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# WISCONSIN ENERGY *Cooperative* September 2025 NEWS

**VERNON**  
**Electric**  
COOPERATIVE — WESTBY, WISCONSIN  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

## POLLINATOR PATH WITH A PURPOSE

WHAT SETS CO-OPS APART  
FROM OTHER POWER PROVIDERS

PIE FOR DINNER

KIDS AND CRITTERS







## WISCONSIN ENDS SALES TAX ON RESIDENTIAL ENERGY BILLS



### State Budget Change to Save Households Millions in Utility Costs

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

**B**eginning October 1, 2025, Wisconsin residents will no longer pay state sales tax on their home electricity and natural gas bills. This change, passed as part of the state's biennial budget, makes the long-standing seasonal exemption permanent and year-round, offering meaningful financial relief for households across the state.

Previously, Wisconsin law exempted residential energy use from sales tax only during the colder months—typically November through April—when heating needs peak. Under the new legislation, that exemption will now apply all year long, including during summer months when air conditioning significantly drives up energy use.

The financial impact is substantial. The nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimates that the expanded exemption will save Wisconsin households approximately \$178 million over the next two years. On an individual level, the average residential customer can expect to save around \$5 per month—more for homes with higher energy usage or electric heating and cooling systems.

This change will occur automatically and customers won't need to reach out

to their utility providers to benefit from the savings. Electricity and natural gas providers will adjust billing systems to stop collecting the 5% state sales tax on qualifying residential accounts beginning with October 2025 billing cycles.

Supporters of the measure praised it as a practical and bipartisan approach to lowering the cost of living. With energy prices rising in recent years and inflation affecting everyday expenses, legislators across party lines backed the sales tax repeal as a way to help families manage utility costs without creating administrative burdens or new programs.

The exemption applies exclusively to residential use. The Wisconsin Tax Code states, "*Residential use means use in a structure or portion of a structure which is a person's permanent residence, but does not include use in transient accommodations, motor homes, travel trailers, or other recreational vehicles.*" Commercial, agricultural, and industrial accounts will not see changes unless they already qualify for separate exemptions under Wisconsin's tax code. The sales tax exemption will apply to all charges on residential bills, including energy usage and delivery fees, so long as the

electricity or gas is used in a residential dwelling.

The timing of the change is notable. While the state takes steps to ease the burden of utility costs, national energy policy remains in flux. Though the state's tax relief offers immediate help, energy advocates say ongoing federal support will be critical to maintaining affordable energy in Wisconsin.

Still, the repeal of the sales tax on home energy is seen as a win for Wisconsin families. It reflects the growing recognition that electricity and natural gas are not just conveniences—they are essential services needed year-round. Whether used to stay warm during harsh winters or cool during increasingly hot summers, energy is a basic household necessity.

By eliminating the sales tax on residential energy use across all seasons, the state has simplified its tax code and aligned it more closely with the energy needs of its residents. As families across Wisconsin look ahead to the change in 2025, they can expect slightly lower utility bills and a small but steady boost to their monthly budgets.





# *Building Together:*

## **WESTBY BUILDERS CRAFTS CUSTOM SHEDS**



*By Leah Call*

**D**rive along Highway 14 between Westby and Viroqua and you'll spot it immediately — over 100 sheds in various sizes, styles and colors spread across a scenic farmstead. It's not a storage lot. It's the home of Westby Builders, a regional producer of Old Hickory buildings and sheds.

Launched in 2014 by Vernon Electric Cooperative members LaVern and Pam Kanagy, Westby Builders took root after the couple relocated from North Carolina and discovered an opportunity that was a perfect fit for their family. "We learned Old Hickory was looking to expand in this area," said LaVern. "So we connected with them, found this farm, and set up the factory."

Raised on a dairy farm in the Midwest, LaVern wanted a similar lifestyle for his children. "I hoped to have something where we could work together as a family," he said. "This business has turned out to be just that."

### **Business is Building**

Today, LaVern oversees construction and manages a team of 20 employees, while Pam handles customer service and office operations. All six of the couple's children pitch in, making Westby Builders a true family-run venture.

The company constructs and sells between 1,800 and 2,300 sheds annually. "Everything is built here," Pam noted. "Most are prebuilt and delivered, but we also do on-site builds when needed."

Seven haulers deliver sheds throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa—sometimes transporting as many as 19 buildings in a single day. Westby Builders currently supplies 57 dealers across the region and delivers and installs sheds for customers within a four-hour radius of the factory.



## Sheds Built to Fit a Vision

While storage is the most common use, some customers transform their sheds into garages, playhouses, chicken coops, greenhouses — even living space. Though the interiors are mostly unfinished, there is a range of customizable exterior options to help people bring their vision to life.

Sizes range from compact 8x8 sheds to spacious 16x40 models. The team recently introduced a new double-wide style, created by joining two 12-foot units.

Customizable features include five roof styles—lofted barn, utility shed, single slope, non-lofted barn, and side gable—plus options for porch style, siding, windows, doors, and color.

Want to match your home's exterior? Choose from 15 standard paint colors or select a custom color from a full palette of Sherwin-Williams paint colors.

Customers can explore options and view a gallery of Old Hickory sheds on the company's website. They can even design their own dream shed using a 3D build tool on the website. Or stop into the Westby Builders office, walk around the lot, and let Pam guide you through the process. "We usually have around 100 sheds on the lot and another 100 in the works," Pam said.



The Kanagy family with members of the Westby Builders work crew. From their farmstead along Highway 14 between Westby and Viroqua, the family and their team build more than 1,800 Old Hickory sheds each year for customers across Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, and Iowa.

"Some people bring in photos and ask, can you build this? We might not match it exactly," Pam said, "but we can usually get very close."

Helping customers design their ideal shed is what Pam enjoys most about her role in Westby Builders. For LaVern, it's every part of producing a quality product.

"I enjoy working with our

employees, creating these buildings, creating new designs and improving our process," added LaVern. "And it's always rewarding to get good reviews from satisfied customers."

At its core, Westby Builders remains true to what matters most to both LaVern and Pam: family, craftsmanship, and building something — together.





# PAY YOUR WAY

At Vernon Electric Cooperative, we offer several convenient ways for members to pay their utility bill—because flexibility and ease matter.

## ✓ AUTOMATIC PAYMENTS

Automatic payments are a simple, secure option that ensures your bill is paid on time, every time. You can have payments automatically withdrawn from your bank account or charged to your credit card on the 20th of each month (or the following business day if it falls on a weekend). No reminders, no late fees—just peace of mind.

## ✓ VANILLA DIRECT

Prefer to pay in person but live far away? Vanilla Direct allows you to pay your electric bill with cash at participating retailers. Simply bring your unique barcode (available in SmartHub or on your printed bill) and your payment to a nearby location like Dollar General, Family Dollar, or CVS.



*Whatever payment method works best for you, Vernon Electric has you covered.*

## Vernon County Fair

Visit our booth at the  
Vernon County Fair!  
**September 10 - 14**



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**Trevor Clark, Editor**

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