

## **MGA MID-GRID Symposium Speaker Bios**

### **Commissioner Dennis Deters, Public Utilities Commission of Ohio**

Dennis P. Deters was appointed to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) by Governor Mike DeWine in 2019 and reappointed to a second term in 2021.

Prior to joining the PUCO, Commissioner Deters served in local government for the last decade, most recently as a judge on Ohio's First District Court of Appeals. Deters also has served as a Colerain Township Trustee, a Hamilton County Commissioner, and a trial attorney representing local government interests.

In these positions, Deters oversaw local regulation of basic public service, adopted and enforced administrative regulation of local services, worked to solve public service disputes, and represented individuals and businesses navigating government regulation.



Commissioner Deters is a member of the Mid-Atlantic Conference of Regulatory Utilities Commissioners (MACRUC), the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) and the Organization of PJM States, Inc (OPSI). In June 2025, Commissioner Deters was elected as President of MACRUC after having served as First Vice President from June 2024 through June 2025. In October 2025, he was appointed President of OPSI by the PJM States, after serving as Vice President for the previous year. He currently serves on the NARUC Committee on International Relations, which manages outreach activities across the globe, including partnerships with numerous countries in Eastern Europe, Africa and Bangladesh. He is also a member of the NARUC Committee on Critical Infrastructure, which analyzes and supports protection of the nation's energy and telecommunications infrastructure. Deters focuses extensively on cybersecurity as it relates to utility services.

Commissioner Deters previously was selected by his peers to work with on a new Federal and State Current Issues Taskforce, a joint effort between NARUC and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission made up of 10 Utility Commissioners from across the United States. This Taskforce, the N10, is working to find solutions to challenges created by multijurisdictional regulation of the Nation's energy systems and markets. He served on the Taskforce until mid-2025.

Commissioner Deters has earned his Bachelor of Arts, English and Government, from the University of Notre Dame, and his law degree from the University of Cincinnati.

### **Joel Jansen, American Electric Power (AEP)**

Joel Jansen is senior vice president of Regulated Commercial Operations for Energy Supply at American Electric Power (AEP). He is responsible for the growth and profitability of AEP's customer-centric, energy asset businesses, AEP OnSite Partners and AEP Renewables. Since 2015, Jansen has led the development, valuation, engineering, project management, operations, and account management activities of these energy asset businesses.

Prior to returning to AEP in 2015, Jansen led the non-regulated energy assets of Integrys Energy Group, Inc. for nearly ten years. He reshaped the company's asset portfolio over that time by divesting of non-core, traditional fossil fuel fired generation assets and reinvesting those proceeds to acquire and develop a collection of customer-centric



renewable energy assets. In addition to the energy asset business, he had an active role leading the risk, pricing, and energy supply functions for the marketing business of Integrys Energy Services, Inc. and was also the interim president of Trillium CNG.

From 2000 to 2005, he worked in a number of roles for AEP Energy Services. These opportunities included the support of investments in wind and combined heat and power projects.

Jansen started his professional career as a project engineer with Primary Energy, Inc., an industrial project development subsidiary of NiSource, Inc.

He holds a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering with a minor in Economics from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and a master's degree with a focus on Finance from Ohio State University.

Jansen serves on the board of the Cristo Rey Columbus High School, a Catholic, college-preparatory high school with a professional work-study program. Originally from Norfolk, Neb., Joel and his wife, Heidi, live in Powell, Ohio.

