



Paula Glover

President and Chief Executive Officer

American Association of Blacks in Energy (AABE)

AABE focuses on representing the voice for African Americans and other minorities on energy policy, regulations, and environmental issues. In celebration of Black History Month, can you share some of the recent milestones your 2000-member association has achieved?

The association has worked diligently in its 42-year history to ensure that the voices of African Americans are heard in discussions around energy policy. Today, we are called upon by policy makers to offer insights on issues at the state and federal level. 2018 was an exciting year for the association. We hosted multiple activities to inform, educate and support the professional development of our members. Our national conference titled, Bridging Gaps Through Innovation brought together more than 600 industry leaders to explore the industry challenges and how using innovative solutions combined with technology can bridge the divides that often exist in our communities. The association hosts monthly webinars spotlighting senior industry experts on key industry issues. In 2018 AABE hosted the first of its kind national energy hackathon bringing together a diverse representation of industry experts, policy makers, students and community advocates to hack multiple industry issues. Our Policy Summit brings together leaders in the industry, members of Congress and the Administration to discuss energy policy and its impact on our communities. In partnership with Korn Ferry, the association conducted professional development programs for our members to prepare them for leadership positions in their companies and the industry. In addition we collaborate to offer supplier development programs so that more African American entrepreneurs can take advantage of the opportunities available in this industry.

Can you tell us about your current role?

As the President and CEO, I direct the association's strategic plan, business development and policy positions. Additionally, I represent the organization before energy industry executives and national and state policy makers. I represent the association as an industry thought leader on energy policy as well as issues around diversity and inclusion. My work on international energy issues underscores the importance of energy to improve the quality of life for people throughout the African Continent. The association under my leadership has created strategic alliances with other industry trade associations, with AA stakeholder organizations, with over 200 community media companies and has partnered with the US Department of Energy on its Minorities in Energy. It is important that as the industry changes, our association is able to be responsive and supportive of these changes.

Looking ahead, what challenges do you expect for the energy industry and how can we overcome them?

The industry is undergoing tremendous change and growth at a time when there are significant demographic shifts in the country. This creates several unique challenges for our industry: 1) the ability to tell a compelling story so that it is seen as an ideal industry to work and one that meets the needs of our future, younger workforce; 2) We are challenged to increase our effort in ensuring that our work places are not only diverse, but also inclusive and 3) Of course the industry's ability to highlight ways in which this industry is working and has been working to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Throughout your career you have been a champion for women, including being a strong supporter of the Florida's Women in Energy Leadership Forum. Why do you believe AABE, and associations with similar missions, are important to ensuring women are empowered to rise in the ranks of leadership?

As associations we have the unique opportunity to support the professional development of women currently working in the industry and those who are entering our industry. As a growing force at all levels, be it workforce, as women legislators and policy makers and as business leaders there is an obligation for us to learn from one another and to support one another in their journey. At the same time, associations should also be advocating for women and helping our leaders see the blind spots when they exist. That means being honest about how our organization's structure and / or culture makes it difficult for women and all diverse hires to succeed. Without environments which welcome and encourage the full participation of women, they will not succeed.

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What is the most memorable lesson or skill that you have learned in the energy industry?

The most memorable lesson I've learned about being in this industry is the impact that the decisions we make has on our customers. It is important to understand not only what customers want and how to respond to them, but also to understand that all customers are not a like. Therefore, you have to listen and be empathetic to their needs.

With only a month into the new year, there are still a lot of resolutions and goals that we are all working toward. What are some of your goals for AABE this year?

Our goals for this year are to find creative ways to have impact for our members and supporters. We will challenge ourselves to be forward thinkers and to offer programming that support pathways to leadership for our corporate members and growth opportunities for our entrepreneurs and small businesses. It's also important that we stay focused on our mission because after 42 years it remains as relevant today as ever. We will work to stay informed and connected to our communities.

The annual Florida's Women in Energy Leadership Forum aims to promote opportunities in the energy industry by recognizing the success that women leaders in the industry have demonstrated in growing Florida's economy and diversifying an already tremendous workforce.