

**A New Era for AABE:
Building
the Pipeline
to AABE's
Future**



AABE 2014
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Global Energy. Resources. Solutions. Sustainability.

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George Williams: AABE's new Board Chairman

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A Message from Paula Jackson, AABE President and CEO: Staying Connected and Staying Committed



Dear AABE Family,

We sincerely hope that you enjoyed our 2014 National Conference in the energy capital of Houston, Texas! A special thanks goes to our outstanding planning committee for producing an extra-ordinary event.

This year's conference thoroughly dissected the changing landscape of energy both domestically and abroad. Once again, our National Conference proved to be a leading source of invaluable information for industry professionals and I am so proud of all that we accomplished.

Through our theme "Global Energy: Resources. Solutions, Sustainability" we heard from dynamic speakers and industry leaders who provided us with honest solutions for a growing field. Throughout the week we were provided with an honest assessment of what lies ahead. Most importantly, we were given excellent tools to understand our roles as minorities within these changing times.

We officially kicked off our conference with an opening session that featured an address from our Chairman, Ralph Cleveland. He set the tone by challenging attendees to view the information received during the conference through 3 lenses: "What's the impact on the consumer?", "What are the environmental impacts?", and "Who's getting the opportunities?" His call to action served as a guide in preparing participants to receive the various viewpoints that were shared during the conference. The diverse range of opinions and fresh ideas left this year's conference goers with a new vision for our field.

I challenge each of you to go a step further. It's not enough to simply hear all of the empowering insight and tips that were discussed. We must be committed to action from mentoring to career development, there are many ways that we can ensure that the pearls of wisdom imparted upon us during our 2014 National Conference never stop impacting the energy sector.

In the meantime, we invite you to participate in a [short survey](#) to provide feedback on our organization. The feedback will assist AABE in continuing to serve as a source of information to its members. The surveys will allow you to provide feedback on two integral components: HR processes and professional development.

Lastly, as we continue to move our organization forward by informing and educating our communities and policy makers I encourage you to join us. We have a lot of work to do, but we also have an opportunity to make a great impact on so many. I look forward to hearing your ideas, having your participation and our working together.

All the Best,

Paula R. Jackson
President
American Association of Blacks in Energy



Follow Paula on Twitter: [@prjackson](#)

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View the AABE Strategic Roadmap

A Message from Your Member Services Department

AABE has been busy in the community. In April, AABE sponsored a booth at the USA Science and Engineering Festival. This festival attracted nearly 30,000 students and their parents from across the country to a three day expo promoting the benefits of a STEM education.

It was exciting to see these children interact with the exhibits and walk away with a greater knowledge of how an interest in STEM can change their lives.

After talking to some of the children and their parents, I'm sure we will see them again one day as our scholarship recipients and future members.

STEM is an important mission for the AABE. We want to inspire the next generation of energy professionals to find their pathway to success through an education rooted in STEM. If you or your organization is currently supporting a STEM program, [tell us about it](#) and we will share it with your fellow AABE members.



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AABE Ushers in New Leadership with George Williams



The element of surprise captured **George Williams'** attention twice. Once when the company he co-owns with AABE Member Dwayne Barlow, **PMI Energy Solutions**, won the Entrepreneur of the Year award at the 2014 National AABE Conference and again when he was elected as the new Board Chairman for the American Association of Blacks in Energy.

PMI Energy Solutions, LLC is headquartered in Batavia, Illinois. PMI continues to skyrocket with opportunities in the energy industry. He has found particular success in the areas of storm restoration, and in overhead and underground electrical distribution construction and maintenance, in the electric utility industry.

"I was successful in securing two direct contracts with Commonwealth Edison (ComEd) to install advance meter infrastructure (AMI) and distribution automation (DA) radio/repeaters and to replace poles. It is very unusual for a relatively young and diverse company to be awarded direct contracts with utilities after a couple years of serving as a subcontractor.

