

# BOARD ELECTIONS

Sangre de Cristo Electric Association, Inc. is a member-owned, not-for-profit, cooperative that provides electric service to 14,000 accounts in five counties in central Colorado. SDCEA is self-regulated and governed by a seven-member board of directors elected by and from our membership. Five board members serving staggered terms are elected from director districts and two are elected at-large.

This year, three board seats are up for election. One board seat from Rural Chaffee/Lake County is contested. Incumbent Joseph Redetzke is running for the seat, challenged by Mark W. Boyle.

The At Large seat held by Michael K Robinson is also contested. He is being challenged for election by Jeff B Fiedler.

Incumbent Blake T Bennetts, town of Buena Vista representative, is running unopposed.

Ballots were mailed to consumers May 1. 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 8, 2023. 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:*

Joseph Redetzke

Mark W. Boyle

## **At Large**

*Vote for one candidate:*

Michael K Robinson

Jeff B Fiedler

## **Town of Buena Vista**

Blake T Bennetts

## CHAFFEE/LAKE COUNTY BOARD CANDIDATES



### **JOSEPH REDETZKE** **RURAL CHAFFEE & LAKE** **DIRECTOR DISTRICT**

**1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?** I have been a member of SDCEA since November 2013.

**2. What insights do you feel you could bring to the board that would increase their understandings of all members?** SDCEA has four relatively new directors on the board with less than one year experience. As an experienced board chairman, I strive to encourage and help these new directors in their duties and responsibilities to understand the complexities of governing the cooperative and to effectively communicate with the membership.

**3. What are your personal goals for SDCEA, and what steps would you take as a board member to achieve these goals?** To continue to apply my leadership skills to insure a reinvigorated family cooperative atmosphere and culture at SDCEA that provides our members with superior continuity of service with reliable and affordable energy 24/7/365. To effectively promote and assist in the orderly energy transition SDCEA, Colorado and the country is undergoing at this time to more renewable and carbon free sources.

**4. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?** Listening to ALL members and to obtain ALL points of view is vital for a director to be able to perform their fiduciary duties and to effectively govern SDCEA. Members can readily obtain my contact information on SDCEA's website and personally call, text or email me with their concerns and suggestions.

**5. What specifically qualifies you to serve as a corporate fiduciary/utility regulator?** My past decades of corporate business experience and private ownership of businesses, being a director on various business and civic organizations' boards has prepared me well plus the 7+ years on the board of SDCEA as a director and 5 years as chairman. I am also a board member and vice president for the Colorado Rural Electric Association, the association that represents the 22 cooperatives in Colorado. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business

Administration from Fort Hays State University and served five years on the alumni association board of directors.

**6. What other education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?** I hold the Director Gold certification from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association which encompasses nearly 30 day long courses which have provided additional education to govern and guide SDCEA. Course curriculum includes risk management, renewable energy and battery storage strategies, strategic planning, anticipatory management, key trend ratio analysis, financial and legal responsibilities and many more subjects to become a more effective board member and leader to serve the members of SDCEA.

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

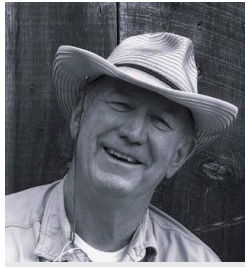
1. To provide SDCEA employees with the necessary equipment and training to insure their safety so they may return home to their families every day. SDCEA linemen and crews work in extremely dangerous environments everyday and especially in storm related outages.
2. Provide rates that are stable and energy that is reliable and renewable.
3. Improve communications and member engagement with all SDCEA members.

**8. 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?** Currently, SDCEA is providing nearly 40% renewable energy to our membership which is nearly double the national average of 20% in 2022. We expect to provide 50% renewable energy in 2024 with our power supplier and with the Trout Creek solar project. We will continue to strive to improve annually to provide more renewable and carbon free energy in the future to meet our goals and the goals set by the Colorado legislature. Being in a transitional market environment, SDCEA will continue to monitor and implement new technologies on a timely basis that are strategic to the financial strength of SDCEA and to our members.

