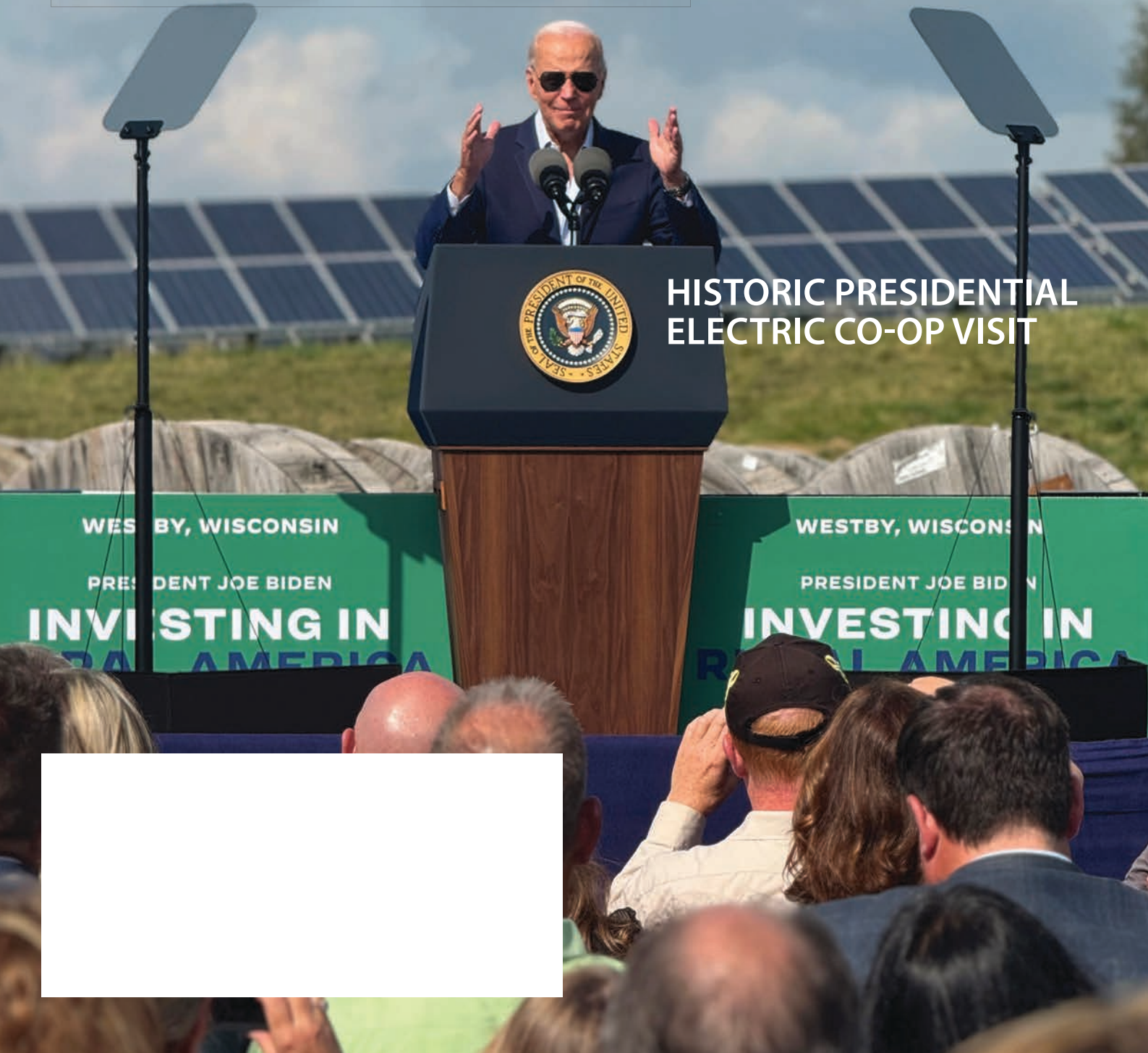


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WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* October 2024 NEWS

VERNON
Electric
COOPERATIVE — WESTBY, WISCONSIN
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HISTORIC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTRIC CO-OP VISIT





POTUS MAKES BIG ANNOUNCEMENT AT VERNON ELECTRIC'S HEADQUARTERS



by Craig Buross, CEO & General Manager

In a landmark event that underscores the pivotal role rural electric cooperatives are playing in America's clean energy transition, Vernon Electric Cooperative recently hosted President Joe Biden as part of a larger Dairyland Power Cooperative gathering. This momentous occasion came on the heels of Dairyland receiving a substantial \$579 million as part of the \$9.7 billion New ERA (Empowering Rural America) initiative and is earmarked for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and deploying renewable energy and storage solutions, particularly in rural communities.