However, as a result of our ability to perform high quality work in a safe and productive manner, we were able to establish credibility with the utilities. We also have large direct contracts with Ameren, INTREN and M.J. Electric. We also have several more contracts in the workings. A number of diverse companies continue as subcontractors for an extended period of time before becoming prime contractors. "

Although PMI Energy Solutions, LLC is only three years old, they are not newcomers to the industry. With an engaging spirit, Williams is CEO with 27 years experience in the utility industry, encompassing transmission & distribution, nuclear, fossil, startups and corporate experience. His success has allowed him to bring on 75 employees to perform services throughout the Midwest. His company has responded to numerous storm disasters across the country and implemented numerous electrical infrastructure improvement projects across the Midwest.

Williams said he is proud to have developed, "strong relationships, performed quality work, set high performance standards and understands that his success is deliberate. "I have worked for six utilities in my career," he said. Our work stands on its own and I'm very proud to have been involved with storm restoration efforts across the country, including Hurricanes Isaac and Sandy. "It was very difficult getting in with road blocks, flooding and many unknowns. We were in the Northeast for three weeks, working 16 hour days until the power was restored."

Williams was recently elected as the new Chairman of the prestigious AABE Board of Directors. "It's a great feeling and nothing is more important than people having the confidence in knowing that their interests and the interest of the organization will be taken to heart.

Williams went on to say that AABE is a dynamic organization founded with a corporate and entrepreneurial spirit in 1977. "We were founded and dedicated to ensure that the input of African Americans and other minorities into the discussions and developments of energy policies, regulations, research & development technologies, and environmental issues."

Williams looks forward to leading the organization. His focus is on growing the membership, thriving financially and living the mission and vision of AABE. With nearly 2,000 members, "AABE is a credible resource to meet the needs of members and continue being a force impacting energy education worldwide."



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Connections and Collaborations at the 37th AABE National Conference

We hope that you had a memorable experience at the 2014 AABE National Conference in Houston, Texas.



This year our planning committee provided a results-driven event, with invaluable resources aimed at assisting members in understanding their role in the changing energy landscape.



Our theme Global Energy: Resources. Solutions. Sustainability was explored by the best and the brightest in the sector. The diverse range of opinions and fresh ideas left this year's conference attendees energized, with a new vision, new partnerships and collaborations.

The week began in the same manner that we have for many years with service to the Houston local communities. Our pre-conference activities featured a science competition for students in Houston. Next up, the Diaspora Forum entitled Engaging in Diaspora to Participate in the Energy Supply Chain was the first of many discussions on initiatives abroad.



The first day concluded with an extraordinary "First Time Attendees" session to help newcomers get the most out of their experience. The special event was followed by an opening session address by the Chairman, Ralph Cleveland.

Later Dot Harris, longtime AABE member and Director of the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity for the Department of Energy, shared her views on the role of minorities in energy. Game Changer Discussions on sustainability, air quality and coal, and shale oil and gas rounded out our first day, yet these hot topics were later explored in-depth during our Game Changer workshops.

The third day focused on leadership and career development. The CEO addresses convened with a presentation by John Watson, Chairman and CEO of Chevron. Each year attendees come to the conference for the career development portion.

This year's event featured an inspiring "C-Suite Conversation" where leaders in energy and entrepreneurship shared their experiences in hopes of impacting the next generation of leaders. The last session was nothing short of electrifying as veteran democratic strategist Donna Brazile and GOP mainstay Michael Steele debated current events on the political landscape.

AABE National Conference: Photo Gallery Now Available on Flickr

If you missed the professional and social experience of the 37th AABE National Conference in Houston, we invite you to [view the photo gallery on Flickr](#) or click on the image to the right to view a sample of what you missed.

If you were there then experience it all over again.



