





Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association

# Index

Government Relations ..... 3-5  
 Engineering and Policy Analysis ..... 5  
 Safety and Training..... 6  
 Meetings and Workshops..... 7  
 Communications & Member Relations ..... 8  
 Timeline ..... 9-11



MMUA photos

*Jim Bigger of Princeton Public Utilities (right) bid farewell to utility customers following a Public Power Week tour of the municipal powerplant.*

### About MMUA:

The Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association is a non-profit entity representing 124 electric, 170 water, and 33 gas utilities owned and operated by cities across the State. MMUA strives to be a recognized leader in advocacy, bringing value to municipal utilities and enhancing their position within the industry.

MMUA’s mission is to support and serve as a common voice for municipal utilities. Its core values: People, Safety, Advocacy, Teamwork, Communication, Creativity, Dedication, Integrity, and Environment. For more about MMUA, its mission and values, visit us online at [www.mmua.org](http://www.mmua.org)



# Government Relations

## *State legislative activities*

2018 saw new beginnings for MMUA's Government Relations team. Amanda Duerr left MMUA and Kent Sulem joined the team as the new Government Relations Director, while Bill Black transitioned into the role of Government Relations Attorney.

The new team hit the ground running with developing position papers for the annual APPA Legislative Rally, held Feb. 26-28 in Washington, D.C. The conference proved to be a bit challenging when appointments had to be rescheduled at the last minute due to the death of Billy Graham and his subsequent laying in state resulted in access to the Capitol being cut off and members needing to reschedule around the ceremonies. But in the end, MMUA members had the opportunity to talk with all members of the State's congressional delegation.

Upon returning to Minnesota, the Government Relations staff shifted focus to the state Legislature. Despite being a "short" session, the volume of work did not decrease. The 2018 session saw:

- 3,493 bills introduced and reviewed for relevance (1,673 Senate Files, 1,820 House files)
- Many of the 5,165 bills that were introduced in 2017 but did not receive final action were carried forward for consideration in 2018
- 8,658 total bills introduced and reviewed
- 115 potential 2018 session laws were sent to Gov. Dayton. Of these bills, 15 received complete vetoes and one was subject to a line-item veto
- 7 issues of the Capital Letter sent out
- 17 conference calls with the Government Relations Committee (plus a few more in preparation for the 2019 session)
- Several direct meetings with legislators
- Regular attendance at both the House and Senate committees with jurisdiction over energy
- Attendance at other standing committees as needed, as well as at conference committees.



*Bill Black of MMUA, Dave Meyer of Glencoe, Andrew Giacini of Rep. Jason Lewis' staff and David Niles of MMPA, from left to right, visited during the APPA Legislative Rally.*

Like the APPA rally, on-the-fly changes were necessary for the state legislative conference when the Legislature scheduled their annual spring break for the week the conference was supposed to be held. Despite the need to change both the date and venue, 63 members attended.

Following the adjournment of the 2018 legislative session, government relations staff participated in seven visits to member utilities, plus one for a workshop, attended 20 political fundraisers, and presented at the 2018 annual conference.

In addition, Sulem participated in the APPA summer conference in New Orleans and the APPA legal seminar in Charleston, attended his first rodeo, and assisted with the gas pre-pay effort, including meeting with interested partners in Kansas followed by the annual mid-west meeting held in Nebraska this past year.

Black attended the annual Mid-West Electric Consumers' Association in Denver, Co. and took the lead on coordinating efforts to develop Minnesota Division of Energy Resources (DER) Interconnection documents and training for MMUA members.

In addition, Black and Sulem attended meetings of the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Commerce, and the PUC.

# 20

*Number of political fundraisers attended by MMUA staff, thanks to member contributions to the Municipal Utility Action Fund (MUAUF).*

## Federal Government Relations

The Second Session of the 115th Congress last year started in January almost exactly where it would end up 365 days later—with a federal government shutdown, mostly over a budget impasse between the parties. A year ago the shutdown was brief, just two days, but it was harbinger of things to come, especially in an election year, since the November midterm elections loomed over everything, even back in January.

For MMUA, the year started with a new U.S. Senator: Tina Smith was in, Al Franken was out.



*MMUA Washington Representative Michael Nolan briefed the MMUA attendees, prior to Congressional meetings.*

The Republicans started the year still celebrating their first major legislative success story of the 115th—the passage of their comprehensive tax reform package. It was essentially a major corporate tax break, with grandiose economic promises to come. But it was divisive on Capitol Hill—

not a single Democrat

voted for the bill in either chamber.

