



DegreeDays

News from the Virginia Propane Gas Association

Country Roads: VAPGA hosts Wild and Wonderful Meeting in West Virginia



VAPGA members, their families, and guests came together October 1-3 at The Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, WV for the 2023 Joint Fall Meeting with the West Virginia Propane Gas Association. We had over 90 Marketer and Supplier attendees from 63 different organizations! There were also 12 first-time meeting attendees, the bulk of which were WVPGA members who had never been to a VAPGA meeting before. We were also thrilled to be joined by many spouses, guests, and family members who contributed to the lively and fun atmosphere throughout the event.

The event kicked off on Sunday with a Captain's Choice golf tournament at The Meadows Course on property at the Greenbrier. It was a beautiful day out at the golf course, and the sunshine, fall foliage, and mountain vistas made for a unique setting. We had a full sellout of 36 golfers who took part in the friendly competition. While the scoring was tight, first place went to

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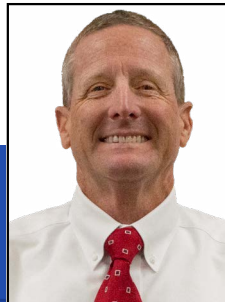


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Executive Director's Message



VAPGA Members – I hope this issue of Degree Days finds you well as we settle into the fall season. Looking back over the past 10 months, you can rest assured that your association has been hard at work on your behalf.

On the networking/professional development front, we hosted 3 fantastic meetings this year: Spring in Williamsburg, Summer in VA Beach, and earlier this month the Fall meeting, a joint meeting with the West Virginia Propane Gas Association at The Greenbrier Resort. Not only did we have near-record attendance at our meetings this year, but we also welcomed 41 first-time attendees. That is an extremely encouraging statistic as we look to continue to promote and grow the association. We are thankful not only for our attendees, but also the sponsors, industry leaders, elected officials, and subject experts who graciously support our events year after year.

In addition to our meetings, we have remained busy recruiting new members, promoting the propane industry, advocating for our members to elected officials, and preparing for a hugely consequential election season and subsequent General Assembly session in January. Much work has also been done at the committee level, and we have welcomed several new committee chairs who have brought some new energy and new ideas into the fold. A few highlights of our committee's work include: Market Development's push to increase rebate usage and the launch of our social media

initiative, the Young Gassers raising over \$13,000 this year and donating \$9,000 in scholarships, and Safety & Education reviving the Bobtail Rodeo event after its COVID-hiatus.

While much has already been done in 2023, now all eyes turn to next month's elections which will greatly impact the legislative and political landscape here in Virginia. For the first time in the history of the Commonwealth, the entire General Assembly will be on the ballot. While the outcome remains unknown, regardless of who wins, it will be up to us and our membership to be proactive and committed to meeting with the new legislators and educating them on our issues. More to come on that, and following the elections we will send out a recap with some commentary from our lobbyist, Mike O'Connor.

In the meantime, you can take solace in the fact that your association is healthy and in many ways is leading the way for the industry. This year we were 1 of 2 state associations who applied for and received an NPGA grant for Hazardous Material Instructor Training (HMIT), and we have been spearheading the Heat Pump Helper rebate, which is now under consideration for a national PERC funding match. We will continue to do our best to support and advance the mission of the association, and we thank all of you, the members, for your continued support of VAPGA.

Cheers,

Zach Eisenman, Executive Director

Tell Us Your Story!

Do you have any company news to share? Big anniversaries? Success stories? Philanthropic events? We'd like to know! Please send your news to **Zach Eisenman**, Executive Director, at zach@eameetings.com. Your news may be published in a future newsletter.

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the team of Randy Doyle, Danielle Gorby, Scott Heishman, and Tom Krupa with a score of 60! Well done!

Monday morning began with a welcome from VAPGA President Tony Hogue as well as WVPGA Executive Director, Amber Perry. After introductions, PERC President & CEO Tucker Perkins provided some comments about the state of the energy industry, and provided some insight into what he is hearing and seeing both at a state, national, and international level. After Tucker's presentation, Dennis Cruise (VAPGA Trainer) and Forest Herron (WVPGA Trainer) provided some safety and training content for the attendees. Following a networking break, Market

Development Chair Tom Krupa presented an update on his committee's efforts at improving VAPGA's social media presence. The efforts were met with a positive response from the membership, and VAPGA is currently engaged with SEPA in an agreement to boost social media presence and provide content for various channels (ex. Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc.). As our online presence continues to grow, we encourage all members and their companies/employees to like, share, and comment on our postings to grow our reach!