<https://www.flickr.com/photos/95909489@N06/sets/72157644691284635/>

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AABE Conference Recap: 2014 Award Winner Highlights

Recognizing our dynamic AABE members is another dimension of our National Conference that reflects our appreciation for those that have faithfully served AABE. This year, we were pleased to bestow the James E. Stewart Award, AABE's highest honor, to Frank Stewart. Stewart is President Emeritus of AABE and has been a powerhouse in the industry since the 1970s. He's seen a lot during his tenure in the field but as he reflected on being the 2014 recipient of AABE's highest honor, this industry mainstay was filled with gratitude.

"One of the most moving and most important things for any professional is to be recognized by his peers," Stewart said. "It's quite a remarkable honor. This is the most important thing that could've ever happened."

Stewart explained that his passion for AABE grew from an understanding of what energy means to communities of color.

"We as professionals in the energy sector need to be more active in making sure communities understand the role energy plays in their lives," said Stewart who served as president of AABE from 2007-2011. "That means encouraging our young people to seek careers in energy."



For Corlene Williams, 2014 recipient of the Chairman's Cup, leadership in AABE has meant acting as a conduit for those she serves. As the former Southeast Regional Director, Williams was honored for her contributions to building a stronger organization.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that I would've been nominated for this award," Williams said. "I've served in the position for a number of years and I was just doing what I should've done as the Southeast Regional Director."

During her tenure, Williams worked to aid chapters in the region with problem solving and interfacing with the national office. She hosted quarterly conference calls and her outreach efforts aided in building strong lines of communication for the members. Much like Stewart, she expressed how important it was to give back to an organization that nurtured her career.

"When I joined, my company was very supportive. I was new to the industry and AABE members had a wealth of knowledge that really helped me." Williams said.

Dwayne Barlow, President of PMI Energy Solutions, echoed her sentiments. He explained that when PMI was awarded the Entrepreneur of the Year award at the 2014 National AABE Conference, it was a gratifying experience being recognized by an organization that contributed to his professional development.

"It's a huge honor because there are a lot of entrepreneurs out there and to be recognized by a national organization blew me away," said Barlow who has been a member of AABE for eight years. "Over the years, I've seen people get the award but I had no idea that [PMI] was in line to receive it."

Barlow's inspiration for becoming an entrepreneur was his desire to leave a legacy in the industry that he loves. "Becoming an entrepreneur was an easy transition for me because in my past career, I worked for a utility for 26 years," Barlow said. "Also, as an entrepreneur you can create generational wealth and I wanted to do that for myself and my children."

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C-Suite Conversation: What The Three Executives Had to Say

Ask any attendee what impacted them the most during the 2014 National Conference and we're certain that many will mention our "C-Suite" Conversation panel discussion. As part of AABE's commitment to offering resources for leadership and career development, the "C-Suite" Conversation provided attendees with the unique opportunity to hear first hand accounts from those who have found success in their respective fields.



This year AABE welcomed Janice Bryant Howroyd, Founder and CEO of the Act-1 Group, Joe W. Laymon, Vice President of Human Resources and Corporate Services for Chevron Corporation, and Melvin D. Williams, Senior Vice President of Planning and Business Services at AGL Resources as panel participants.



Bryant led the impactful conversation by noting the role her faith played as she blazed her trail to success in the human resources industry. "It's about understanding the need to ask the right questions and seeking God for the right answers," Bryant said. She also shared instances in which listening to the thoughts and opinions of those she leads to gain an honest perspective on the world around her.

Meanwhile Williams stressed how critically important it is to set your self apart from others along the way. "What I knew was going to be the great equalizer for me among my peers was that I was going to outwork them," Williams said.

He added that another cornerstone of success is the importance of remaining true to who you are. "You don't have to lose who you are personally to become what you desire professionally," Williams said.

Layman added that you have to understand the importance of building relationships with others. He noted that there are instances where you have to depend on others to notice all you have to offer. "I've never worked in a company where I could promote myself; others had to see something in me," Layman said.

Stephanie Hickman, president of Trice Construction and moderator, wrapped up the panel with questions from the audience and closing comments.