### **Jeff Bielicki Ph.D., The Ohio State University**

Dr. Bielicki ([Google Scholar](#) | [ResearchGate](#) | [ORCID](#) | [ResearcherID](#)) runs the Energy Sustainability Research Laboratory at Ohio State University (OSU) where he and his students research issues in which energy and environmental systems and policy interact, specifically on topics related to carbon management, renewable energy, and the energy-water nexus. He is also Program Director of the *Ohio State EmPOWERment Program* ([energyfuture.osu.edu](http://energyfuture.osu.edu)) — a convergent graduate training program for sustainable energy — and is Lead for Energy at OSU Sustainability Institute. Dr. Bielicki is an Associate Professor with a joint appointment in the Department of Civil, Environmental, and Geodetic Engineering and in the John Glenn College of Public Affairs. Dr. Bielicki is also on the faculty of the Environmental Science Graduate Program. Dr. Bielicki holds a Ph.D. (Harvard University), an M.P.A. (Harvard University), an M.B.A. (University of Chicago), and a B.S. (Valparaiso University). Prior to returning to graduate school, Dr. Bielicki was a mechanical engineer at Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, where he primarily worked on devices and infrastructure that produce antiprotons. His academic and research appointments have included being a Non-Resident Scholar (in lieu of Visiting Fellow) at Princeton University's Andlinger Center for Energy and Environment, a Visiting Professor at ETH-Zurich, a Research Associate at the University of Minnesota, a Weinberg Fellow at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, a Fellow at the Baker Center for Public Policy (University of Tennessee), and a Research Fellow with the Energy Technology Innovation Policy group at Harvard University.



In Dr. Bielicki's present research, one line of inquiry combines carbon management and renewable energy, where he investigates the use of CO<sub>2</sub> to produce and to store renewable energy and the implications in the broader energy and environmental systems. In another line of inquiry that combines renewable energy and the energy-water nexus, Dr. Bielicki investigates how changes in environmental and economic conditions could affect energy and water systems, particularly with respect to weather, climate, and land use.

Dr. Bielicki collaborates with researchers in academia and U.S. Department of Energy national laboratories in numerous disciplines that span physical, natural, and social sciences. Dr. Bielicki is a member of a number of professional and honorary organizations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Geophysical Union, the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the American Economic Society, Tau Beta Pi, and Sigma Xi. A blackbelt in taekwondo, in his free time Dr. Bielicki likes to run, practice yoga and improvisational comedy, and teach himself how to play acoustic guitar.

## **Jade Davis, BRITE Energy Innovators**

Jade D. Davis serves as President & CEO of BRITE Energy Innovators, Ohio's only energy technology incubator, where he leads efforts to accelerate the commercialization of energy storage, grid modernization, and clean-tech solutions across the Midwest. Under his leadership, BRITE is expanding its statewide presence, strengthening partnerships between innovators, utilities, investors, and manufacturers, and positioning Ohio as a national hub for advanced energy entrepreneurship.



In addition to his role at BRITE, Jade is Co-Founder and Chief Strategy Officer of Thornton Buckeye Group, a respected public affairs and strategic advisory firm guiding clients through complex energy, infrastructure, and workforce challenges. He brings a unique ability to bridge private-sector innovation with public-sector policy, ensuring that growth and resilience advance together.

Prior to these leadership roles, Jade served as Senior Vice President of Public Affairs & Energy at the Port of Cleveland, where he launched and led the port's energy and environmental initiatives, strengthened public-private partnerships, and directed the organization's government relations strategy at the local, state, and federal levels. Earlier, he was Senior Director of State Affairs and Outreach for the American Coalition for Clean Coal Electricity (ACCCE) in Washington, D.C., overseeing legislative and regulatory engagement across 35 states.

Jade began his career as Legislative Liaison to the Ohio General Assembly and Congressional Delegation for the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, where he advanced critical energy, regulatory, and economic development initiatives.

He is an alumnus of The College of Wooster, Eastern Michigan University, and the Harvard Business School, and he continues to mentor emerging leaders in the clean energy and public policy sectors.

Jade is deeply involved in civic life, serving on the boards of Karamu House, the MetroHealth Foundation, and Benedictine High School. He resides in Northeast Ohio.

## **Ralph Whaley Ph.D., Cincinnati State Technical and Community College**

Ralph Whaley is the Program Chair of Electrical Engineering Technology at Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, where he oversees three engineering programs – Electronic Systems Engineering Technology, Biomedical Equipment Technology, and Power Systems Engineering Technology. He is the primary instructor for all the power systems classes. Prior to joining Cincinnati State in 2013 he was an Associate Professor of Electrical Engineering at Ohio University in Athens, OH where his teaching was mostly focused on electromagnetics and optics. From 2000 to 2005 he was a Member of Technical Staff at Sarnoff Corporation in Princeton, NJ conducting research on active and passive semiconductor photonic devices and was also a visiting research faculty member at the Princeton University PRISM facility.