As is the case with many Fall Meetings, especially those ahead of an election, the final content of the day turned

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> **Fall Meeting**, *continued from page 5*



to legislative matters. VAPGA lobbyist Mike O'Connor provided attendees with his crystal ball predictions for the November General Assembly elections, as well as gave an overview of potential legislation we can anticipate this January. Amber Perry, WVPGA's Executive Director and lobbyist, provided a brief update on West Virginia politics...which bear little resemblance to what we see play out in Richmond. Following those remarks, we were honored to be joined by VA State Senator, Creigh Deeds, who spoke on his 2022 Emergency Fill Bill (which the association helped improve after its initial draft), as well as his take on the most beneficial ways to engage legislators.

Following a buffet lunch, each committee took time to meet and discuss their plans, solicit feedback from members, and game plan for the next year. Monday evening was our traditional cocktail hour and dinner banquet, and we were pleased to have over 115 people in attendance.

It was truly a wonderful evening filled with laughs, connections, and great food and drink. After dinner, some attendees headed to explore the hotel, while others went to the casino to try their luck. All in all, it was a very productive and congenial meeting. VAPGA was pleased to have our friends from West Virginia join us, and we hope to be able to facilitate another joint meeting with them in the future.

Many thanks to all attendees, guests, spouses, and hotel staff who made the event a success. As we close the book on the 2023 meeting season, I am pleased to report that it was yet another successful three meetings for VAPGA. While much of the work of the association is done in between the three meetings, it is really at the events themselves where our members can connect, learn, and come together to support the Commonwealth's propane industry. We look forward to seeing everyone next year!



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Your donations help VAPGA gain visibility and leverage access to promote our industry. Now more than ever, we need your support to combat the electrification and fuel ban efforts that threaten our industry. Please consider making a donation to the PAC today.



If you'd like to make an investment in the future of Virginia's propane industry, contact [Zach Eisenman](#), Executive Director, or [John Phillips](#), VPAC Committee Chair.

In addition to PAC donations, please let us know if you would be interested in hosting and/or meeting with a legislator this fall.

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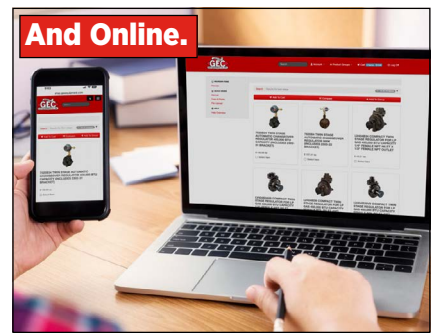
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Fall 2023 Clean School Bus Rebates Program is Now Open

What is the Rebate?

It is a federal rebate program totaling at least \$500 million managed by the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) to incentivize and accelerate the replacement of existing model year 2010 or older diesel school buses with clean school buses, including propane buses. Rebate applications can request funds for replacing up to 25 buses. Applications are due January 31, 2024 at 4:00 PM ET.

Who Can Apply for the Rebate?

Applications will be accepted from state and local governmental entities that provide bus service, including public school districts; eligible contractors; nonprofit school transportation associations; Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, or Tribal-controlled schools responsible for the purchase, lease, license, or contract for service of school buses or for providing school bus service for a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) funded school. *School bus dealers, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), school bus service providers, and private school bus fleets that meet specified criteria are eligible contractors.*

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Propane Primed for Power Generation

Jim Bunsey has found a way to explain propane's role in the growing electrification-of-everything movement.

"Propane's electrifying the future," he says.

With a variety of power generation applications available today, Jim Bunsey says, propane retailers can provide "peace of mind" for customers. Photo by LP Gas staff and Tom Ledford/Ledford Productions

Electricity transmits energy from one place to another, says the director of commercial business development for the Propane Education & Research Council (PERC) and a speaker at the LP Gas Growth Summit.

"Just remember," he adds. "We still have to produce that energy somewhere. The country and the world are still going to need us. We're still a solution that's available."

Amid heightened demand for energy and an unstable electric grid vulnerable to costly weather events, propane is a resilient, reliable and affordable power source that secures the needs of households and commercial and industrial facilities. Propane retailers interested in growing their business through power generation now have added tools and technology to help them make that transition.

At the Growth Summit, Bunsey reminded propane retailers about how they can offer a variety of power solutions through the propane tanks already sitting in their customers' backyards. In an industry awash in supply, exporting about twice the volume sold in the U.S. retail market, retailers have ample product available to grow the users and uses of propane while displacing diesel and gasoline applications.