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AABE[®] Legislative Crossfire *The Recap*

Over the years, AABE's legislative conversation has become one of the most highly anticipated events during our national conference.

This year's passionate exchange between political powerhouses Donna Brazile and Michael Steele further solidified its place as a conference staple for AABE.

Both of the veteran strategists discussed political issues of the day starting with possible outcomes for the impending mid-term election.

David Owens, Executive Vice-President of Business Operations for Edison Electric Institute, opened the discussion by prodding Brazile and Steele on whether their respective parties could reclaim the U.S. House of Representatives. There are 17 seats that are potentially up for grabs but Brazile noted that gerrymandering would undoubtedly impact outcomes.



"Today, many districts are either ruby red or midnight blue," Brazile said.

As for the Senate, Steele added that the GOP could indeed regain the majority but there will be obstacles.

"I do believe we can take back the Senate but there are some challenges with image," Steele said.

One area of contention during the debate was the Affordable Care Act and its impact on the upcoming election. The controversial piece of legislation was viewed by Steele as an Achilles heel for Democrats while Brazile fiercely defended the bill as a positive step in addressing America's healthcare crisis.

Later in the discussion, Brazile noted that too often voters overlook the importance of local politics and how it shapes the nation. "There's a preoccupation on Washington D.C. when it's what happens in individual states that matter," Brazile said.



From an economic perspective, Brazile stressed workforce development and jobs as a means to aid African-Americans in overcoming recessionary times. Meanwhile Steele said current policy has presented a challenge for entrepreneurs.

"There are a lot of pressures being put on small business owners in the midst of the current economy," Steele said.

Later in the conversation, the expert debaters tackled energy matters noting that supplier diversity was a key component to the success of the industry. Both of the participants challenged the audience to prepare by doing their part to encourage diversity in the field.

They ended with a passionate plea for understanding the importance of voting as a means to address the various issues plaguing the nation. Yet, both agreed that new voter ID laws serve as yet another barrier to making the voices of the people heard at the polls.

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Latest Energy Industry and Scholarship News

ROLL CALL:

The Women Shaping Our Energy Future | Commentary

As Congress considers important energy issues this spring, female legislators are at the forefront of the debate. For the first time in the nation's history, women serve in the top two leadership positions on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee: Mary L. Landrieu, D-La., is chairwoman, and Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, is ranking member, and they are steering legislation that sets the nation's energy policies to promote sustainability, security and growth. [Learn more](#)

U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT:

Supporters of energy-efficiency, Keystone XL pipeline vow to keep trying after Senate defeat

Supporters of a popular energy savings bill and the controversial Keystone XL oil pipeline say they will keep trying to force Senate action on the measures, even after they were defeated amid partisan gridlock in the Senate. [Learn more](#)

USA TODAY:

More solar energy powering Corporate America

As solar costs plummet, U.S. corporate giants including Apple, Google and Wal-Mart are turning to the sun to power stores, data centers and other facilities. [Learn More](#)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY:

Announcing the National Champions of Student Energy Conservation Competition

The U.S. Department of Energy and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) recently announced the national champions of the America's Home Energy Education Challenge (AHEEC), a student competition created to help families save money by saving energy. [Learn More](#)

FOX BUSINESS NEWS:

U.S. Energy Dept Offers \$4 Billion Loan Aid Plan For Renewable Energy

The U.S. Energy Department on Wednesday unveiled a plan to offer up to \$4 billion in loan aid to renewable energy projects, opening up another round of funding for a program that faced harsh political attacks over past government-backed failures. [Learn More](#)

Tell Us Something Good

Send us your news or let us know about your latest activity, event or special notice you would like to share with AABE members.

e-mail us at news@aabes.org and we'll be in contact to help get your posting inserted in our next newsletter.

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Women in Energy: Sometimes Moving Ahead Means Being an Advocate for Others

Years ago when Carolyn Bermudez, vice president of operations, Florida City Gas, was looking for a job one summer, she never thought she'd end up in energy. Today, after surviving two acquisitions and the deregulation of the gas industry in 1997, she says she couldn't imagine being anywhere else.