**9. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.** It is an honor to serve the members of the five county service territory of

SDCEA and I enjoy and appreciate spending time and conversing with the members. I am active in the Buena Vista community with membership in the Optimists Club, former director and president of the Game

Trail HOA and former finance committee member of St. Rose Catholic Church. I enjoy building and maintaining long lasting relationships with friends, neighbors and members of SDCEA.



**MARK W. BOYLE**  
**RURAL CHAFFEE/LAKE CO.**  
**DIRECTOR DISTRICT**

**1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?** 11 years

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

In brief: Reliable energy delivery; comparable rates; and keep it local. Having operated a small family farm and being actively involved with our irrigation company for the past 11 years, I represent the average rural member in the SDCEA service area. I have worked in the power industry for 40 years and have a very good understanding of how electric power distribution systems work. I would like to serve on the SDCEA Board of Directors to help ensure that SDCEA proceeds into the future with policies and programs that continue to maintain our power delivery reliability and security, make our energy bill affordable and comparable to other neighboring utilities.

**3. What are your personal goals for SDCEA, and what steps would you take as a board member to achieve these goals?** Reliability and security are the most important aspects of operating and maintaining a power distribution utility. I would strive to maintain SDCEA's ability to deliver reliable energy into the future. I believe SDCEA must embrace the challenges of the clean energy transition and respond with forward-thinking innovation in order to maintain reliable and secure service. The steps are: study, plan and do; evaluate and adjust as necessary; then repeat until successful.

**4. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?** The Board of Directors are the conduit from the membership to the SDCEA leadership and management. It is the board member's responsibility to encourage communication in both directions, from and to the members, in an open, transparent and collaborative manner. If elected, I will help facilitate better out-reach programs from SDCEA management to its members, especially before and during the development of policies that will have an economic impact on the individual members.

**5. What specifically qualifies you to serve as a corporate fiduciary/utility regulator?** I spent 30 years as an electrical engineer and manager in the power industry with the United States Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). My final job was as the Division Chief for over 100 engineers and managers. After retirement from BOR, I joined HDR Engineering, Inc. as

a part-time senior electrical engineer and project manager consultant. During my employment with HDR, I led many power generation feasibility studies. I have served as a Director on the Board for the Williams & Hamm Ditch Co for ten years. I also serve as the Ditch Foreman, and I served as the Ditch Co Secretary/Treasurer for 8 years. I served as the Chairman for the Accountability Committee for my children's elementary school for 5 years.

**6. What other education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?** My work on the Board of Directors for the Williams and Hamm Ditch Co has taught me how to work collaboratively as a director for a non-profit, shareholder-owned corporation. My education and experience in the electric power industry and as an upper-level manager in a large organization gives me a broad viewpoint and experience in strategic planning. In 1996, I received the U. S. Department of the Interior, Superior Service Award for my work in power plant operations and maintenance.

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

**1. Reliable Energy:** Maintaining reliability and security of our energy distribution system is the highest priority as we plan for the future. We cannot let what happened in Texas, in the winter of 2021, happen here.

**2. Affordable Energy:** Maintain sound business practices while embracing new technologies to move SDCEA to more comparable rates with its neighboring Rural Electric Associations and Investor-Owned Utilities.

**3. Local Control of Our Energy Sources:** Encourage, support, and develop new sources of power and delivery. Revisit existing contracts. Strive for a more diverse and open-market purchase of power and distribution.

**8. 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?** Our longevity in the business will depend on our ability to change with the times. Currently, we rely heavily on coal and natural gas. As the industry is legally required to move away from fossil fuels, all the above-mentioned technologies will be a part of the solutions going forward. All sources of electric power are needed at this place and time. The question becomes how much of what kind is needed, and when, as we move forward.

**9. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.** I am honored to be a member of SDCEA, and it will be an honor and a privilege to serve my fellow members as their representative on the Board of Directors if I am elected.

**AT LARGE BOARD CANDIDATES**



**MICHAEL K ROBINSON**  
**AT LARGE DIRECTOR**

**1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?** 2021

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

I believe members want transparent, forth-right, honest interaction with their utility providers. They want to see "fairness in action" and want both good news as well as bad news delivered with integrity. Members also want the Board to "go to

bat" for them when possible, and represent the members interests with tenacity and zeal, and not as a passive, disinterested body of governance.

