

## 2025 WEN OH Slate of Candidates



### **President: Lauren Stenger, Taft Law**

Lauren is an Ohio and Michigan licensed attorney at Taft Law and specializes in energy, utility, and broadband regulatory matters. Lauren represents utilities (gas, electric, water, and broadband), startups, and government agencies. Lauren has significant experience representing her client's interests in proceedings before the Ohio Public Utilities Commission and Ohio Power Siting Board. Lauren graduated from Miami University and Capital University Law School. She lives in Upper Arlington with her husband, Jared, and their two cocker spaniels, Oscar and Wilbur. Lauren loves to try new recipes, listen to classic rock, and travel with her family



### **Vice President: Claire Linkhart, API**

Claire is a government affairs professional with over sixteen years of public policy experience on Ohio's Capitol Square, currently serving as Associate Director of API Ohio.

Claire began her career in the Ohio Senate, serving in a variety of capacities over a ten-year period including Senior Policy Advisor and Director of Budget and Finance. In her roles, Claire advised the Senate on state policy and economic matters with particular focus on K-12 education and energy policy. In 2017 Claire transitioned to the private sector in a government affairs role, where she serves as Associate Director for the American Petroleum Institute (API), a national oil and gas trade association. In this position she manages regulatory and legislative issues impacting the industry in Ohio and Michigan. Her duties also include creating and managing programs that educate and influence key stakeholders on oil and gas industry issues while building partnerships with elected officials, allied businesses, industry employees and other key constituencies.

Claire is actively involved in her community of Springfield, Ohio, serving her alma mater as a member of the Wittenberg University Alumni Association Board and as the co-chair of Wittenberg's Greater Springfield Alumni Chapter.

She resides in Springfield with her husband, Rob – a middle school principal – and their daughters, Ella and Annie.



### **Secretary: Sara Swanson, EDL Energy**

Ms. Sara Swanson has twelve years' experience in the energy industry, working as a Senior Process Manager at EDL. She leads a team to support engineering and technical efforts for the North American business. She is also a process safety leader, coordinating EDL's corporate Process Safety Management (PSM) program. Her prior experience is in supporting natural gas projects in the Utica Shale, from new construction of pipelines and compression facilities through operations engineering of cryogenic plants. She has formerly worked at Chesapeake Energy, Access Midstream, and Williams. Sara received her Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering from West Virginia University in 2013, graduating with honors and a minor in nanosystems. Sara's greatest professional interests lie in the realm of continuous and process improvement, workplace safety, and diversity and inclusion. She is passionate about volunteering, most recently joining Summit County's Project Learn, where she tutors mathematics for those wishing to pass their GED exam. Sara's other passions include her two dogs, seeing live music, yoga, working out, cooking, traveling, hiking, all things Cleveland, and West Virginia University sports.



### **Treasurer: Mandolyn Newell, ONEi**

Mandolyn Newell serves as the Treasurer on the Board of Directors for the Women's Energy Network Ohio. As an Education and Workforce Programs Associate at the Ohio Natural Energy Institute, Mandolyn is passionate about supporting the future energy workforce, engaging students through innovative programs, and promoting STEM careers helping students find their passion. With 5 years of experience in the oil and gas industry, she has leveraged her expertise to advance educational initiatives. An avid traveler and Dive Master in training, Mandolyn has conducted international research on energy and climate, enriching her understanding of global energy challenges. Outside of work, she enjoys sightseeing with her daughter, underwater photography and driving her Mustang, fueling both her adventurous spirit and love for exploration.



### **Membership Director: Brooke Harrison, Burns & McDonnell**

Ms. Harrison is a project manager in the Environmental Services global practice at Burns & McDonnell. She has 24 years' experience in environmental consulting performing field surveys and managing a variety of natural resource projects involving stream and wetland identification and delineation, terrestrial habitat surveys, threatened and endangered species habitat surveys, avian surveys, mitigation planning and monitoring, and 401/404 project permitting. She also has extensive experience with developing natural resource approaches to meet a variety of client and project needs including renewables, residential, commercial, industrial, infrastructure (electric transmission, pipeline, sewer, roadway), parks, government and private property. Ms. Harrison has

conducted ecological-related work throughout Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois, Indiana, New York, Massachusetts, Missouri, Michigan, Minnesota, Washington, Nebraska, Alabama and Texas. Ms. Harrison earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resources from The Ohio State University. She is 40hr HAZWOPER certified and is working towards obtaining her Professional Wetland Scientist certification. Brooke can assist with determining if your project requires natural resource surveys and provide guidance on navigating the regulatory landscape.