Could the parties work together, even in an election year? The answer was a surprising ‘Yes,’ as Congress passed a major spending package in late March, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2018. Bipartisanship was alive and well, at least for a little while, but the parties wouldn’t have success till year’s end when they approved the FAA/FEMA reauthorization legislation in October, something that hadn’t occurred in years, and finally struck a deal on a final farm bill during the lame duck session. But those legislative feats proved few and far between in what was a very partisan and divided Congress heading for the midterms.

For the energy industry most Capitol Hill attention turned to the Senate, where several battles were waged over various White House appointments at EPA, the Department of Energy, and FERC. For the public power community attention was paid early on at the annual APPA Legislative Rally in March, where environmental regulation was a key issue. The EPA’s Clean Power Plan was out—the major deregulation efforts of the White House con-

tinued—and the Affordable Clean Energy rule was in. Wholesale markets, the selling of PMA and TVA assets, and grid security were all priorities, including telling Congress that threats to the electric grid are always evolving but the industry is doing their part to protect their infrastructure.

But public power was reeling from Congress’s earlier decision to repeal advance refunding provisions in the Republican tax bill, and attempts to reinstate those provisions were not successful.

Two other major legislative initiatives kept MMUA busy: FCC regulation and the farm bill. Under new White House leadership, the FCC worked for two years on a major ruling on widespread deployment of broadband services, including access to the forthcoming technology 5G. It was a comprehensive and controversial undertaking by new GOP leaders at the FCC, including new chairman Ajit Pai, pushed hard by the major telecommunication wireless carriers and corporations.

APPA objected even to the unfair process at FCC, but in four different orders the FCC pushed back. In late September the FCC

issued their final rule, the Declaratory Ruling and Third Report and Order, that preempts state and local laws and agreements, including those related to pole attachments. The ruling was decidedly pro-business and anti-local control, and it was soon headed for the federal courts.

At the same time as the FCC action, Congress was debating similar issues, especially the Senate. Powerful Chairman John Thune (R-SD), along with

# 51

*Number of people attending the APPA Legislative Rally under the MMUA banner. Total Rally attendance was 510.*



*Tim Bertocci, deputy chief of staff for then Rep. Tim Walz took notes while St. Peter city councilmember Susan Carlin discussed an issue.*

Democratic Senator Brian Schatz of Hawaii, introduced legislation that was similar to the FCC regulations—it would preempt local laws and pave the way to repeal the federal exemption for pole attachments currently held by public power utilities. But there was strong push-back by several senators, including Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a key member of the Commerce Committee. MMUA worked closely with Sen. Klobuchar, as well as APPA, to help develop her views on the legislation, including sending a letter of opposition that expressed MMUA concerns. In the end a hearing was never held on the bill and the legislation died with the end of the 115th Congress.

Another key member of the Minnesota congressional delegation, Rep. Collin Peterson, was ranking member of the House Agriculture Committee, in charge of developing the major farm bill. It's a five-year reauthorization effort, and the bill—the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018—is highly-charged and often controversial. This year's bill was no different and prospects for final passage were slim to none by the fall midterms.

MMUA is always interested in the farm bill, mostly because of nasty and difficult service territory issues, which generally reside with state legislatures and commissions. But these issues tend to find



Representative (and now Governor) Tim Walz met with the MMUA contingent in his office during the APPA Legislative Rally.

their way into farm bills, and the MMUA message is the same: keep these issues out of federal legislation. Fortunately, Rep. Peterson agrees, and no service territory issues made it into the final package. The farm bill was approved late in the lame duck session.

#### Legislation in the 115th Congress:

- 13,556 bills introduced.
- 443 bills passed.
- 758 resolutions passed.

## Engineering and Policy Analysis

Bob Jagusch is MMUA's Director of Engineering and Policy Analysis. His year in numbers:

Miles driven: 27,193. Air miles: 9,236

Member visits: 13

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission meetings: 14

e21, Xcel, Minnesota Power meetings: 6

Division of Energy Resources meetings: 6

Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) restructuring meetings: 8

National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO) meetings: 3

Midwest Governors Association meetings: 3

APPA meetings: 4

Joint Action Agency Meeting visits: 7

Minnesota Pollution Control Association meetings: 3

MMUA/MMUA Board meetings: 12

Department of Energy meetings: 2

University of Minnesota/Clean Energy Resource Teams/ Energy Storage/Humphrey School/ Mondale School of Law meetings: 6

Midwest municipal utilities meeting: 1

FERC meeting: 1

**14**

Number of Minnesota Public Utilities Commission meetings attended by MMUA's Bob Jagusch.