Ralph received his Bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University in electrical engineering and physics, his Master's degree from Brown University in optical physics, and his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in electrical engineering. Originally from Atlanta, GA, Ralph lives in Cincinnati with his wife, Carole, and enjoys playing the guitar, playing golf, and hiking the trails.

## **Jon Ford, Indiana Office of Energy Development**

Jon Ford currently serves as the Executive Director of the Indiana Office of Energy Development (OED). In this role, Jon is responsible for overseeing the state's energy policies and initiatives, ensuring the reliability, affordability, and sustainability of Indiana's energy resources. He provides policy guidance to executive branch agencies, the legislature, and the public, and administers federal grants to support the state's energy priorities.

Jon brings a wealth of experience in the energy sector, particularly in nuclear energy. Before joining the OED, he was the President of Reliable Energy, Inc. (REI), where he successfully promoted policies aligned with state and federal energy experts to better position Indiana's energy priorities with economic growth. His leadership at REI included managing operations related to coal, natural gas, solar, and recycled battery storage.

Jon's extensive background also includes his tenure as a Republican state senator from the 38th District, where he advocated for Indiana's coal industry, CCS and other energy producers. His commitment to energy development and policy has made him a key figure in advancing Indiana's energy landscape.

## **Justin Grady, Kansas Corporation Commission**

Justin Grady, Director of the Utilities Division at the Kansas Corporation Commission and has been employed by the KCC in the Utilities Division for 23 years.

He is currently Kansas' voting representative on the Cost Allocation Working Group (CAWG) and the Cost Control and Allocation Review and Evaluation team (CARE) at Southwest Power Pool. He has filed testimony in 81 Dockets before the KCC, as well as participated in several major ratemaking dockets at FERC, both electric transmission and interstate gas pipeline. Justin regularly represent the KCC before the Kansas Legislature by providing testimony and presentations to legislative committees. He has a BBA in Finance and Economics from Washburn University in Topeka, KS, and an MBA in Corporate Finance from the University of Kansas.



## **Shane Lies (pronounced Lees), American Electric Power (AEP)**

Shane Lies is executive vice president, Nuclear Development, for American Electric Power and is responsible for the company's nuclear generation strategy and growth.

Most recently, he was executive vice president, Projects and Services. Lies also served as executive vice president and chief nuclear officer and was responsible for oversight of AEP's Donald C. Cook Nuclear Plant in Bridgman, Michigan.

Lies began his career at Cook in June of 1996 as a System Engineer. In 2000, he joined the Operations Department and obtained his Senior Reactor Operator's license. After serving in the control room as a Unit Supervisor, he has held the positions of System Engineering Manager, Operations Manager, Assistant Plant Manager, Engineering Director, Plant Manager, Engineering Vice President and Site Vice President.



Lies received his bachelor's degree in nuclear engineering and master's degree in mechanical engineering from Kansas State University

### **George Damian, Clean Energy Economy Minnesota**

George Damian is the Director of Government Affairs for Clean Energy Economy Minnesota (CEEM), a role he has held since January 2022. He graduated from William Mitchell College of Law (now Mitchell Hamline School of Law) after earning his undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Before joining CEEM, George worked on a range of Minnesota statewide, congressional, and local political campaigns, and spent five years in the communications department at the Minnesota House of Representatives.



George lives in the South Metro with his wife and two daughters. From April through October, you're just as likely to find him at Target Field, hacking his way around a golf course, taking his daughters to Valleyfair, or picking up sticks in the yard.

### **Lissa Pawlisch, Minnesota Department of Commerce**

Pawlisch joined Commerce in March 2023 as the Energy Development Office Director in the Division of Energy Resources and became Assistant Commissioner of Federal and State Initiatives in September 2024. Since joining Commerce, she has worked to expand the Energy Development team to respond to the influx of Minnesota clean energy opportunities. With her team, she has worked to secure additional federal funding, to stand up and implement an array of new state and federally funded programs, and to continue the technical assistance, environmental review, and education and outreach activities Commerce has done for many years. She has worked on advancing clean energy – conservation, energy efficiency and renewable energy - for over 20 years. She previously led the Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs) partnership working to support and center community engagement clean energy project development. Pawlisch received her bachelor's degree from Macalester College and M.S. degree in Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy from the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.