### **Sponsorship Director: Katie Cooke, CBIZ**



Kathleen “Katie” Cooke has been a trusted advisor in the Employee Benefits and Insurance market for over 15 years. She works with businesses to solve problems and find effective strategies on the cost of healthcare, employee engagement, recruitment and retention. Katie is committed to customizing the right solutions to meet the varying needs of her clients. While Katie works with a variety of industries, she has extensive experience working with clients tied to the Oil and Gas Industry.

Katie holds a Master’s Degree in Community and Regional Planning, an Accident & Health, Casualty, Life, Property and Variable license through the State of Ohio, and the ChHC®. Katie joined WEN in March 2022 and currently serves as the Membership Director. She lives in Columbia Station with her husband, Lewis.



### **Community Initiatives: Carol McKnight, SWCA**

Ms. McKnight is a Principal Project Manager for SWCA's Northeast/Midwest operations. Ms. McKnight manages projects and clients, particularly in the Power sector, develops new business, manages client relationships, provides technical support/quality control, and mentors staff. Ms. McKnight brings more than 25 years of successfully navigating agency and regulatory requirements. With an in-depth knowledge of FERC, NEPA, ESA, US Army Corps of Engineers permitting processes, Ohio Power Siting Board filings, and state and local permitting, she can successfully manage project schedules and effectively advise clients to a successful project outcome. Ms. McKnight’s experience also includes environmental impact studies (EIS) and assessments (EA), as well as environmental planning and permitting, erosion and sediment control plans, wetland and stream mitigation plans, ESA compliance, Section 106 compliance/process, and post-construction monitoring. Ms. McKnight specializes in supporting Power sector clients (natural gas, electric utility, solar, etc.) navigate environmental permitting such as Clean Water Act, Power Siting Boards, and state and local permitting.



### **Programs Director: Kristen Henson, Enbridge**

Kristen Henson is the Senior Advisor for Stakeholder Engagement at Enbridge covering Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Maryland. Kristen's focus is on supporting operations and projects through collaborating with external stakeholders to build long-term relationships that create shared value and promote ongoing safety and environmental stewardship. Prior to joining the company, she worked in the Ohio House of Representatives as a Legislative Aide and served as the Director of Member Relations for the Ohio Gas Association. Most recently, Kristen worked as a third-party consultant to Enbridge during the project phase of the Nexus Gas Transmission pipeline which was placed into service in Ohio in 2018. Kristen joined WEN in May 2022 and currently serves as a Program Director focused on events in Central Ohio. She lives in Canal Winchester with her husband Clayton.



### **Marketing & Communications Director: Wendy Yanni, Atlas Technical Consultants**

Ms. Yanni is the Marketing Director of the Ohio Valley for Atlas Technical Consultants. Ms. Yanni manages Special Events and conferences along with Business Development for The Brecksville office. Ms. Yanni creates and manages SOQ and proposal content and creative design along with the coordination and presentation of conferences for the Ohio Valley. She specializes in supporting petroleum, Construction Materials Testing (CMT), environmental, and wetlands clients. Ms. Yanni brings 15 year of experience in design and managing of marketing and special events along with business development.



### **Director at Large: Bridget Johnson, Blackrock Resources**

Bridget Johnson has 15 years of experience in Business Development and Marketing within the Energy, Industrial and Construction industries. Throughout her career, Bridget has established an extensive professional network across the tri-state region. She excels at fostering connections that lead to business generation, exceeding the goals and expectations of the company's growth strategies within specific markets. Additionally, she has found professional and personal satisfaction in applying her networking skills to influence more positive, productive team environment, fitting all the pieces together like a giant puzzle.

As Sr. Business Development Account Executive at BlackRock Resources, Bridget is responsible for helping her customers find qualified talented people to join their companies. In working with the recruiters at BRR she helps qualify and identify candidates that fit the positions needed to fulfill the

job requirements provided by the hiring companies. In addition, Bridget also seeks unique engineering opportunities as BRR provides niche engineering services to the oil and gas industry.

Bridget currently service on the Board of Trustees for the Ohio Oil and Gas Association. She was appointed as President of Women's Energy Network of Ohio 2022. Her experience as within the WEN Greater Pittsburgh Chapter has led her in this direction. Previous roles within WEN Greater Pittsburgh were Public and Industry Relations Director for 2019-2020 and Membership Director for 2021. In addition to her involvement with WEN, Bridget has served as a committee chair for the ACE Mentoring Program, designed to mentor high school students and inspire them to pursue careers in design and construction.