# Safety and Training

MMUA offers a wide variety of job training, safety and OSHA compliance assistance services including:

## *Safety Management Program*

12 – Safety Coordinators serving 100 member utilities/cities.

## *Job Training & Safety Program*

86 – communities benefitting from MMUA technical training.

## *Natural Gas Circuit Rider Program*

33 – Municipal gas utilities/private companies benefitting from MMUA tutelage.



The second annual Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo started with a stirring rendition of the Star Spangled Banner.



James Monroe joined the MMUA staff in 2018 and is our primary apprenticeship training instructor.

## *On-Site Apprentice Lineworker Training Program*

75 – Days of on-site training completed.

20 – students enrolled in the "On-Site" apprenticeship training program, from 11 cities/utilities, at year end. James Monroe joined the MMUA staff in July 2018 and serves as our primary instructor.

## *Generation Programs*

55 – Electric generation plant audits conducted by MMUA, under contract with the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT). Operations & Maintenance manuals produced for 15 power plants. (Plants that meet LMCIT requirements qualify for 10 percent discount on their insurance through the League.)

## *Regional Safety Group Program*

Worked with more than 300 (smaller) city governments through our Regional Safety Group Program.

## *Lineworker Schools and Workshops*

371 – participants attending our nine training programs (including students from MREA).

## *Lineworkers Rodeo*

17 – lineworkers participating in our second annual Rodeo (including one Apprentice from Wisconsin!)

14 – Minnesota municipal lineworkers graduated from Northwest Line College (NLC) in 2018. Seven of these were also enrolled in MMUA's On-Site/On-Demand Apprentice Lineworker Program.

22 – Videos completed as part of the APPA SafetySmart DEED video project.

0 – Number of MMUA-coordinated mutual aid events in 2018. The program, however, was alerted to standby status several times and remains intact.

## *For a great cause*

MMUA helped coordinate the 2018 Minnesota Public Power Fishing Tournament. Twenty-one two-person teams and generous Associate sponsors donated \$1,600 to four Electric Lineworker programs in Minnesota.

17

Participants in the second annual Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo.

# Meetings and Workshops



The Annual Summer Conference remains MMUA's largest in terms of attendance. In 2018, 231 people attended this event.

One purpose of MMUA is to “meet, confer and provide for the dissemination of information that will make for the greater efficiency and economy of municipally-owned utilities.”

One big way we fulfill that purpose is by meeting!

MMUA held two large membership meetings, a legislative rally, coordinated efforts on a national rally and held numerous training schools and workshops in 2018. Thanks to our members for avidly supporting these efforts. Numbers include:

231 – Attendees of the 87th MUA Annual Summer Conference, held Aug. 20-22 at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria.



Dave Nelson of Dakota Supply Group, MMUA's Theresa Nedderymeyer and Buffalo's Joe Steffel, from left to right, at the Summer Conference trade show.

94 - Attendees of the Technical and Operations Conference, held Dec. 4-6 in St. Cloud.

51 – Hardy souls traveled, under the MMUA banner, from the frozen tundra to the relatively balmy climes of Washington D.C., for the American Public Power Association Legislative Rally, held Feb. 26-28.

75 – Public power advocates attend the MMUA Legislative Rally, held April 11-12, in St. Paul.

22 – graduates of the MMUA Leadership Academy – our first crop of trained leaders. The program continues with two more groups making their way through the process.



MMUA Director of Administration Rita Kelly, who also serves as our primary meeting planner, received the President's Award from Shakopee's John Crooks at the Summer Conference. The award is MMUA's highest.

# 22

Members of the first graduating class of the MMUA Leadership Academy.



# Communications and Member Relations

MMUA's mission is to unify, support and serve municipal utilities. With 124 electric and 33 natural gas utilities spread around the state, a vital part of unification is communication. MMUA performs the communications function through a variety of mediums.

