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For Immediate Release:

State legislators address electric cooperative members during event sponsored by Firelands Electric

NEW LONDON, OH, Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2024, at 10:40 AM — Approximately 100 member-consumers and employees of Firelands Electric Cooperative attended a recognition breakfast and legislative update at the 2024 America's Electric Cooperatives PAC (political action committee) of the nation's electric co-ops. The event was hosted on Friday, Oct. 25, at Firelands Electric Cooperative's facility in New London.

Local and state government officials representing portions of Firelands Electric's four-county service territory, including both Democrats and Republicans, were invited to attend the event. Co-op PAC members and guests were updated on legislative issues currently affecting electric cooperatives and local communities and were able to participate in an open Q&A forum. Topics covered by those speaking included: reliability of electric baseload generation in Ohio and the surrounding states; how Ohio is meeting power needs for the ever-increasing data centers being established across the state; increased federal regulations affecting Ohio's energy needs; electric vehicles; and continuing supply chain issues.

U.S. Congressman Bob Latta addressed the crowd on energy reliability and growing power needs. Congressman Latta is currently a senior member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and an active chairman of the communications and technology subcommittee. He also sits on the energy, climate, grid security, and health subcommittees.

Latta discussed concerns regarding the decreased amount of baseload power generation in Ohio over the past decade. He advised how power is currently able to serve the day-to-day needs for Ohio's homes and businesses, but would likely fail if faced with a polar vortex like the one in 2014 that brought record-breaking cold temperatures and wind chills. Latta also spoke about how the growing number of data centers across the Buckeye State is a concern for baseload electric generation and future power reliability.

The ongoing push towards electric vehicles (EVs) was another topic discussed by Latta during his address. Latta voiced his concerns regarding EV batteries and lithium production, and the estimated 40 percent increase in power the United States needed, but does not currently have available, for EVs.

Reliability and affordability are crucial, and Ohio needs adequate energy to sustain its manufacturing industry. Latta advised that mixing nuclear energy with natural gas can help manufacturing production in the United States, make the industry more competitive, and bring prices down. He discussed how hard it's going to be to get back our reliable baseload energy portfolio, but advised that it is possible, especially when Ohio has more than 500 years of potentially mineable coal at current production levels.

Ohio Representative D.J. Swearingen discussed property taxes and voiced his concerns about how Ohioans are currently being taxed. As an advocate for business owners, he spoke on the importance of trade policies that support American jobs and energy policies that are reliable and affordable for all.

Swearingen believes in true American independence and that we need to manufacture more goods in America. Some of his committee assignments include constitutional resolutions, house finance, and health provider services, including the finance subcommittee on infrastructure and the American Rescue Plan.

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Ohio Representative Marilyn John addressed the crowd on the importance of workforce development and improving education. John advised the group of a current broadband project having the ability to bring high-speed internet access to every Ohioan and build a best-in-class broadband network in Ohio. The broadband project extends across U.S. 30 broadband project and will be a key to future economic development in the region.

John addressed several questions regarding Ohio Issue 1, and the confusing language associated with it, which would remove constitutional protections against gerrymandering. John advised that Issue 1 would eliminate the longstanding ability of Ohio citizens to hold their representatives accountable for establishing fair state legislative and congressional districts, which follow census maps updated every 2 years. She does not feel that Issue 1 would be good for Ohio.

According to John, Issue 1 would remove elected officials from drawing congressional and state legislative districts. Instead, a new taxpayer-funded commission of fifteen appointees (retired attorneys and judges) will be required to gerrymander the boundaries of state legislative and congressional districts. She strongly encouraged attendees to vote no on Ohio's issue 1 that prevents gerrymandering, our state laws from being removed, and holding Ohio people accountable.

Firelands Electric's objective in hosting its annual PAC breakfast is to develop and foster its relationships with elected legislators, while also providing a face-to-face forum for co-op members to meet and communicate with officials. This exclusive event was comprised of members who invest in [America's Electric Cooperatives PAC](#), which serves to increase legislators' awareness of what electric cooperatives are and how they benefit their communities.

Firelands was pleased to have this opportunity to give our PAC members a chance to interact with their elected officials. "Just as we like getting first-hand information and insight from our legislators, they too like hearing directly from the residents of their districts," said General Manager Don Englet. "As a member-owned cooperative, we look forward to these grassroots events, which provide a forum for local voices to be heard at the state level and beyond."

Firelands Electric Cooperative, a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, is a member-owned, not-for-profit electric utility serving more than 9,200 homes and businesses in rural areas of Ashland, Huron, Lorain, and Richland counties that ranks among the highest energy utilities in the country for customer satisfaction. Visit the cooperative's website, www.firelandsec.com, [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter feed](#), to learn more about reliable and affordable power. Photos of Firelands Electric's PAC recognition breakfast can be viewed on the cooperative's Flickr page, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/firelandsec/>.

**ATTACHED PHOTOS:
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Firelands Electric Cooperative's General Manager Don Englet introduces local legislators during a recent America's Electric Cooperatives PAC event. Seated on the stage L-R is Ohio Representative D.J. Swearingen; Ohio Representative Marilyn John; and U.S. Congressman Bob Latta.



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U.S. Congressman Bob Latta addresses the crowd during the America's Electric Cooperatives PAC recognition event that was hosted on Friday, Oct. 25, at Firelands Electric Cooperative's facility in New London.



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