### **Director at Large: Dunja Augustin, Vistra Corp**

Dunja Augustin is Vice President of Retail Operations at Energy Harbor, the second largest US non-regulated nuclear fleet energy producer and fully integrated retail energy provider, previously known as FirstEnergy Solutions (FES), the former competitive subsidiary of FirstEnergy Corp. She began her career at FirstEnergy in 2009 as an Analyst and held various roles at FirstEnergy Solutions until 2019, at the time of corporate restructuring, separation, and establishment of Energy Harbor. She oversees eight retail operations business units and is also responsible for market expansion and new product development. She played a key role in adding Natural Gas, to Energy Harbor's commodity portfolio. In addition, she led Energy Harbor's product development efforts related to Carbon Free Power products.

Mrs. Augustin earned her undergraduate degree in International Business with a minor in PreLaw and International Politics from The University of Akron in 2006. During her time as an undergraduate student, Mrs. Augustin received top honors including the Global Business Scholarship. She dedicated herself to community service activities through Alpha Delta Pi Sorority and Ronald McDonald House at Akron Children's Hospital. She also served as President of the International Business Association.

In 2007, Mrs. Augustin graduated with a master's in Business Administration from The University of Akron with a concentration in Strategic Marketing and Global Sales Management.

Mrs. Augustin was raised in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Aachen, Germany and moved to the United States as a teenager. She is fluent in three languages. Mrs. Augustin now resides in Akron with her husband Matt, her 6-year-old son Thomas, and her 5-year-old daughter Sofia. As an active and passionate young professional, Mrs. Augustin finds time to give back to the Greater Akron area, a community for which she has a deep appreciation. She is the President of the Board at Embrace Care and Clinic Center, Board Member of the Greater Akron Chamber, Board Secretary of the Women in Energy Ohio Chapter and a Member of the University of Akron Marketing Advisory Board. She enjoys volunteering and giving back to Mason Elementary and United Way of Summit County.





### **Community Initiatives Chair: Maggie Molnar, TRC Companies, Inc.**

Ms. Molnar is a Professional Wetland Scientist (PWS) and Ecologist working at TRC. Ms. Molnar specializes in stream and wetland delineations, ecological resource surveys, and waterway permitting for a mix of private and government clients. Ms. Molnar is also experienced in doing wetland and stream mitigation monitoring, wetland functions and values assessments, vegetation surveys, invasive species management, and threatened and endangered species consultation. She has prepared countless §401 Water Quality Certifications and §404 Individual Permit applications; Level 1 Ohio Isolated Wetland Permit applications, NWP applications, Pre-Construction Notification's, Ohio EPA Director's Authorizations, and Permit Determinations for a wide variety of clients. She has extensive field experience in the identification of aquatic and terrestrial plants, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and wildlife habitat requirements. Ms. Molnar has done environmental consulting work related to wetlands, waterway permitting, vegetation, and wildlife issues for 11 years throughout Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, West Virginia, and Virginia. She has a BS in Environmental Studies from Ohio Northern University.



### **Community Initiatives Chair: Amanda Finn, Ascent Resources.**

As Director of External Affairs for Ascent Resources, Ms. Finn is the liaison to local, state, and federal officials on issues affecting not only Ascent but the industry as a whole. Assisting with legislative initiatives and bill creation. Ms. Finn is a registered lobbyist in Ohio and West Virginia. Ms. Finn also manages all landowner and external affairs for Ohio which is part of creating a corporate/local relationship structure within their operating counties. Previously Ms. Finn worked as Government Relations Manager for Magnum Hunter Resources, Eureka Midstream, and GreenHunter Resources, where she also handled all local, state, and federal issues affecting all three companies. After years of working closely with a Congressman on the Energy and Commerce Committee, Ms. Finn brings with her the experience and exposure that is necessary to be an effective advocate to the oil and gas industry. Counterpoint to her government relations reach is her community relations experience. An Ohio native, an active volunteer for local political campaigns, Chairman of the Ohio Oil and Gas Association (OOGA), Chair of the Government Affairs Committee for OOGA, WEN board member, AXPC member and a member of local volunteer organizations, Ms. Finn's community involvement plays a critical role in the relevancy of her understanding of the issues for the industry. Ms. Finn has a background in Marketing and Business Development and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Marketing from Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri.



## **Membership Committee Chair: Vernita Cockrell, Whitt-Sturtevant**

Vernita Elaina Cockrell joined Whitt Sturtevant LLP in April of 2023. She is licensed to practice law in both Illinois and Ohio. Prior to joining Whitt Sturtevant, Vernita was an Assistant State’s Attorney at the Cook County State’s Attorney’s Office, Civil Actions Bureau. There she negotiated and litigated a high volume of complex workers’ compensation cases. Vernita also has experience developing mitigation plans and defense strategies.

