

Greater Omaha Chamber 2026 OPPD Board of Directors Candidate Questionnaire

Instructions: Please answer each of the following questions. Please keep each response to 150 words or fewer. Responses will be shared with Chamber members as submitted.

Candidate Name: Jay Ignowski

OPPD Subdivision: Subdivision 2

Occupation/Background (Limit to 200 words): Licensed Journeyman Electrician with over 26 years of hands-on trade experience and President of IBEW Local 22, representing 2,500 electrical workers. Lifelong South Omaha resident, South High graduate ('95), husband to Trisha, and father of two. Experienced executive and fiscal steward who serves as a Trustee for multi-million-dollar health, welfare, and retirement funds. Dedicated community leader serving on the Heartland Workforce Solutions Youth Services, Poverty Elimination, and Construction Sector Boards, and partnering with Omaha Public Schools on the Electrical Pathway Program. Running for OPPD Board Subdivision 2 to bring technical expertise, grid accountability, and ratepayer protection to utility governance.

Questions

Each question includes a short background note in italics to help readers understand the issue.

1. Planning for Growth

Background: *OPPD is updating its long-range plan (the 2026 Integrated System Plan), which forecasts how much electricity the region will need in the years ahead. If that forecast is too low, new and expanding employers may not be able to get power when they are ready to open.*

Greater Omaha is competing with other regions for major employers, including advanced manufacturing and technology projects that need large amounts of power. How would you make sure OPPD plans for enough electricity to support that growth, and how would you manage the risk of building too much too soon?

As a 26-year journeyman electrician and union executive, my approach to planning for growth combines technical reality with fiscal prudence. To support new manufacturing and technology projects, OPPD must rely on data-driven, practical forecasting grounded in operational requirements rather than speculative projections. I support phased, modular infrastructure expansion aligned with verified economic development milestones. This ensures that power capacity and grid readiness are available when expanding employers open, while protecting ratepayers from the financial burden of overbuilding or stranded assets.

2. OPPD as an Economic Development Partner

Background: *Site selectors often rule out communities that cannot promise reliable, affordable power on a fast timeline. A utility that works closely with economic developers can be a deciding factor in where companies invest.*

What should OPPD do to help Greater Omaha win new business investment and jobs? How would you work with the Chamber, local governments and site selectors while treating all customers fairly?

Reliable, competitively priced power is Greater Omaha's strongest asset for economic development. OPPD must be an active, responsive partner with the Chamber, local governments, site selectors, and workforce organizations like Heartland Workforce Solutions to streamline project timelines and align grid expansion with site readiness. To ensure fairness across all customer classes, OPPD must implement transparent cost-of-service principles so that large new developments cover their direct infrastructure requirements, preventing cost-shifting onto existing households and small businesses while generating local, high-paying trade jobs.

3. Serving Large New Customers

Background: *Data centers and large manufacturers bring significant investment, jobs and tax base, but they also need large amounts of power and new infrastructure.*

What principles would guide how OPPD serves very large new customers? How would you keep OPPD competitive in attracting these projects while making sure existing homes and businesses are not left paying costs that belong to someone else?

Serving data centers and large industrial customers requires three guiding principles: technical accountability, cost equity, and ratepayer protection. OPPD can remain competitive by offering clear, predictable interconnection processes while enforcing rate structures where large-load customers pay for their dedicated infrastructure and capacity additions. By ensuring large users pay their fair share, OPPD can attract major investments, expand the local tax base, and create workforce opportunities without driving up electric bills for existing residents and small businesses.

4. Building the Grid Ahead of Demand

Background: *Transmission lines and substations can take years to plan and build. Communities that wait until a project is fully committed can lose it to a competitor whose sites are already powered and ready.*

When should OPPD invest in transmission, substations and other grid infrastructure before a customer has signed on? How would you manage the financial risk of those investments?

OPPD should make targeted pre-investments in transmission and substations only in designated, high-priority growth corridors supported by strong site-selection data and regional planning. Waiting until a project is fully committed can mean losing investments, but building blindly risks ratepayer capital. Financial risk must be managed through phased construction, strict multi-year capital budget oversight, and risk-sharing mechanisms such as developer options or infrastructure guarantees, ensuring grid readiness without exposing ratepayers to unrecovered expenditures.

5. An All-of-the-Above Energy Mix

Background: *OPPD produces power from a mix of sources, including natural gas, coal, wind, solar and purchased power. Relying too heavily on any single source can increase costs and reliability risks.*

Do you support an all-of-the-above approach to power generation? How would you balance natural gas, coal, wind, solar, battery storage, nuclear and other resources, and which factors (such as reliability, cost and speed to build) would carry the most weight in your decisions?