While staff is fully adept with various communications tools, one of our favorites remains face-to-face meetings in member communities. Here is a look at our efforts, mostly by the number:

### *Print media:*

- 1933 – The year MMUA began producing publications.
- 1968 – The year MMUA began producing a monthly publication.
- 11 – Editions of the MMUA Resource newsletter produced in 2018 (combining July and August).
- 20 – MMUA Annual Sponsors with ads in the *Resource* newsletter.
- 12 – Promotional/registration publications produced for MMUA's training programs.

MMUA staff also produced a meeting/schools calendar, and position statement booklets for the APPA Washington Rally and the MMUA Winter Legislative Conference. The MMUA brochure and a general brochure on municipal utilities were updated, as were various maps and presentations. Some of this updating of general information included statistical updates.

### *Social media:*

- 23 – Tweets combined from @SDownerMMUA and @BBlackMMUA.
- 62 – Facebook posts.
- 1,442 – People reached with our most popular Facebook post.
- 42 – Number of new photos posted on Flickr.

**Communications/  
member  
relations  
staff traveled 8,878  
miles on  
52 trips to  
member  
cities.**



### *Member*

*Relations:*  
52 – Visits to municipal electric utility cities, by communications/member relations staff. Thanks to everybody who took the time to talk!

8,878 – Miles covered on MMUA business during these visits and other trips.

MMUA Communications/Member Relations staff also

met with municipal and other representatives on a variety of topics relating to municipal utilities and their operation, including the benefits of a city owning and operating a municipal electric or natural gas utility. Staff also monitors low-income issues while chairing the Salvation Army HeatShare Advisory Board, which includes investor-owned utility and state government representatives.

MMUA researched and answered numerous questions regarding operation of municipal utilities. Three online surveys were done. MMUA staff also completed a salary survey. These surveys are posted on our website, behind the login.

*And that's not all:*

22 – Years MMUA has administered the Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award, and the MMUA Drug and Alcohol Testing Consortium.

# 1,442

**Number of people reached with our most popular Facebook post**





# Timeline

## January

MMUA hires Kent Sulem as its government relations director. Sulem comes from the Minnesota Association of Townships, and also previously worked with the League of Minnesota Cities.

January 16 – MMUA and MREA boards meet for a joint dinner at Rush Creek Golf Course in Maple Grove.

January 18 – MMUA holds one of a series of Distributed Generation Workshops, this one at Marshall Municipal Utilities.

## February

February 9 and 23 – Fourteen municipal employees graduate from the MMUA Firstline Supervision/Leadership course. One group met at the MMUA office; the other at the Central Lakes College in Brainerd.

Feb. 13-16 – More than 50 people attend the MMUA Meter School and Pre-Conference, held at the MERIT and the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Attendees came from 26 municipal utilities in Minnesota, South Dakota and four from cooperatives.

Feb. 26-28 — Approximately 50 municipal utility representatives trek to Washington, D.C., for



Lucas Spaeth of Halstad, Sen. Dave Tomassoni, Darryl Tveitbakk and Dalene Monsebroten of NMPA and Thief River Falls Mayor Brian Holmer (l to r) at the Legislative Conference reception.

the American Public Power Association (APPA) Legislative Rally. The MMUA contingent included locally-elected officials, city and utility personnel, and MMUA and power agency staff.

February 27-28 – MMUA holds its PCB Management and Record-Keeping Workshop at the MMUA offices in Plymouth.

## March

March 6-7 – In preparation of the Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo, MMUA holds its Lineworker Rodeo Clinic, at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall.

## April

April 10-12 – Owatonna Public Utilities serves as home base for the MMUA Generation School. Hands-on training takes place at the Blooming Prairie and New Prague power plants. A group of 31 power plant personnel from 17 utilities participate.

April 11-12 – Approximately 75 municipal utility representatives flock to St. Paul, for the MMUA Legislative Conference.



The Minnesota contingent to the APPA Legislative Rally met with Sen. Amy Klobuchar (center in pink jacket).

*continued on next page*

April 17-19 – A busy April continues with the Substation School, held at Rochester Public Utilities. Twenty-seven municipal utility personnel and one from an electric cooperative attended, despite inclement weather during the snowiest April in recorded history.

April 27-28 – Twenty contestants from five Minnesota municipal electric utilities compete in the Public Power Lineworkers Rodeo in Wake Forest, North Carolina. MMUA staff coordinates efforts, transports gear, and safety staffers Joe Schmidt and Bob Sewell combine for a presentation the day before the competition. A quilt sewn by MMUA's Rita Kelly is raffled and raises \$3,785 for the Highline Heroes Foundation.