"With the propane tanks in their backyards, you can offer them that resilience and reliability that you're totally off grid, unconnected, and that gives people peace of mind," he says.



With a variety of power generation applications available today, Jim Bunsey says, propane retailers can provide "peace of mind" for customers. Photo by LP Gas staff and Tom Ledford/Ledford Productions

Bunsey, responsible for PERC's commercial and power generation portfolios, referenced the following opportunities:

Backup power – also referred to as propane standby power, which can prevent disruption to a home or business in a matter of seconds after a power outage.

Mobile/towables – are as versatile as they sound, providing power to locations as needed. Compared to diesel units, PERC says, propane units are less expensive and quieter.

Combined heat and power (CHP) units – allow the heat that would normally be lost in the power generation process to be recovered at the point of use to provide needed heating and/or cooling applications; CHP is an ideal choice for any building with a high thermal load.

Microgrids – are self-sufficient systems that can serve a geographic footprint (e.g., a college campus, business center, community housing). Solar panels and wind turbines collect and store electricity and get support from a propane generator.

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> **Propane Primed**, continued from page 12

Prime power – can supply power in locations with no access to the electric grid or when cost or reliability make reliance on the grid impractical. PERC says these propane units have lifecycles up to 40,000 hours and can burn significant gallons.

Bunsey shared examples of companies that provide propane-fueled generator technology for a variety of applications. They include Upstart Power, Stateline, Qnergy, JuiceBox from Evergreen Mobile Power, and Moser.

“I’m excited to say there’s a lot of manufacturers in the power gen market that already have propane available to us,” he says.

In addition to detailing the different types of generators, Bunsey highlighted other advanced technology and applications available in the market today. They include mobile electric vehicle charging stations in which propane is serving as a power source. Propane is generating power in an industrial chiller from Tecogen, and he says companies like Caterpillar and Rolls-Royce “are getting in the game with propane-powered generators.”

Bunsey says he can serve as a resource for propane retailers interested in growing through power generation

applications and can connect them with equipment manufacturers and vendor partners, depending on the type of customer.

“There are solutions for every power need that you have out there,” he says.

Bunsey encourages industry members to visit propane.com for more power generation resources, including an “ultimate guide” to the market, a white paper about microgrids and other educational tools through PERC’s Learning Center.

| MemberNews



In Memoriam

Felton Novelle Crews, 82, passed away on October 18, 2023, in Easley, South Carolina. Felton had a long career with **Blossman Gas Inc.** and was active in VAPGA. He also served as a past president of the NC Propane Gas Association as well as the SC Propane Gas Association.

Read his obituary [here](#).

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NPGA, NYPGA, Mulhern Gas sue New York over gas ban

By Brian Richesson and Ellen Kriz

The National Propane Gas Association (NPGA), New York Propane Gas Association (NYPGA) and Mulhern Gas Co. are part of a coalition of businesses, trade associations and labor unions that filed a lawsuit in federal court in the Northern District of New York. The suit accuses New York state of violating federal law by banning gas appliances and infrastructure in most new buildings beginning Dec. 31, 2025.

“We work with the state associations and try to advocate for policy that is neutral to energy,” says Steve Kaminski, president and CEO of NPGA. “We’re not pushing these states for anything that’s beneficial specifically to the industry other than simply – treat us like everyone else.”

The lawsuit in the case of Mulhern Gas Co. v. Rodriguez seeks to declare the ban invalid and to block its enforcement on the grounds that it is preempted by the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act (EPCA).

New York’s 2024 budget, approved in May, includes amendments to New York’s Energy Law mandating a prohibition on the installation of fossil fuel equipment and systems in new buildings of fewer than seven stories, except for new commercial and industrial buildings greater than 100,000 sq. ft. All buildings will be subject to the ban by Jan. 1, 2029.

The ban has limited exceptions for emergency backup power and standby power systems, manufactured homes, and in buildings or parts of buildings used for certain purposes, such as medical facilities, laundromats and commercial food establishments.

The federal EPCA imposes uniform energy conservation and use policy for covered appliances. To avoid differing state regulations and protect a national energy policy, it preempts state and local regulations that relate to the energy use of federally regulated appliances, Kaminski notes.

Other plaintiffs in the case are the Plumbing Contractors Association of Long Island; National Association of Home Builders; New York State Builders Association; Northeast Hearth Patio & Barbecue Association; Holmes Mechanical;

Master Plumbers Council of New York; IBEW Local 1049; Plumbers Local 200; IBEW Local 97; and TWU Local 101.