### **Claire Vigesaa, North Dakota Transmission Authority**

Claire graduated from NDSU with a BS in Ag & Bio Systems Engineering in 1982. He worked in the electric cooperative network for 39.5 years, retiring in March of 2022.

His career began at Verendrye Electric Cooperative, Velva ND as an energy engineering advisor, working on a research project analyzing the effect of electric heat on substation loading. He had several career advancements, serving as Assistant General Manager at Northern Plains Electric Cooperative and Vice President of Development and Energy Services at Cass County Electric Cooperative. In these positions, he developed load management programs, served as rate and billing manager, managed public & member relations, key accounts, economic development programs, and served as chief lobbyist.



Later in his career he was tapped to help with a special task force at Tri-State G & T Association in Denver, facilitating the transfer of 100 kV plus assets (\$145 million asset transfer) from its member systems to the G & T.

Claire was named General Manager/CEO of Upper Missouri Power Cooperative in April of 2012. During that tenure, he saw the cooperative quadruple electric energy sales, the cooperative became a transmission owner in MISO and he participated in the submission of transmission assets in the Southwest Power Pool.

Throughout his career he was privileged to serve on numerous boards and committees; as President of the Carrington Economic Development Corporation, landing the Dakota Growers Pasta Company in 1992, served on ND Governor Schafer's transition team, served as an Executive Board Member and Interim CEO of the Greater Fargo-Moorhead Economic Development Corporation, served on the board of Western States Power Corporation and as a board member of the Mid-West Electric Consumers Association. He also served on National Touchstone Energy Committees for over ten years and served as a NRECA mentor for new electric cooperative CEOs.

Failing at retirement, he was approached to serve as Deputy Director of the North Dakota Transmission Authority following retirement and was appointed to serve as Executive Director of the North Dakota Transmission Authority in July of 2023. In this position, he monitors electric transmission grid activities and provides support and information to the ND Industrial Commission, ND Agencies, utilities, and developers with transmission related topics.

Claire and his wife, Jill of forty-two years, built a retirement home northwest of Bismarck near the Hawktree Golf Course, have three grown children and four adorable grandchildren. He enjoys traveling, camping and helping his son with his corn/soybean farm and custom harvesting/forage chopping enterprises; driving tractors and semi-trucks!

### **Luke Wilson, Indiana Office of Energy Development**

Luke Wilson serves as the Chief Policy Officer for the Indiana Office of Energy Development where he oversees the advocacy and educational efforts of the agency and helps coordinate legislative matters for the Secretary of Energy & Natural Resources. Previously, he served as the Executive Director of External Affairs for the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission, where he directed the Commission's legislative, media, and stakeholder engagement strategies. Prior to his time at the Commission, Luke served on staff at the Indiana House of Representatives, advising members on legislative matters mainly related to utilities, transportation, and public health. Luke graduated from Purdue University with a Bachelor of Science in Economics.

### **Benjamin Stafford, Great Plains Institute (GPI)**

Benjamin Stafford joined the Great Plains Institute in 2024 as senior policy manager for the Energy Systems program. Benjamin leads work on utility regulatory innovation and transmission deployment.

Benjamin brings over 20 years of experience in the energy industry to GPI. Most recently, he provided strategy consulting to address regulatory and business model challenges to a clean energy transition. Benjamin's past clients include investor-owned electric and gas utilities, environmental interest groups, and federal and state agencies. Benjamin also has worked extensively in government affairs, advocating for legislative and regulatory policy changes. Benjamin also brings experience in state regulation of public utilities.



### **Tom Content, Citizens Utility Board (CUB) Wisconsin**

Tom joined the Citizens Utility Board in 2017 after working for more than 30 years as a journalist. He became interested in energy and what it costs households while sitting in the back seat, waiting for what seemed like forever, during the gas lines of the '70s. After graduating from Boston University's College of Communication Tom worked at newspapers in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania before moving to Wisconsin. He reported on utilities and worked as business editor at the Green Bay-Press Gazette in the 1990s and then moved to Milwaukee, where he covered energy, utilities and sustainable business for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. His reporting on energy and



climate change won the National Press Club's Stokes Award for Energy Writing in 2007. Tom and his family live in Glendale.

