

## **Introduction for Governor Jared Polis DOE CyberCon May 14, 2019**

Welcome to the 2019 DOE Cyber Conference opening session featuring Colorado Governor Jared Polis.

I am Mark A. Gabriel, Administrator and CEO of the Western Area Power Administration within the Department of Energy. It is an honor to be here to introduce Governor Polis as the plenary speaker today.

The Department of Energy invited distinguished cyber thought leaders from across the country and around the world to come to Denver for this conference, and we are confident that everyone in attendance will benefit from hearing from Governor Polis about the importance of NREL and WAPA to the state of Colorado, as well as his perspective on cyber and information technology research and development.

Governor Polis began his adult life as an entrepreneur, launching American Information Systems from his college dorm. Most interesting to me was that he began ProFlowers, one of the world's leading online flower retailers, in 1998.

This was important for two reasons: First was Mr. Polis' understanding that flowers are big business, and second was his initiative to bring that big business into the nascent online retail industry.

Governor Polis is an innovator and a techie—traits he shares with many of us at this conference. He has been on the leading edge of internet development and the possibilities it held for the world economy.



I, for one, am interested to know if he had an inkling of the cyber challenges that we would face as our economy and lives have increasingly been conducted online.

Much of Governor Polis' career has been dedicated to public service, in particular improving the public education system. He served six years on the State Board of Education before being elected as the Representative for Colorado's second Congressional district.

This is when our paths first crossed.

Western Area Power Administration, or WAPA, sells hydropower generated at federal powerplants across 15 central and Midwestern states, including Colorado. Like many federal agencies, we have a strong presence in Colorado, including about 700 federal and contract employees in our headquarters in Lakewood, the Electric Power Training Center in Golden, a regional office in Loveland and an energy management and marketing office in Montrose.

There are 14 federal hydroelectric powerplants in Colorado operated by the Bureau of Reclamation. Annually, these plants produce nearly 1.6 billion megawatt-hours of electricity and represent most of hydropower's share of the state's energy mix.

We sell this wholesale power to 43 utilities, agencies and Native American tribes in Colorado. Most Coloradoans receive a portion of their energy needs from WAPA's clean, renewable and reliable hydropower. This includes much of the 2nd District of Colorado.

Then-Representative Polis and WAPA worked together to maintain and improve the more than 2,000 miles of high-voltage transmission lines and associated infrastructure we operate and maintain in Colorado.



Specifically, our staffs worked with one another on a project to reduce and replace two transmission lines in Estes Park, Colorado. This project, nestled in one of the state's prime access points for Rocky Mountain National Park, required considerable public outreach, discussion and partnership to accomplish.

We also worked to assure the people of Estes Park were able to use WAPA fiber for critical communications after the 2013 floods wiped out the only other provider in the area. This cooperation is the forerunner of helping to bring broadband to rural America.

The Estes-to-Flatiron transmission replacement project epitomizes a number of challenges facing transmission lines in a new energy frontier. It is a 20th century engineering marvel accommodating a 21st century reality filled with renewables, distributed generation, impending 5G network, increased desire for strong environmental stewardship, extreme weather events and demand for 100-percent up time.

As part of modernizing the grid for this century, we need to look into the technologies that many of you are working in: artificial intelligence, blockchain, electric vehicles, control systems and more. And most importantly, we need to learn how to shield all of these new technologies and connections from adversaries wishing to disrupt the American way of life via the electric grid.

We at WAPA are ready and eager to discuss Governor Polis' goal to modernize electric infrastructure as we do in all the states in which we serve. Opportunities abound for partnerships to transform the 20th century marvel into a secure, reliable and resilient grid that will support Colorado and American energy needs for decades to come.

