



Introducing NECA Officers

The profiles that follow introduce the officers being elected at the Board of Governors meeting in Las Vegas on October 4, 2026. These **unopposed** candidates will be **elected** that day and include the following:

Terms of office will begin on January 1, 2027, and are two-year terms.

- **Jeffrey T. Barber** will be the new District 2 Vice President replacing **Steven M. Petri, Sr.**
- **Sara Dinkel Smith** will continue as District 4 Vice President
- **Mitch Murphy** will continue as District 6 Vice President
- **Chris Thomson** will fulfill the vacancy as District 8 Vice President
- **James C. Atkins** will be the new District 10 Vice President replacing **Steve Lindley**
- **James A. Thiele** will be the new Vice President of Integrated Systems Contractors replacing **Charles W Fairchild, II**

INTRODUCING JEFFREY T. BARBER, VICE PRESIDENT, DISTRICT 2 NOMINEE



Jeffrey T. Barber
Executive Vice President/Principal
VEC Inc
Girard, Ohio
Mahoning Valley Chapter NECA

BACKGROUND

Barber served 10 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant and spending five years stationed with the Blue Angels. He earned a bachelor's degree in Aeronautics and an associate degree in Safety from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, as well as a master's degree in Business from Youngstown State University with a focus on leadership and finance. He is also a BICSI Registered Communications Distribution Designer (RCDD). Barber entered the electrical construction industry in 2000, working for an interconnect company before joining VEC, Inc. in 2002 to establish its Low Voltage Systems Integrator Department. In 2015, his responsibilities expanded to oversight of the company's electrical, low voltage and mechanical projects. Today, Barber is an owner of VEC and serves on its Executive Leadership Team and Board of Directors.

COMPANY INFORMATION

VEC, Inc., formerly Valley Electrical Consolidated, was founded in 1965. The company provides electrical, low voltage, mechanical and general contracting services, with electrical construction accounting for approximately 75 to 80 percent of its work. VEC currently has 38 active projects across eight states, primarily east of the Mississippi River and throughout the Northeast. The company focuses heavily on industrial markets, including power generation, oil and gas, advanced manufacturing and automotive. VEC employs approximately 400 people companywide and has averaged \$150 million in annual revenue over the past three years.

INVOLVEMENT WITH NECA

Barber has been involved with NECA since 2001 and has held numerous leadership roles at both the local and national levels. His service has included the LMCC, JATC, Pension Trust, Inside Negotiations and Low Voltage Labor Management Committee. He has served on his Chapter's Board for 15 years, including terms as Vice President, President and Governor. Nationally, Barber has been active with NECA's Workforce Development Committee and Electrical Training Alliance, as well as the Political Leadership Council and its committee. He is also a Fellow of the Academy of Electrical Contracting.

INDUSTRY OBSERVATIONS

Barber sees the rapid growth of large hyperscale projects as one of the most significant forces reshaping the electrical construction industry. The demand created by these projects has contributed to labor and material shortages and rising costs, while also creating opportunities for contractors. He believes these pressures could make it increasingly difficult to compete for more traditional day-to-day work. Barber also points to continued industry consolidation through private equity and corporate acquisitions as a significant development, requiring small and midsize contractors to adapt. Looking ahead, he believes the industry must rethink longstanding approaches to collective bargaining agreements and workforce classifications to remain competitive in a changing construction environment.

AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

Barber and his wife, Rachel, are high school sweethearts and have been married since 1997. They have two children, Elizabeth and Nathan, and a two-year-old grandson, Oliver. They enjoy spending summers boating around the islands of Lake Erie and time at their condo in Pensacola Beach, often bringing family and friends along. As a Marine Corps veteran and Blue Angels alumnus, Barber also enjoys reconnecting with friends at air shows. He and Rachel are active supporters of local charities and regularly participate in fundraising activities.

INTRODUCING SARA DINKEL SMITH, VICE PRESIDENT, DISTRICT 4 NOMINEE



Sara Dinkel Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Sycamore Engineering
Terre Haute, IN
Central Indiana Chapter, NECA

BACKGROUND

Smith earned her degree in Mechanical Engineering from Washington University in St. Louis. She started as a design engineer with HVAC and plumbing systems. As her skills developed, she added electrical design along with project engineer and project management titles. Smith has been with Sycamore Engineering for 26 years and has developed a strong grasp of each management role.