Prior to the announcement being made, employees from Vernon Electric (VEC) and Dairyland Power (DPC) worked tirelessly with White House staff and Secret Service through Labor Day weekend to ensure the cooperative headquarters would be a viable option to host this historic event. Several sites throughout southwest Wisconsin were considered but

none drew the same attention. VEC had the setting the White House was looking for with the rural community, renewable energy features, and it was a member of DPC. Being the first outdoor event held since the assassination attempt of former

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president Trump, safety and security were of utmost concern of the Secret Service. While VEC was not an ideal location from their perspective, several layers of security were put in place to mitigate risk.

Once VEC was selected as the site by the White House, it did not take long for the community to learn of President Biden's potential visit as three MV-22 Ospreys and two helicopters, including "Marine One," descended upon the Westby industrial park for a practice run. Excitement set in throughout the VEC headquarters as the event's magnitude unfolded and Secret Service agents swept the location and surrounding areas.

Those of you who have visited our headquarters for a picnic or our annual meeting understand the vast amount of equipment we have in our warehouse and pole yard. All the items needed to be removed from the facility or carefully inspected by Explosive Ordinance Detail (EOD), which included opening hundreds of underground transformers and removing the lids from overhead transformers for the thorough Secret Service K9 inspection.



Numerous items throughout the pole yard needed to be removed or relocated, such as the large wire reels along our fence which served the Secret Service as a protective barrier. Perhaps the most ultimate display of teamwork involved VEC and DPC line workers moving their utility vehicles to impede line of sight to the president from offsite locations. Three long rows of large utility trucks, end to end with only enough space for a single person to walk between, completely eliminated line of sight.

The visit marks the first time in the history of Wisconsin's electric cooperatives that a sitting president of the United States has made an official visit at an electric co-op headquarters, and possibly the first in the nation.

DPC submitted a Letter of Interest for New ERA funding in September 2023 and received an invitation to proceed with the full application process earlier this year. The award enables the development of projects totaling 1,020 megawatts (MW) of power purchase agreements for solar and wind energy installations in Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. Projects include 593 MW of wind, 427 MW of solar, and 60 MW of energy storage. To put this in perspective, the thousands of solar panels around our office in Westby add up to less than 1 MW. Once complete, these new clean energy projects are projected to power over 240,000 homes, reduce carbon emissions by over 3.3 million metric tons per year, and soften future rate increases for rural electric cooperatives.

This funding will affordably accelerate carbon reduction goals and significantly help fund power purchase agreements for major renewable energy projects while creating economic

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Created by the Inflation Reduction Act, New ERA (Empowering Rural America) is a \$9.7 billion program available only to rural electric cooperatives, with the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and deploying new clean energy and storage resources.





New ERA represents the largest investment in rural electrification since President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Rural Electrification Act into law in 1936.

Once complete, Dairyland Power Cooperative's New ERA clean energy projects will:

- Total 1,020 megawatts (MW) of wind, solar and storage.
- Power over 240,000 homes.
- Reduce carbon emissions by over 3.3 million metric tons per year.
- Provide downward pressure on rates for rural electric cooperatives.



SCENES FROM OUR DAY WITH THE PRESIDENT



opportunities. As a member-owner of Dairyland Power Cooperative, Vernon Electric and its members stand to benefit from these significant investments designed to support competitive wholesale rates by paying down the investment in renewable energy.

“One in five rural Americans will benefit from these clean energy investments, thanks to partnerships with rural electric cooperatives like Dairyland,” said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. “Put simply, this is rural power, for rural America.”

As part of its overall sustainable power supply plan, DPC has retired 579 MW of coal generation since 2014. They are exploring small modular nuclear reactors and other resources to support the increased investment in intermittent energy sources. “Nuclear will drive the transition by providing reliable, carbon-free power to support the integration of wind and solar,” noted

Dairyland Power Cooperative President & CEO Brent Ridge.

During the event, Biden praised electric cooperatives like Vernon and Dairyland for their dedication to energy innovation and environmental stewardship. The visit symbolized the federal government’s commitment to supporting rural cooperatives in their journey toward sustainability.

“We’re investing in communities like these because they’ve been the backbone of America for generations,” President Biden remarked. “Rural cooperatives are leading the way in our clean energy transition, and today’s investments will ensure they continue to do so for decades to come.”

This recognition from the highest office in the land is not just an honor for Dairyland Power Cooperative and its 24 members, but also a testament to our continued innovation and forward-thinking approach. Biden’s visit brought national attention to the critical role of Vernon Electric Cooperative

About the Empowering Rural America (New ERA) program:

Established by the Inflation Reduction Act, New ERA is a \$9.7 billion program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and invest in renewable energy.

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and its counterparts in transitioning to renewable energy sources while maintaining safe, reliable and affordable energy services for its members.

Note: Vernon Electric Cooperative has hosted elected officials from all political parties. However, Vernon Electric is not a partisan organization and does not endorse individuals or elected officials.



President Biden with Vernon Electric Cooperative’s Board of Directors.

Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

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