Yes, I fully support a data-driven "all-of-the-above" approach. Power generation must balance natural gas, coal, wind, solar, battery storage, and nuclear resources to ensure uninterrupted power. In my decisions, 24/7 reliability and cost-containment carry the greatest weight, followed by speed to build. We should integrate clean renewables like wind and solar where financially and operationally sound, but they must be anchored by dependable baseload generation to protect grid stability and keep rates low.

6. Keeping the Lights On

Background: *In February 2021, extreme cold across the region forced rolling power outages in OPPD's service area. Reliable power around the clock is essential for employers, hospitals and families.*

What should OPPD do to make sure the power stays on during extreme weather and periods of record demand? What role should always-available ("dispatchable") generation play in that plan?

Extreme weather demands continuous, always-available power. OPPD must maintain robust, winterized dispatchable generation—such as natural gas and baseload facilities—capable of meeting record peak demand around the clock. As an electrician, I know weather-dependent renewables alone cannot guarantee stability during severe freezes like the 2021 polar vortex. OPPD must maintain adequate dispatchable reserve margins, strengthen high-voltage transmission lines, and perform proactive grid maintenance so homes, hospitals, and critical infrastructure never lose power.

7. Nuclear and Emerging Technologies

Background: *Advanced nuclear, including small modular reactors, could provide around-the-clock power with no carbon emissions, but these technologies are still early in commercial development.*

Should OPPD pursue advanced nuclear and other emerging technologies as part of its long-term plan? What would you need to see on cost, timeline, safety and regulatory approval before supporting a major investment?

Yes, OPPD should explore advanced nuclear technologies, including Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and advanced storage as part of its long-term portfolio for carbon-free baseload power. However, before approving major capital investments, I would need to see verified operational safety records, complete federal regulatory approvals, realistic construction timelines, and firm cost guarantees. OPPD must act as a prudent fast-follower rather than absorbing first-of-a-kind cost overruns on unproven commercial technologies.

8. North Omaha Station

Background: *OPPD's current policy allows North Omaha Station to keep operating as it does today. OPPD's long-range plan assumes the plant's three oldest units (Units 1, 2 and 3) will eventually retire and its two newer units (Units 4 and 5) will be converted from coal to natural gas.*

What conditions must be met before OPPD retires or converts any North Omaha Station units? Please address replacement power, transmission readiness, reliability, cost, environmental impacts and impacts on the surrounding community.

Before retiring or converting any North Omaha Station units, four non-negotiable conditions must be met: 1) Fully operational, 24/7 replacement generation capacity is online; 2) Transmission infrastructure is fully ready to maintain local voltage and grid stability; 3) Rate

impacts are thoroughly analyzed to protect affordability; and 4) Community health, air quality, and local workforce impacts are addressed, preserving family-sustaining trade jobs while advancing environmental progress.

9. Balancing Environmental Goals with Reliability and Growth

Background: *OPPD has set a goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. At times, that goal may compete with keeping power reliable, rates affordable and capacity available for new growth.*

If meeting the 2050 goal on its current schedule would threaten reliability, raise rates or limit OPPD's ability to serve new customers, how would you set priorities? Would you support adjusting the goal's timeline or approach?

My highest priority is providing reliable power at affordable rates. While I support clean energy goals, rigid timelines must not compromise public safety or economic stability. If reaching net-zero by 2050 threatens grid reliability, causes steep rate hikes, or limits service to new employers, I would support adjusting the timeline or implementation strategy. Environmental goals should adapt to technical and financial realities, ensuring clean energy progress remains practical and affordable for all ratepayers.

10. Rates and Affordability

Background: *Competitive electric rates are a key advantage for Nebraska employers and households. OPPD will need major investments in new generation and grid infrastructure to keep pace with growth.*

How would you keep OPPD's rates competitive while making the investments needed for growth? How should rate impacts factor into the timing and scope of major projects?

Keeping rates competitive requires rigorous fiscal stewardship. As a Trustee managing multi-million-dollar benefit funds, I focus on cutting waste, eliminating administrative inefficiencies, and optimizing operational costs. Rate impacts must be a primary filter—evaluated at the inception of every major project—to dictate scope and timeline. By prioritizing essential grid reliability over non-essential overhead and phasing capital expenditures, OPPD can invest in growth while keeping utility bills predictable and affordable for working families.