The plaintiffs say they support the transition to cleaner energy but contend that New York’s gas ban is invalid under the EPCA. They also argue the ban will:

- Force businesses to downsize, close or move out of New York.
- Spark layoffs and reduce hiring needs.
- Trigger a significant increase in energy prices.
- Exacerbate the state’s housing affordability crisis.
- Jeopardize the reliability of an already-overburdened electric grid.

“My family has worked for the people of the Hudson Valley for over a century,” says Rick Cummings of Mulhern Gas. “We have worked in blizzards, heat waves and tropical storms to deliver, install and service propane equipment. Now, we have no idea what the future holds. We agree that a greener economy is necessary, but we must figure out how to implement a smooth transition that does not unnecessarily raise costs and impose burdens on families.”

Second federal suit this year

The federal suit marks the second against a state this year in which the propane industry, including NPGA, a state propane association and a propane marketer, teamed with coalition partners to challenge codes restricting the use of propane and natural gas in new residential and commercial construction. Blue Star Gas and the Pacific Propane Gas Association were part of an original filing against Washington state in February.

Kaminski says “the law is in our favor,” evidenced by the results in Washington and Berkeley, California. The legal action stymied Washington’s initial attempts to initiate anti-gas rulemakings, though Kaminski expects the state to continue its gas-ban push in another legal format. Berkeley, meanwhile, was forced to overturn its ban on natural gas hookups in new construction following an April decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit. The court held that Berkeley’s ban on gas piping concerned the energy use of appliances covered by the EPCA and therefore was illegal. Berkeley is challenging the decision.

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“In our opinion, both in Washington state and New York state, they violated federal law,” Kaminski says. “The EPCA is federal law that preempts the states from taking these kinds of actions and banning gas. That is what the 9th Circuit held in the Berkeley case, and it is the advocacy arguments we’re using in both Washington state as well as in New York.”

At its fall meetings in Louisville, Kentucky, NPGA approved the formation of a legal action fund, committing \$1 million from its reserves, to help support the fight for energy choice. The association will seek to grow the fund to \$2.5 million in the coming years without a need to raise member dues, Kaminski says. It also plans to form a five-member committee to oversee the fund.

Congratulations to Scholarship Recipient



The 2023-2024 Virginia Propane Gas Association Endowed Scholarship at Brightpoint Community College was awarded to Maryna Nikulin, a Nursing major from Glen Allen, VA. While the VAPGA Endowed Scholarship at Brightpoint gives preference to those affiliated with the propane industry or interested in trades relevant to propane, the College will award it on merit to a student if no preferred students apply. We are proud to support Maryna on her journey to becoming a nurse in Henrico County.

PERC 2024 Leadership in Energy Ambassador Program

PERC invites propane marketers to apply for its second cohort of Leadership in Energy Ambassadors in 2024. We are looking to identify individuals across the country to join the 44 energy ambassadors that were inducted into the program in 2023 and play a key role in telling propane’s story. This educational program provides critical content, competency development, and tools to inspire our industry members to become ambassadors for our energy in the national energy conversation.

The select group of individuals who will be accepted into this program must seek nomination from their Company CEO or owner, agree to pre-and post-meeting work, and be enthusiastic about the opportunity to engage with their communities and other industry colleagues. **Applications are now open until December 1st, apply [here](#).**

PERC Technical School Grant Program

Help the future generation of HVAC and Plumbing technicians be confident with propane powered appliances by assisting in the implementation of a propane specific curriculum into their classroom. Through the Technical School Grant Program, qualifying schools can receive up to \$10,000 to install propane appliances in their lab.

The program requires each recipient to have a Propane Advisor- someone to not only make sure the appliances and equipment are installed correctly, but to offer their unique perspectives to educate students about propane applications and the career opportunities in propane, as well.

Learn more [here](#).

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2023 Rebates



We are still offering \$300 Safe Appliance Rebates for 2023. We have been granted 200 additional safe appliance rebates from PERC to use through the end of the year. See below for program guidelines and a copy of the 2023 application.

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[\\$300 Safe Appliance Rebates Application](#)

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Our \$500 "Duty to Warn" rebate is now live, and we are accepting applications. Each marketer will be able to apply for \$500 to help offset the cost of their Duty to Warn initiatives – guidelines and the application can be found [here](#).

Email **Tami Rawlette** or call **804.241.2232** for additional information or to request an application and pre-approval numbers.

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