### **Gregory J. Poulos, Consumer Advocates of the PJM States, Inc.**

Greg Poulos has been the executive director for the Consumer Advocates of the PJM States, Inc. (CAPS) since April, 2017. Established in 2013, CAPS is a nonprofit organization whose members include state advocate offices in the 13 PJM states and the District of Columbia. As a whole, the CAPS members represent over 67-million consumers throughout the PJM footprint. As the executive director of CAPS, Greg coordinates the efforts of the member offices, stays active in the PJM stakeholder process, and monitors relevant proceedings at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to ensure that the prices consumers pay for reliable, wholesale electric service are reasonable.



Greg earned his undergraduate degree in Political Science from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He received his Juris Doctorate with from the Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. Greg is a member of the Department of Energy Electricity Advisory Committee.

### **Maureen Willis, Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel**

Maureen Willis became the Agency's fifth Consumers' Counsel on Oct. 1, 2023. She previously served as Acting Legal Director starting in April of 2023. During the previous eight years, Maureen served as OCC's Senior Counsel. Maureen specializes in the litigation of complex electric cases but has diverse legal experience and has served on cases across all utility industries. She has advocated for Ohio consumers in numerous appeals before the Ohio Supreme Court.



Maureen began her career at the OCC in 1982 as a legal intern and was hired as a Staff Attorney upon receiving her juris doctor degree from Capital University Law School in 1983.

Prior to earning her JD, Maureen graduated from the University of Dayton with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. Maureen left Columbus and when she returned a few years later, she rejoined the OCC as an Assistant Consumer's Counsel. In 2004, after time away from OCC, Maureen returned to OCC at the request of the third Consumers' Counsel. In her time away from OCC, Maureen continued to practice in the public utility field. Maureen worked for the Office of the People's Counsel (the Washington, D.C., consumer advocate on utility matters); Hahn, Loeser and Parks; the Office of the Ohio Attorney General as Special Counsel; and the Montgomery County Prosecutor's Office.

Maureen was appointed the fifth Ohio Consumers' Counsel by the OCC Governing Board on June 30, 2023. In a press release issued on that day, Maureen said that "I am honored and humbled to have the opportunity to serve Ohio's residential consumers as the fifth Consumer's Counsel. I will work hard to carry on the rich tradition of consumer advocacy that has been the hallmark of the Agency."

## **Lanny Zieman, Iowa Office of Consumer Advocate**

Lanny is the Consumer Advocate for the Iowa Office of the Consumer Advocate. He was appointed by Attorney General Brenna Bird and unanimously confirmed by the Iowa Senate in April of 2023. He has led the fifteen-person office since. Lanny has served in the armed forces for over twenty-five years. While serving as an active duty Air Force JAG, he was assigned as a utility litigation attorney representing the Department of the Air Force before utility commissions across the country. Lanny serves on the Financial Research Institute advisory board and on the executive council of the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates. He grew up on his family's farm in Iowa graduating from Mount Mercy College and the University of Iowa College of Law.



## **Franz Litz, Great Plains Institute**

Franz Litz brings 30 years' experience in environment and energy to his work with state governments, think tanks, business and non-profit organizations. An accomplished facilitator, lawyer and thought leader, Franz has been especially active at the state and regional levels in the United States, helping to develop energy policy solutions and meet the challenge of climate change.

Franz is a co-founder and co-director of the Conveners Network, an organization that brings together partner organizations to work with groups of states to drive investment and innovation in the advanced energy economy. Great Plains institute is a partner in the Conveners Network and hosts the Conveners Network Secretariat. Franz also facilitates the Midcontinent Power Sector Collaborative for GPI.



As a state official in New York, he was a driving force behind the development and launch of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a multistate program that has dramatically reduced emissions from the power sector across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. Since leaving state service in 2007, he has worked with many other states and provinces, both individually and in regional groups of states and stakeholders, including the Western Climate Initiative, as well as regional groups in the Midcontinent, Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. He has done this work from posts with the World Resources Institute and the Pace Energy and Climate Center, and most recently through his independent consultancy, Litz Energy Strategies LLC.