*This scene from the Underground School illustrates the real-world training conducted at the MMUA Training Center.*

## **May**

May 4 – MMUA staff attends a 'listening session' on Distributed Energy Resources at St. Cloud State University.

May 9 – A committee made up of MMUA members and staff select the top four winners in the annual Tom Bovitz Memorial Scholarship Award contest. The theme? Municipal utilities, good for all of us. Prize money totaled \$5,000. High school seniors of municipal utility customer parents are eligible to compete.

May 15-18 – The MMUA Underground School continues to be one of our most popular trainings. Nearly 40 students from municipal utilities and one cooperative attendee rotated through six different two-hour sessions, at the Training Center in Mar-

shall. A class on project management and system design was also offered.

May 22-23 – MMUA follows-up the successful Underground School a week later with more in-depth training during the Competent Person and Excavation Workshop. More than 50 people from 20 utilities, a rural water district and a private contractor attended.

## **June**

June 2 – Teams in 21 boats take part in the Public Power Walleye Fishing Tournament. MMUA coordinates the event, held on Rush Lake.

June 6-7 – MMUA board holds its annual planning session.

June 12 – MMUA staff presents a certificate to a scholarship winner at the Elk River Municipal Utilities Commission meeting.

June 26 – MMUA staff makes a presentation to the winner of the MMUA Scholarship contest at the Rochester Public Utilities board meeting.

## **July**

July 2 – Jordan St. Clair joins MMUA as a regional safety coordinator, and James Monroe as Apprentice and Job Training and Safety Instructor.

July 18 – MMUA staff attends meeting of Salvation Army HeatShare Advisory Board. Among the attendees: large investor-owned utilities and state eHeat staff.

## **August**

August 20-22 – Greg French of Virginia takes the MMUA president's reins from John Crooks of



*Newly-minted President Greg French spoke at the Summer Conference, while John Crooks, outgoing president, listened.*



Shakopee, at the 87th annual MMUA Summer Conference, held at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria. Along with some fun events and interesting speakers, a full slate of association awards are presented. A total of 231 people attend.

### **September**

September 5 – Minnesota Public Utilities Commissioner John Tuma and two staff members visit MMUA. The topic of discussion is cybersecurity.

September 11 – The second annual Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo is held at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. Eighteen linemen from six utilities compete. A small army of volunteers and generous support from Associate Members make the event possible.

September 11-14 – Forty lineworkers from 21 utilities participate in the MMUA Overhead School, at the Training Center. Students from Minnesota West Community and Technical College come to observe. Students rotate through four different three-hour training sessions.

September 20 – The Minnesota municipal aid network is alerted but not put into action, as tornadoes and severe wind gusts caused damage across southern Minnesota. Nearby members respond, as Owatonna and Fairmont are among the areas hardest hit.

September 20 – Minnesota Public Utilities Commission approves the 84-megawatt Freeborn Wind Farm, the first wind plant subject to a regulatory ‘contested case’ hearing in Minnesota.



*Mike Enright of Shakopee Public Utilities won the Hurtman Rescue event at the Minnesota Lineworkers Rodeo, sponsored by MMUA.*

### **October**

October 16-18 – Cross Training School held at the MMUA Training Center in Marshall. The school receives consistently high marks from participants.

October 18 – Federal Energy Regulatory Commission orders reduction in ITC Holdings ‘transco adder,’ saving some \$24 million for its transmission customers, including Minnesota municipals. MMUA was a founding member of the Midwest Municipal Transmission Group, which petitioned for the rate relief.

### **November**

November 28 – MMUA Leadership Academy graduates its first class, of 20.



*The first group of graduates from the MMUA Leadership Academy gathered for a picture.*

November 29 – Twenty more municipal utility people graduate from the Firstline Supervision program.

### **December**

December 1 – Anthony Lenz joins MMUA as a regional safety coordinator.

December 11-14 – MMUA holds its annual Transformer School at the Training Center. The Pre-Conference is attended by 34 people and the Conference 55 people from 27 municipal utilities, four from South Dakota municipals and three cooperatives.

December 4-6 – MMUA holds its annual Technical and Operations Conference in St. Cloud.



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