Vernita is a native Chicagoan. She earned her JD at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Law, a MA in Public Policy at the University of Chicago and a BA in Political Science from Roosevelt University. During law school, Vernita was very active including: working as a 711 licensed law clerk for the Cook County Office of the Public Guardian, Juvenile Division; serving as President of the Black Law Students Association – Glenn T. Johnson Chapter and the Christian Legal Society – UIC Law Chapter; National Secretary for the National Black Law Students Association; and mediating in the Cook County Circuit Court after becoming certified through the Center of Conflict Resolution. She also spent a summer working at a distinguished intellectual property law firm in Beijing, China, as well as an ongoing volunteer through the Restorative Justice Program at UIC Law.

Vernita enjoys bringing people together and working with community and industry organizations. Since the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, she has had the privilege of serving on several boards, and even started a couple of organizations. She looks forward to the opportunity to work with the WEN Ohio leadership team.

In her spare time, Vernita enjoys watching football, basketball, and movies with her AMAZING husband, Adam, and her adorable boxer, Apollo.



## **MarCom Committee Chair: Ilham El-Monier, OSU – Engineering**

Ilham El-Monier is an Associate Professor at The Ohio State University (OSU). El-Monier joined OSU to lead the Petroleum Engineering Minor program development under Chemical Engineering. Before that, she worked as a Lecturer at the University of Oklahoma. She received her B.Sc. and M.Sc. from Cairo University in Egypt and her Ph.D. from Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, all in Petroleum Engineering. ElMonier’s research focuses on Reservoir Engineering, Formation Damage, Stimulation, Hydraulic Fracturing, Geothermal Reservoirs, and CO2 Storage (CCUS).



## **Lauren Strobe: Manger, Manager, Government Relations & Association Management**

Lauren Strobe's academic and professional journey has been influenced by a strong educational foundation and a diverse range of experiences that have greatly shaped her career in government relations and policy analysis. With a Master's degree in political science specializing in policy analysis and a Bachelor's degree in Public Administration from Miami University, Lauren has combined academic achievements with hands-on

experiences.

Her academic pursuits were enriched by volunteering at the Refugee Center in Luxembourg, broadening her perspective on global humanitarian issues. In the United States, she collaborated with local government bodies such as the Fairfield County Commissioners and the Regional Planning and Building Department, applying her knowledge to practical administrative and planning tasks.

Participating in a significant fellowship focused on pretrial justice policy in Cincinnati and Washington D.C., she acquired valuable perspectives on the criminal justice system. Transitioning into politics, Lauren oversaw county-wide campaign effort. Subsequently, she worked as a legislative assistant at the Ohio House of Representatives, managing constituent communications and legislative matters. These experiences prepared her for her current role at Hicks Partners, excelling in government relations and association management.



## **Sponsorship Committee Chair: Rachel Jenkins, NiSource**

Rachel Jenkins is the Asset Program Owner for Transmission Integrity at NiSource. She's been in the oil and gas industry for 20 years, serving in various role in compliance, operations, engineering, and project planning. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from The Ohio State University and her MBA from Ohio University. She began her career as a utility engineer in New York City, working for the pipeline safety group with the New York State Public Service Commission. She has worked as a pipeline

engineer for Columbia Pipeline Group (now TC Energy) and Dominion Energy Ohio (now Enbridge Ohio), before moving on to her current role at NiSource in 2023. She has extensive experience in pipeline integrity, pipeline pigging and in-line inspection, underground storage, project planning and management, compliance, and pipeline defect analysis. Outside of the office, Rachel enjoys music and catches as many live performances as possible, everything from classical to pop to heavy metal. She also enjoys hiking, travel, crochet, karaoke, and The Ohio State Buckeyes. While she works out of NiSource's Columbus office, she lives in Wadsworth Ohio with her husband Matt.





**Past President: Sheryl Smith, TRC Companies, Inc.**

Ms. Smith is the National Market Director for Power in the Environment & Infrastructure Sector at TRC, with 40 years of technical, financial and market analysis experience in the development and management of solid waste and power projects. She develops and executes market strategies for growth for utility and energy clients, leading TRC's account managers in proposal and presentation development, contracting, technical collateral development, and client interface strategies. Her expertise is in coal ash beneficial reuse and borrow material benchmark studies, solid and industrial waste market analysis, industry data research, and biomass sourcing studies. She has a Master of Engineering (Civil) from Cornell University and a BS in Civil Engineering from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.