"I came into the industry by chance," said Bermudez. "But there was nothing happenstance about my preparation and what's led to my long career in energy. I had a plan." Bermudez's route to success had its share of challenges. But she survived by learning the business – all of it. Accounting, Regulatory, Operations, the list continues. She even filed rate cases – a pivotal moment in any utility's existence. She credits this broad knowledge of the business with helping her survive and thrive in her energy career. Plus, she had a reputation for being hardworking.

"You can't just work hard," she added. "You have to develop a good reputation at work and take responsibility for your own career by finding ways to learn the business – sometimes in non-traditional ways."

Indeed, most people understand the value of a mentor. What's even more priceless, especially in today's economy, is having a sponsor in your corner. A sponsor, according to Bermudez, is a person who can put you in a role that can help you excel and advance in your career. She says she was fortunate to have the chance to work with leaders who saw something in her and challenged her to step outside of her comfort zone. She admits she didn't see their vision at first, but she had to decide to trust them if she wanted to continue to grow at the company.

It was not without its share of sacrifices. Once she decided to take on the challenge, which meant traveling between Florida and Atlanta weekly, she became a self-professed "weekend mother and wife." Soon after, she found herself in Operations where she spent much of her time in the field – a place she never thought she'd be. Turns out, it was the place where she learned the most. She essentially traded the suits she wore in Finance for the uniform she donned while in the field.

It was a chance for her to learn the technical side of the business – how operations technicians and land surveyors did their jobs and the technical skills they used. In doing so, she gained the respect of the frontline employees because she went into their world. Later, when she had an opportunity to do so, she became an advocate for what they needed in their jobs.

The next call she received in her career progression was one to her current role as VP of Operations for Florida City Gas. She could hardly believe it. She was quick to add that her mentors frequently asked her what she was doing for others.

"My commitment," said Bermudez, "was to find the next 'Carolyn Bermudez.' We must model behaviors, and my goal was to be a model and an advocate for others."



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Members and Chapters on the Move

Florida Chapter: Nona Jones Featured in Essence Profile



Image Credit: Essence.com

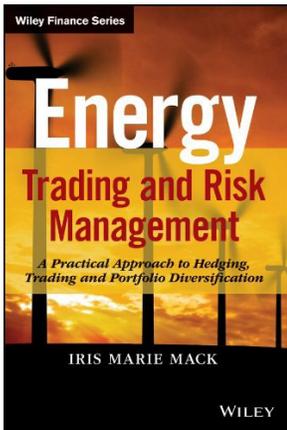
AABE Florida chapter member, Nona Jones (Gainesville Regional Utilities), is featured in Essence for her work in the energy industry. She is also a recipient of the American Public Power Association's Robert F. Roundtree Rising Star Award this year. Nona is also an independent Christian/Gospel music singer-songwriter. Her music is soulful and worshipful, infusing jazz, neo-soul, and contemporary influences.

Send her a shout out on Twitter [@NonaNotNora](#) or [visit her Website](#) to learn more about our talented fellow member.

Congratulations Nona!

Washington-Oregon Chapter: New Book Explores Energy Trading & Risk Management

If you're looking for an early summer read, AABE Washington-Oregon Chapter President **Bill Dickens** reports that his colleague, **Iris Mack**, has a new book called **Energy Trading & Risk Management** (John Wiley Press: April 2014).



Energy Trading and Risk Management provides a comprehensive overview of global energy markets from one of the foremost authorities on energy derivatives and quantitative finance.

The book provides a primer on energy trading while incorporating recent theoretical and empirical tools for understanding complex energy transactions. Bill authored a chapter on Behavioral Economics and Hydro Electric Power Operations included in the book (Chapter 10).

With an approachable writing style, Iris Mack breaks down the three primary applications for energy derivatives markets – Risk Management, Speculation, and Investment Portfolio Diversification – in a way that hedge fund traders, consultants, and energy market participants can apply in their day to day trading activities.

