affordable electricity safely to the members of our beautiful mountain valleys and I believe the cooperative achieves this mission to the best of our abilities.

#### **7. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.**

We have good momentum to continue to advance a secure energy future, both locally and regionally, and the path ahead will require seasoned, courageous, and committed leaders to drive results and make hard decisions. It is a privilege to serve the entire cooperative family, especially our local cooperative membership and I am highly motivated and well-prepared to continue to serve as your representative and your voice on the SDCEA board of directors. Thank you for your vote!

*Please plan to attend!*

### **SDCEA BOARD OF DIRECTORS CANDIDATES**

April 16 | 6-7:30 p.m. | SDCEA Community  
Room, 29780 US Hwy 24 N., Buena Vista.

For more election information, scan the QR code.



# AT LARGE BOARD CANDIDATES



**SANDRA (SANDY)  
D. LONG**  
AT LARGE DIRECTOR

**1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?** 20 years.

**2. What insights do you feel you could bring to the board that would increase their understandings of all members?** For the last two years, I've attended SDCEA Board meetings and have talked to Board members and staff. I thoroughly analyzed the Cost-of-Service Study and applicable PUC rulings and provided input to Board members. As the group leader of the Chaffee County Citizens' Climate Lobby Chapter, I am very familiar with the Inflation Reduction Act and rebates and incentives. I've organized educational sessions on energy topics including heat pumps, home audits, electric vehicles, and IRA incentives. At the Home and Garden show, the Mountain Mania Car Show, and the Green Home tours, I've had the opportunity to talk with members of the community about new technology and incentives and to hear their concerns.

**3. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?** Communication is a top responsibility of board members. Dialogue must be two-way and include active listening. All viewpoints must be heard and respected. When big changes like new rates are proposed, the board should communicate what is being proposed and why, and then get feedback from members before approving changes. I recommend a monthly email newsletter to members which includes a note from the CEO or Board Chair. As a board member, I will be available for phone calls, meetings, and prompt email replies. The board must be transparent about issues and upcoming challenges so the membership is part of the solution.

**4. What education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?** I have an Electrical Engineering degree and a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA). For most of my career I was a Product Manager, setting requirements, introducing new products, driving cost reductions, meeting with customers, and responsible for the overall profitability of the product. I was mostly in the telecom industry but spent 4 years as product manager of a solar inverter which we sold to utilities. I also managed people for over 15 years.

For eight years, I was on the board of directors of a manufacturer of brooms and cleaning tools. I am very experienced in approving budgets and expenditures, financial analysis, strategic planning, and working with a CEO and management.

**5. What are the three most important issues to members that SDCEA should focus on?**

First, SDCEA has one of the highest electricity rates of all the Tri-State Coops and a very high monthly access charge. With lower monthly access charges, customers can have more incentive and ability to lower their own energy bill by using less. Also, if we can reduce the peak demand costs that SDCEA pays to Tri-State, we can save money for all members.

Second, Tri-State as our electricity supplier has a lot of challenges that may impact SDCEA. Some co-ops have already left Tri-State, and more intend to leave. Tri-State applied for \$970 million in funding through the IRA, but we are still unsure how much of that they will receive. Tri-State has an ambitious Electric Resource Plan, but it has yet to be proven if they will meet their goals.

Third, SDCEA needs to maintain high reliability and utilize new technology (battery storage, demand response, microgrids, etc.) to increase resiliency while reducing costs.

**6. How do you view the future of energy in central Colorado (i.e., affordability, renewable energy, electric vehicles, battery storage, micro-grids, etc.) and what is SDCEA's primary responsibility moving forward?** SDCEA must proactively manage new growth. With the growth of electric vehicles, SDCEA must have a plan to make sure members don't charge their vehicles during periods of peak demand. Many homes in our region have electric resistance heating which is very inefficient and results in high energy demands during Tri-State's highest rates. SDCEA needs to promote programs to increase energy efficiency (i.e., insulation, window upgrades, etc.), transition members to heat pumps, and incentivize battery storage (thus turning solar power into an advantage to offset peak power costs).

**7. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.** I'm confident that I will add value to the SDCEA board with my expertise in both technology and business. I'd be honored to serve on the SDCEA Board of Directors and represent all members during this exciting energy transition.



*Join Us*

**For Our Annual Meeting**

SDCEA's annual meeting will be held on June 11, 2024, in Custer County at the Wet Mountain Saddle Club. 9 a.m. registration, 10 a.m. start. 90 CR 241, Westcliffe



## EDWARD H. SIMMONS AT LARGE DIRECTOR

**1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?** Four Years.

**2. What insights do you feel you could bring to the board that would increase**

**their understandings of all members?** Governor Polis has set state policy that will see an 80% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fueled power plants by 2030. The six major utilities that serve Colorado are transitioning away from coal as a fuel source. SDCEA must be part of that transition. This transition must be accomplished by considering all available options that serve the goals of SDCEA and the best interest of the co-op member. My 40 years of active and reserve service in the U.S. Navy has taught me to look at a problem from all sides, consider viable options and then decide which option best achieves the goal. I will bring these skills as well as strategic planning experience to the board during this time of transition.