COMPANY INFORMATION

Sycamore Engineering was founded in 1960 by the Dinkel family who has owned and operated the company since inception. The company has grown to include complete electrical, mechanical, and service-related activities. Their mechanical and sheet metal fabrication shops provide in-house service for mechanical construction projects as well as stand-alone projects. Sycamore offers Electrical, Mechanical, Sheet Metal, Building Solutions, Engineering, and a full-service fleet. Servicing commercial, industrial, and healthcare clients in West Central Indiana and East Central Illinois with annual sales volume of \$55 million.

INVOLVEMENT WITH NECA

Sycamore Engineering joined the Central Indiana Chapter in 1966. Sara started as the Primary Contact in 2001 and has held various positions with the chapter since including Division Chair, Board Member, Health and Welfare Trustee and Negotiating Chairman. She served as both Chapter President and Governor. She has been on the Management Development Committee since 2023 and currently serves as Chair. As a PLC member, she is engaged with her local legislators to inform them of NECA business. Additionally, Sara also contributes to Women in NECA and serves on the Board of Directors for Union Health System and the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce.

INDUSTRY OBSERVATIONS

Smith believes that being involved is not an option, but a duty to improving the outcomes of the community. Do not be afraid to be curious and ask the questions, you will learn something new every day.

AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

Sara's proudest achievement is her family. She and her husband, Jeff, have been married for 26 years and have three children: Hudson, Oliver, and Vivienne. Outside of work, Sara enjoys golf, pickleball, tennis, and traveling with her family.

INTRODUCING MITCH MURPHY, VICE PRESIDENT, DISTRICT 6 NOMINEE



Mitch Murphy
Owner
Sierra Electric Inc
Pasco, Washington
Inland Empire Chapter NECA

BACKGROUND

Murphy began his career in the electrical industry after graduating from high school in 1975. He completed a two-year residential apprenticeship in 1977 and later that year entered the inside wireman apprenticeship program, graduating in 1981. Murphy worked as a journeyman and foreman electrician for three years before moving into project management and eventually executive management with Power City Electric, where he remained through 1997. In 1998, he founded Sierra Electric, Inc. and joined NECA that same year.

COMPANY INFORMATION

When the company Murphy had worked for announced plans to sell the business, he saw an opportunity to venture out on his own. In 1998, he founded Sierra Electric, Inc., purchasing a couple of used trucks and equipment and renting a small office at the Port of Pasco. Today, Sierra Electric serves Eastern Washington and performs work on schools, airports, commercial and industrial buildings, traffic signals, street lighting, service projects and contracts with various municipalities. The company's annual sales average between \$16 million and \$20 million.

INVOLVEMENT WITH NECA

Murphy joined NECA in 1998 and has served on his Chapter's board since 2007, holding a variety of leadership positions. He served as Treasurer, Chapter President from 2016 to 2022, and Chapter Governor from 2022 to 2025. He has also served on the Apprenticeship Committee since 1990 and as a Trustee of the Health and Welfare Trust since 2002. Throughout his career, Murphy has placed a high priority on giving back to the industry and ensuring Eastern Washington is well represented. He considers the opportunity to serve as NECA Vice President an honor and a natural extension of the relationships and industry involvement he has built throughout his career.

INDUSTRY OBSERVATIONS

Murphy points to the rapid evolution of technology and construction methods as one of the most significant changes he has witnessed during his career. He believes contractors must always be prepared for the unexpected and sees emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, as creating significant opportunities for the industry. As AI continues to develop, Murphy sees virtually unlimited possibilities for using it as a valuable tool across many types of projects.

AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

Murphy and his wife, Tina, have five adult children and eleven grandchildren between them. Much of their free time is spent cheering on their grandchildren at sporting events, dance recitals and other activities. They also enjoy golfing together, boating at Lake Roosevelt, traveling, and spending time with family and friends.

INTRODUCING CHRIS THOMSON, VICE PRESIDENT, DISTRICT 8 NOMINEE



Chris Thomson
President
Tec Electric Company
Logan, Utah
Intermountain Chapter NECA

BACKGROUND

Thomson graduated from Utah State University in 1994 with a bachelor's degree in economics. He continued his education through the NECA/IBEW five-year JATC electrical apprenticeship program, earning his journeyman license in 1997 and later his master electrician license in 2008. His combination of academic education, trade training, field experience and business leadership has provided a strong foundation for both technical operations and executive project management.