Moving from the fundamentals of energy markets through simple and complex derivatives trading, hedging strategies, and industry-specific case studies, Dr. Mack walks readers through energy trading and risk management concepts at an instructive pace, supporting her explanations with real-world examples, illustrations, charts, and precise definitions of important and often-misunderstood terms.

From stochastic pricing models for exotic derivatives, to modern portfolio theory (MPT), energy portfolio management (EPM), to case studies dealing specifically with risk management challenges unique to wind and hydro-electric power, the book guides readers through the complex world of energy trading and risk management to help investors, executives, and energy professionals ensure profitability and optimal risk mitigation in every market climate. The book is available on [Amazon.com](#).

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AABE and the National Utilities Diversity Council Invite You to Complete an Important Industry Survey

The Executive Leadership Program is a collaboration between AABE and the National Utilities Diversity Council and other partners.

AABE Members, even if you did not attend our Annual Conference in Houston, we invite you to take a short survey regarding the senior level and executive leadership recruiting process in your company.

AABE
American Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE) - Executive Leadership Program (ELP) Employee Survey

The ELP is a collaboration with the National Utilities Diversity Council and other partners.

The following is a short survey regarding how you hear about promotions or growth assignments in your organization, and what factors might impact your ability to be considered for a promotion, growth assignment or a new opportunity outside your current organization.

1. Do you know how your organization defines executive readiness?

Yes
 No
If yes, please describe: _____

2. If you have a mentor or a sponsor, do you feel that your mentor or sponsor offers advice that goes beyond the responsibilities of your job? *Note: A sponsor offers career-focused support for an individual's advancement in the organization or within the profession. A mentor takes interest in and action to support and/or advance an individual's career, personal and/or professional development.*

Yes
 No
 I do not have a mentor.
If yes, what is his advice? _____

3. Do you have more than one mentor or sponsor now?

Yes
 No

4. Has there been a time when you wanted to pursue a relationship for a potential mentor, sponsor or professional contact but you have been turned down, or had a negative experience?

Yes
 No
For both yes or no, please describe: _____

AABE is working in partnership with ELP to better understand how our members' organizations hire and promote from a diverse candidate pool. An equally important goal is to identify and illuminate the social and professional factors that impact our industry's ability to do so.

The findings from this research will help us to demonstrate key opportunities to improve the quantity and increase the opportunities that will be available to our future energy workforce.

Click here to begin the survey or visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/AABE_EmployeeSurvey

Kairos Consulting honored as HUBZone Small Business of the Year

Kairos Consulting Worldwide and Lynn Sutton, the managing principal of Kairos and a member of AABE, recently announced that Kairos was named the HUBZone Small Business of the Year by the Department of Energy at the department's 13th Annual DOE Small Business Forum & ExpoTampa.

Nominated by the Department of Energy's Office of Science, Kairos was recognized for its documented increased productivity in acquisitions, greater efficiencies in routine and specialized administrative tasks and greater customer satisfaction across its Laboratory Site Offices.



Upcoming AABE Events

- June 13-14 AABE Board of Directors Meeting, Chattanooga, TN
- June 19, 2014 Atlanta Chapter June Meeting
- June 26, 2014 Atlanta Chapter Networking Event
- June 27, 2014 AABE Michigan Chapter George C. Turner 21th Annual Scholarship Golf Outing
- July 11, 2014 Tennessee Chapter Officers and Executive Committee Board Meeting
- July 31, 2014 General Membership Meeting – Valero Memphis Refinery Tour
- July 31, 2014 Tennessee Chapter General Membership Meeting (Valero Tour)
- August 1, 2014 Tennessee Chapter Officers and Executive Committee Board Meeting
- August 15, 2014 Michigan Chapter - Membership Open House
- August 27, 2014 2014 Annual Golf Tournament - KSMO Chapter

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