**3. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?** Knowledge is Power and as public servants, we must communicate the advantages and disadvantages of all possible solutions. This allows the individual member to understand the opportunities and challenges we are facing. The next few years will be vital to the future of our Co-op. The unbiased flow of information must be the cornerstone of our transition.

**4. What education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?** My degree path was Mechanical Engineering and I am a registered Professional Engineer (PE) in the State of Colorado. During my active service with the U.S. Navy, I attended Nuclear Power School and was then assigned as a reactor operator on two submarines. Following my active service and college graduation, I began designing power plants of various sizes and the associated air quality control systems. I have worked with utilities across the United States and have a good understanding of the industry's business models. I have worked with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment to establish new air permit requirements that will result in lower emissions for a diesel engine power plant.

**5. What are the three most important issues to members that SDCEA should focus on?**

One: Maintaining our HIGH reliability rating. SDCEA members have enjoyed a greater than 99.9% electrical service availability. Most would agree we need to decommission the remaining fossil fueled power plants, but we must replace them with SUITABLE and RELIABLE electrical capacity. Some other states have decommissioned coal plants faster than alternatives have been built. This has resulted in rolling brown outs which do not equal a high reliability rating.

Two: Providing multiple energy sources. It was heartbreaking to watch the State of Texas experience widespread power outages due to Winter Storm Uri in 2021. The United States learned that these tragic consequences were due to a lack of energy supply options and redundancy. Our Co-op must ensure we have access to multiple, reliable energy sources to maintain our own resiliency.

Three: Cost Reduction. SDCEA must be a knowledge resource center for our members. By providing multiple options for higher efficiency water heaters, home heating, EV charging or solar system installation, the member can decide what works best for their home and reduce their electrical costs.

**6. How do you view the future of energy in central Colorado (i.e., affordability, renewable energy, electric vehicles, battery storage, micro-grids, etc.) and what is SDCEA's primary responsibility moving forward?**

Looking forward, SDCEA's primary responsibility must be to provide reliable energy to co-op members through a combination of renewable and acceptable fuel generation sources. We must take a wholistic approach of energy and grid management by integrating member battery storage capacity to reduce the peak power demand costs. We must provide educational and incentive programs to help our current and future members make informed decisions when replacing aging equipment or making wholesale energy efficiency improvements to a home or business. We must ensure the present and future financial stability of our Co-op thru cost effective investments.

**7. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.**

We are moving away from fossil fuels. It is extremely important that every SDCEA member recognize that much of our power currently comes from coal fired power plants. Our Co-op needs open-minded, problem-solving Directors to responsibly manage this transition. The decisions we make over the next few years will influence and set the stage for the future of SDCEA. It would be a privilege to be your open-minded Director.

### DEADLINE TO VOTE — JUNE 3 AT 1 P.M.

Deadline to vote online or for your ballot to be received by SBS (the company conducting the election) by mail for the SDCEA board of directors election is 1 p.m. on June 3.

#### Forgot to mail your ballot in time?

Go to our website, [myelectric.coop](http://myelectric.coop) to vote.





## Innovative Housing and Childcare Solution Breaks Ground in Buena Vista

### SDCEA collaborates on Midland Apartments

Breaking new ground! On April 1, key business, local and state government representatives, and project partner representatives including SDCEA and Tri-State, took the first step towards development of the Midland Apartments with shovels in hand, ceremoniously turning the earth to kickstart a new beginning.

An innovative initiative, aimed at supporting local families with housing and childcare, was celebrated at a groundbreaking event April 1 in Buena Vista. SDCEA is pleased to have played a part in launching this exciting project.

The Midland Apartments, a public-private 60-unit apartment project, will also include a 4,600-square-foot childcare center. The project has been made possible by the town of Buena Vista, Buena Vista housing builder Fading West and multiple other public and private entities. The project will feature 60 deed-restricted apartments that are hoped to help with the local workforce housing shortage.

One of the marquee features of the apartments is their design for energy-efficiency and potential future energy needs. Through a significant electrification program, Fading West qualified for \$218,600 in energy rebates through a partnership with SDCEA's wholesale power supplier, Tri-State Generation and Transmission. Fading West used the incentive to offset costs for the project, placing high-efficiency, all-electric heating systems in the apartments. This eco-friendly approach not only brings substantial cost savings to

build the project and for residents' utility bills going forward, but also aligns with Colorado's clean energy initiatives. The apartments will also be constructed for potential solar capacity and EV charging.

Gary Kelly, CEO of SDCEA, emphasized the value of these advancements: "We are excited to contribute to this vital initiative, which assists in the efforts to provide accessible housing and childcare services in the community. The collaboration with Tri-State ensures a cost-effective, low emissions, and efficient heating system, setting a benchmark for future developments."

All SDCEA members are encouraged to learn more about various rebates and energy-efficiency programs available for residential and commercial new construction and existing buildings by visiting [myelectric.coop/energyefficiency](#).

"This installation not only promotes energy efficiency but also contributed towards keeping costs manageable. It symbolizes our continued support in enhancing the local infrastructure for housing, aligning with our broader goal of nurturing the communities we serve," added Kelly.



Shovels lined up for the first dig at the site of the future Midland Apartments. Stay tuned for progress on this promising development!



Bridging progress and partnership, key business, local and state government representatives, and project partner representatives including SDCEA and Tri-State, attended the groundbreaking ceremony on April 1.