**3. What are your personal goals for SDCEA, and what steps would you take as a board member to achieve these goals?** a. Continue delivering both reliable and affordable energy to all members, while exploring innovative ways to do that on a curve of continuous improvement where possible. b. Help develop clear, actionable strategies that drive ongoing transition to renewable, clean energy.

**4. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?** The Board has a "Duty

to Care” to their members, including robust communication to keep members informed of the co-op challenges, opportunities, and plans to always deliver reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy, with an openness to receive feedback from members.

**5. What specifically qualifies you to serve as a corporate fiduciary/utility regulator?** I have a robust background in serving the public within the infrastructure industry, specifically telecommunications, as both an engineering/operations leader, from Fortune 100 corporate leadership to small owner/operator telecom construction businesses. I know the rigors of managing outside plant infrastructure businesses with the challenges of operating over a large, diverse landscape in rural areas. Telecommunications is much like energy, it is a necessary service for quality of life, and as such the enormous responsibility of delivering both reliable and affordable service is paramount.

**6. What other education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?** In addition to my electrical education, I've led the implementation of national and international telecom infrastructures. In the U.S. we sometimes take our reliable grid for granted because of longstanding overall reliability, however the continuous focus on reliable energy to members is sometimes the difference between life and death. I take the governance of SDCEA seriously, and never put our members at risk of not having the necessary energy they need to live a quality life.

**7. What are the three most important issues to members that SDCEA should focus on?** a. reliable highly available electricity, b. affordability of

that electricity, c. decarbonization of electricity sourcing, and d. wildfire mitigation. Some may not perceive wildfire mitigation an important issue, but SDCEA has a significant responsibility to protect life and property by maintaining their lines and right-of-way to prevent wildfires.

**8. 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?** Future energy sources must include ever-increasing share of renewable energy to greatly reduce carbon emission. The industry is in the early stages of this massive transition by investing in solar and wind while continuing to rely on hydro. However much more can be done by pursuing geothermal, nuclear, and possibly hydrogen. I believe DER (distributed energy resources) such as rooftop solar contributes to the transition. EV's are going to escalate in market share which will add enormous demand on the grid, hence we have to expand our capacity by using many sources of energy to accommodate the expected increase in demand.

**9. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.** Supply chains for the co-op are strained, in part due to competing industries such as EV production requiring the same components as co-ops require for transformers. Supply chain issues can potentially impact availability of transformers, poles, etc. and the co-op needs to monitor this and incorporate redundant sources. I am committed to help navigate this to assure the reliability and affordability expectations of our members are continually met.



## JEFF B FIEDLER AT-LARGE DIRECTOR DISTRICT

**1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?** 3 years.

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

my previous role on the school board and current role as Lake County Commissioner, I hear from and seek out the concerns of all members of the community. I think this experience would enable me to not just hear the concerns of members, but ensure that members feel listened to and, even if SDCEA does not make decisions they agree with, that member feels that decisions are made in a fair, transparent, and reasonable manner.

**3. What are your personal goals for SDCEA, and what steps would you take as a board member to achieve these goals?** I am interested in serving on the SDCEA Board to promote the best interests of SDCEA members and of the broader communities within SDCEA's service territory. I believe that the electric utility sector in general and SDCEA are facing unprecedented changes in the technical, economic, and regulatory context within which they operate. This offers significant challenges and opportunities. I would bring a forward-looking perspective to my Board role, grounded in a pragmatic, collaborative, and solutions-oriented approach that I have demonstrated throughout my career.

**4. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?** An electric co-op and its board should treat communication and engagement with its members more like the transparency required of a governmental entity to its constituents and less like a private company. The transparency approach should start with an assumption that information is open to members, unless

disclosing information would undermine negotiations with financial or personnel implications, rather than seeking to disclose the bare minimum.

**5. What specifically qualifies you to serve as a corporate fiduciary/utility regulator?** I have served on several boards with fiduciary responsibility over multi-million-dollar budgets, including the Lake County School Board and the Lake County Board of County Commissioners. This experience includes budgeting, oversight of expenditures and capital planning, and review of financial audits.

**6. What other education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?** My current role as a county elected official (and previously on the Lake County school board) has given me valuable experience in setting long-term goals that reflect the needs and desires of constituents, while also being grounded in the realities of a limited budget and capacity.

