



AWE NEWS



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AWE Leaders Discuss Perspectives on Michigan's Energy Landscape



Advancing Women in Energy invited its members to attend a riveting panel discussion on the state's changing energy landscape for a members-only lunch at Lansing Brewing Company on March 22. Members had the opportunity to network, enjoy some chow and hear the unique viewpoints of panelists Tanya Paslawski, Katie Abraham and Erin McDonough from their experiences in the electric and natural gas, municipal electric, and oil and gas industries, respectively.

Moderated by AWE Treasurer Monica Martinez, the panelists shared how they got their start in the energy industry before delving into the challenges facing their organizations and where they saw opportunities for growth.

Abraham, executive director of the Michigan Municipal Electric Association, kicked things off by talking about the association's broad membership base and how its diversity presented both unique challenges and opportunities.

"Bring lots of diversity into a room and it may take time to find a solution, but overall, the outcome is going to be better because of it," said Abraham.

Pivoting to Paslawski, who serves as president of the Michigan Electric and Gas Association and AWE, Martinez asked about the obstacles around electric and natural gas.

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Paslowski highlighted an overarching theme of change and with it, the uncertainty surrounding what utilities should be spending their money on.



Left to right: Tanya Paslowski, Katie Abraham, Erin McDonough and Monica Martinez.

“As technology continues to evolve, there’s a question of how we’re preparing for that change and an energy future that we know will be very different from today,” she said. “We’re required to think broadly about what we’re investing in because you don’t know what will take off.”

As president and CEO of the Michigan Oil and Gas Association, McDonough identified public perception as a major hurdle in the oil and gas industry, citing a disconnect between the association’s members and the general public, as well as the public’s lack of understanding of where their energy comes from.

“We spend lots of time talking to ourselves within this industry, but with oil and gas, it’s like a heart issue —

we have to figure out where people’s hearts are and spend time meeting them on things that resonate with them, such as energy security and independence.”

McDonough also pointed out how political polarization has presented a unique challenge for small businesses.

“Polarization of politics has caused a problem because of policy shifts,” she said. “When you’ve set a direction as a business and policy is constantly shifting, that makes it hard to invest. Oil and gas exploration is high risk — it’s the only business you can be wrong fifty percent of the time and still be successful.”

Despite the obstacles facing these industries, some of the panelists expressed hopefulness and opportunities for positive change.

Abraham, for instance, sees great opportunity in the classroom to fight the misperception that the energy industry is the “wrongdoer.” By reaching students when they’re young, she explained how they can benefit from an early introduction to the skilled trades and learn how the industry is “leading the charge in changes in technology to limit greenhouse gas emissions.”

When Martinez asked the panel what advice they would offer to women looking to advance in the energy industry, the speakers agreed that it starts with women taking leadership roles within their own companies and pushing to do the work and make the changes they know are right.

Paslowski offered the following words of encouragement: “Regardless of how high you want to see yourself rise and what traditional male role is attractive to you, just keep trying until you get there.”

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Before answering questions from attendees, the panelists wrapped up the discussion by forecasting what they thought the energy industry and technological advancements could look like 30 years from now. Here’s what they predicted:

- Paslawski: “It’s going to look a lot different — there will be more electric vehicles that will have a big impact on infrastructure and customers will be far more independent in their energy usage.”
- Abraham: “Customers are going to be more connected to energy in their every day lives, with energy storage moving to the forefront within the next decade.”
- McDonough: “Technology in finding and extracting oil is going to advance and evolve immensely, using geographic and seismic information to pinpoint reserves. And with these advancements, we’ll see greater success with fewer wells being drilled.”



Left to right: Katie Abraham, Nathalie Osborn and Laura Sherman.

AWE Leadership Changes

In March, AWE was pleased to announce that members [Katie Abraham](#), [Nathalie Osborn](#) and [Laura Sherman](#) joined the [AWE Board of Directors](#).

“We are thrilled to welcome them to their new roles and believe they will be tremendous assets to the board,” said AWE President Tanya Paslawski.

Additionally, AWE welcomed [Tanya Baker](#) as the new chair of the Communications Committee, replacing former chair Laura Sherman.

Member Highlight: Tanya Baker

The following is an excerpt — find the [full interview](#) on the [AWE website](#)!

Please describe your current role: I serve as the marketing and communications manager for Michigan Saves — the nation’s first nonprofit green bank dedicated to making energy improvements easy and affordable for Michigan’s energy consumers.

How did you get into the energy industry? I’m an energy rookie! My introduction to the industry coincided with me joining Michigan Saves in late 2018.

What has been the key to your success? The willingness to say “yes” to new experiences.



What’s some of the best advice you’ve received? “If you want something you don’t have, you have to do something you’ve never done.”

What inspires you in your work? My hardworking colleagues endeavoring to be their best selves and do their best jobs on a daily basis — it’s infectious.

What would you tell a young person considering a career in energy? This industry is growing and evolving rapidly, which means the opportunities around it are, too.

In Case You Missed It

AWE Vice President Katherine Peretick and Board Member Nathalie Osborn weighed in on the challenges and potential for microgrids and energy storage technologies in Michigan. Read the full story [here](#) and [find other AWE members featured in the news on our website](#).

Be sure to also [follow us on Twitter](#) to check out the latest happenings and events involving our members, including highlights from the Michigan Energy Innovation Business Council’s annual members meeting, where the women of AWE had a big presence!



A rendering shows the vision for a smart energy district in Jackson, Michigan.

Microgrid boosters hope Michigan ‘energy district’ will spur more interest



AWE @MI_AWE · Mar 25

AWE Vice President and @NRStorTweets Director of Engineering Katherine Peretick explaining real world applications of energy storage at the Plugging Into Storage event hosted by @MichiganPSC and @MIAgency4Energy. #EnergyStorage



Heads Up!

To better track membership statuses and manage renewals, AWE will be utilizing PayPal going forward. So, please be on the lookout for an email from PayPal regarding membership renewal notifications!

Quote of the Quarter

“Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.” — Maya Angelou