COMPANY INFORMATION

Thomson represents the third generation of leadership at TEC Electric, continuing a family legacy in electrical contracting that dates back to 1933, when his grandfather founded Thomson Electric. In 1972, Thomson's father expanded the business by launching the contracting division under the TEC Electric name. Today, the company employs more than 200 field employees and operates throughout Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Idaho and Hawaii. TEC Electric specializes in high-quality service, industrial and commercial electrical construction.

INVOLVEMENT WITH NECA

Thomson has held numerous leadership positions within NECA's Intermountain Chapter, serving as Vice President from 2009 to 2011, President from 2011 to 2013, and Governor from 2015 to 2016. At the national level, he served on NECA's Business Development Task Force in 2016 and 2017 and helped launch the inaugural NECA Project Excellence Awards. Thomson returned to Chapter leadership as President from 2019 to 2021 and currently serves as Chair of the Electricians Licensing Board. He looks forward to representing the Chapter and the region as NECA Vice President for District 8 and collaborating with industry leaders from across the country.

INDUSTRY OBSERVATIONS

Thomson points to the unprecedented growth of extremely large-scale projects and the continued consolidation of smaller contractors by larger firms as two of the most significant changes facing the electrical construction industry. He believes successfully navigating these shifts will require a balance of adaptable field management and forward-thinking strategy. Thomson also sees organizations such as NECA playing an important role in helping contractors of all sizes remain competitive and successful as the industry evolves.

AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

Thomson and his wife, Holly, have been married for 33 years and have three children (two sons and one daughter) and two grandchildren. They enjoy cycling, snowmobiling, boating, skiing and golfing. Thomson and his wife are also active in their church community and enjoy traveling and spending time with family and close friends.

INTRODUCING JAMES C. ATKINS, VICE PRESIDENT, DISTRICT 10 NOMINEE



James C. Atkins
President, CEO, and Founder
Northline LLC
Au Sable Forks, New York
Northeastern Line Constructors Chapter NECA

BACKGROUND

Atkins began his career in the electrical construction industry as a welder on a caisson crew. A New York State certified welder, he graduated from the Northeast Apprenticeship and Training (NEAT) line apprenticeship program in 1991, becoming a journeyman and live-line lineman. He has also completed college coursework in business, leadership, and management. The electrical industry has been part of the Atkins family for four generations. His grandfather, Howard, a Marine Corps veteran of World War II and the Korean War, joined IBEW Local 1249 in 1952, followed by his father, Warren, in 1968. Jamie continued the tradition, and his son, Brandon, became the fourth generation when he joined Local 1249 in 2014.

COMPANY INFORMATION

Founded in 2005 as what Atkins describes as a “friendly neighborhood line contractor,” the company has grown to approximately 700 employees operating in 13 states and generating approximately \$300 million in annual revenue. With a primary focus on the Northeast, the company performs traditional transmission, distribution, and substation construction projects, along with specialty services including energized transmission work, training, and professional and technical services.

INVOLVEMENT WITH NECA

Atkins has been extensively involved in industry leadership, serving on the Northeast Line Chapter Board of Directors and as Chapter Governor and Safety Fund Liaison. His additional service includes the Line Construction Advancement Fund Board of Directors, NEAT Apprenticeship Local 1249 Subcommittee, Local 1249 Pension and Insurance Trust, Local 1319 OSHE Trust, New York Lineman’s Safety Training Fund, and the Council on Industrial Relations. Atkins has also served on the Electrical Industry Certifications Association (EICA) Board of Directors and as its President. His work with EICA provided an opportunity to become more engaged with District 10 leadership, ultimately leading to his peer nomination to serve as NECA District 10 Vice President.

INDUSTRY OBSERVATIONS

Atkins has seen the role of line contractors evolve significantly during his three decades in the industry. What was once viewed largely as a resource for major projects or peak workload demands has become a reliable and scalable component of the industry’s overall workforce strategy. Looking ahead, he believes changing demands and new opportunities will continue to challenge traditional ways of doing business. Atkins sees the industry’s willingness to embrace change as critical to its continued growth and success.

AWAY FROM THE OFFICE

Atkins enjoys working outdoors on his family property and spending time with family and friends, including his grandchildren. He also enjoys building and racing just about anything with a motor. An avid reader, Atkins enjoys researching leadership, organizations and labor-management issues.

INTRODUCING JAMES A. THIELE, VICE PRESIDENT OF INTEGRATED SYSTEMS CONTRACTORS NOMINEE



James A. Thiele
Executive Chairman
BW Secure
Colorado Springs, Colorado
Southern Colorado Chapter NECA

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