From my professional career I bring an ability to synthesize technical, economic, legal and policy information in service of a clear strategy. Prior to being elected county commissioner, I worked for 30 years on clean energy and climate policy, and I will bring an understanding of grid modernization and the ongoing energy transformation in the electric utility sector that will enable me to contribute to Board work at SDCEA.

**7. What are the three most important issues to members that SDCEA should focus on?** First, having a long-term strategic plan consistent with shifts in the electric industry (and specifically examine different pathways for the Tri-State relationship and the role of distributed generation). Second, transparency with members about these planning efforts, and their potential impact on rates. Third, economic development efforts (including zoning, affordable housing, sustainability plans) within its service area, as it determines the customer base and community sustainability.

**8. 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?** There is no doubt that recent technical, economic and policy shifts are creating an energy transformation. On the economic side, renewable energy has become significantly less expensive and in many cases is now cheaper than conventional fossil fuel generation. Technically, distributed generation, battery storage, and grid management capabilities provide new options compared to the previous vertical structure of generation and transmission. State and federal

policies are incentivizing this clean energy transition. I would seek to ensure that SDCEA has viable operational and business model and isn't left behind. SDCEA's primary responsibility is to ensure reliability of service, financial sustainability of the co-op, and a reasonable and fair electric rate structure.

**9. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.** I currently serve as Lake County Commissioner but am running in a personal capacity. I would be honored to serve the member owners of SDCEA.

## BUENA VISTA BOARD CANDIDATE



### **BLAKE T BENNETTS** BUENA VISTA DIRECTOR DISTRICT

**1. How long have you been a member of SDCEA?** I have been a member of SDCEA for 21+ years (1985-2004 & 2019-2023).

**2. What insights do you feel you could bring to the board that would increase their understandings of all members?** I bring an analytical skill set with a Professional Engineering License. I also bring a small-town community understanding from growing up in Nathrop/Buena Vista.

**3. What are your personal goals for SDCEA, and what steps would you take as a board member to achieve these goals?** The safety of all cooperative employees and members is my most important priority. Ensuring the cooperative has reliable energy and a positive culture must also be a priority. As a board member, I will continue to encourage these goals by taking them into consideration during each discussion and vote. I will also keep the CEO accountable for maintaining safety, reliability, and positive culture.

**4. What responsibility do board members have to communicate with the membership of the cooperative?** Each board member has the important responsibility to communicate with all members of the cooperative. This communication must be an open, trusted, and two-way discussion to help answer questions and talk through concerns regarding the direction of the cooperative.

**5. What specifically qualifies you to serve as a corporate fiduciary/utility regulator?** Specifically, I have 48+ hours of electrical cooperative training and have received the Credentialed Cooperative Director Program Certification.

**6. What other education and background experience do you have that specifically apply to governing this electric cooperative?** I have a BS in Civil Engineering and have 10+ years working with municipalities, government agencies, and utility companies building large civil projects (many of which were hydropower related). I am also a Planning and Zoning Commissioner for the Town of Buena Vista.

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

1. Safety of all employees and cooperative members.
2. Reliability of our energy and energy grid system.
3. Recorded and archived meetings & Hybrid voting options (online/mail/in person).

**8. 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's primary responsibility moving forward is to safely provide reliable electric energy and services to power the lives of our members and our communities. The future of energy in central Colorado will continue to evolve with more renewable energy sources. Colorado has a goal to have 100% renewable energy by 2040. Tri-State has a goal to have 70% renewable energy by 2030. It is vital that SDCEA continues to work through this energy transition to ensure the cooperative stays successful. We must consult with professionals to ensure we are investing in the best technologies. We must team with government entities and work with Tri-State to capitalize on local energy projects to keep local energy in our cooperative. As our cooperative continues to electrify, we must invest in our infrastructure and strengthen our grid.

**9. Please add anything else you would like members to consider.** I have served on the SDCEA Board of Directors since June 2022. I enjoy being involved in our community and aim to make a positive difference.



*Join Us*  
**For Our Annual Meeting**

SDCEA's annual meeting will be held on June 15, 2023, at Buena Vista High School. Results of the 2023 board election will be announced during the meeting.