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A Division of the WV State Building Trades, AFL-CIO | Chuck Parker, *President* | Dave Efaw, *Secretary-Treasurer* | Steve White, *Director*

# UA 625 Leads Local Jobs Protest at US Methanol

Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 625, Charleston led two protests at a construction site at Institute and the Charleston office site of US Methanol on September 17.

Members of the Pipefitters were upset that another nonunion, out-of-state contractor had been chosen for the project.

While construction started in 2017, and the announced completion date was mid-2018, the site is far from complete today.

According to Local 625 Business Representative Craig Mosteller, last month a company called APTIM was awarded a major piping contract.

It was the third time in three years the owners, US Methanol, had selected a nonunion, out-of-state piping contractor.

"They picked a company called Bilfinger-Westcon the first two times and now they are gone," said Mosteller. "We don't know details but always felt Bilfinger-Westcon couldn't do the job at the numbers they bid."

"We were told our numbers were good for the third try but they still went with an out-of-state company

and that's frustrating," said Mosteller.

Mosteller has tried to talk with Baton Rouge, Louisiana based APTIM, the company he was told had the job, but can't get them to talk with him.

"Why import workers, especially with the covid-19 crisis, when we have qualified local workers who need the jobs is beyond me," he said.

The plant reportedly was torn down at a Brazil location and shipped to West Virginia to be reconstructed.

That apparently hasn't worked out too well.

German owned Bilfinger-Westcon, selected to build the project in 2017 with a mid-2018 completion date, didn't work out too well either.

MMR Constructors, also from Baton Rouge, Louisiana has been awarded a major electrical contract.

"A few small contracts went to local companies but the big parts like piping and electrical have gone to companies that import their workers," said Mosteller.

"We're tired of the crumbs." ■



Members of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 625, along with supporters and local political leaders, rally in support of local workers across from the US Methanol site in Institute. APTIM from Louisiana was recently awarded the piping subcontract.

# Coal, Governor Kill Brooke County Project

Relentless attacks by the coal industry and Governor Jim Justice appeared to have caused the \$950 million Brooke County Power project to fold.

The developers, Energy Solutions Consortium, announced on Friday, October 9 the project is suspended.

The company had been trying to build the project for many years and

faced numerous attacks.

The coal industry, ignoring the 22 gas-fired plants built or under construction in surrounding states, claimed killing this one plant would somehow save coal jobs.

"The coal folks have had every opportunity to present a case to support their claim but they never do because stopping West Virginia plants pro-

vides no relief to the coal industry," said ACT's Steve White.

"We support coal power too, but we don't see anyone building a new coal plant. The coal industry killed our jobs which may help Ohio and Pennsylvania build more gas-fired plants but won't help West Virginia."

Brooke County Power asked the state Economic Development Au-

thority (EDA) for help with a small loan back in the spring of this year. They had a loan guarantee from Fluor Constructors, the company originally selected to build the project. Fluor backed out of the job because of internal problems and left the loan guaranty in place for over a year but the time had come to replace it.

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# 14 Arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement Getting Electrician Licenses

The West Virginia Fire Marshal's Office along with federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents arrested 14 people who were attempting to get a WV electrician's license.

According to an October 9 press release the arrests were made on Tuesday, October 6 in Charleston.

No contractor was arrested or charged.

The press release said the individuals traveled to Charleston but did not say where they came from.

"We don't know where these folks would have been working but there are many sites we suspect," said Steve Crum, International Representative for the **Electricians**.

According to Crum there currently are several locations in the eastern and northern panhandles that are suspected of using unlicensed and illegal labor for electrical work.

In addition, there are pending projects like the US Methanol site near Charleston that will import perhaps 100 electricians. "They certainly

could have been coming for any one of these projects," said Crum.

Four people were arrested in November of 2019 for allegedly lying on their application. Their cases are slated for presentation to a grand jury.

During the 2020 legislative session several amendments were proposed and passed with bi-partisan support to add E-Verify to both the electrician and plumber license process.

However Republican legislative leaders blocked passage. E-Verify is a government database that validates ID's.

In the press release State Fire Marshal Ken Tyree underscored the importance of safety rules like the electrician license that protect the public.

"Besides the threat to from unsafe or hazardous work performed, there is the potential for further fraud and compromise of the licensing process," Tyree said.

He also mentioned that reciprocity with other states may be compromised if the integrity of West Virgin-

ia's program is not maintained.

"We applaud the Fire Marshall's office for their efforts however it is disturbing that neither the contractor

who sent these folks, nor the owner who didn't appear to care about the labor on their job are being charged or will pay any penalty," said Crum. ■

## Columbus Passes Wage Theft Law

The City of Columbus has passed an ordinance aimed at stopping wage theft, a growing problem in the construction industry and other sectors of the economy.

The vote, held in early October, created a new commission able to investigate claims of wage theft on city contracts and projects that receive a public incentive.

The commission can stop work on a project during investigations, require contractors properly classify their workforce, and recommend the City Attorney pursue litigation to revoke tax incentives given to companies.

The effort was led by City Council

member Rob Dorans, who also is chief legal counsel for ACT-Ohio.

"Wage theft not only cheats workers, it cheats the entire community," said Dorans. "When we allow wage theft we are telling companies who play by the rules they must cheat to compete."

According to Dorans wage theft takes on many forms including failing to pay minimum wage, the prevailing wage or overtime, or misclassifying workers as independent contractors.

The ordinance was opposed by the anti-union group the Associated Builders and Contractors, Central Ohio Chapter. ■

## WI Study: Prevailing Wage Repeal Hurts

Wisconsin saw their state prevailing wage law repealed in 2017 with the promise of great savings to taxpayers.

And just like in West Virginia, where the law was repealed in 2016, a new study confirms those savings never materialized.

Instead the study, published in early October by the Midwest Economic Policy Institute, documents how repeal of the state prevailing wage law resulted in lower wages for workers, weakened apprenticeship systems, less overall bid competition, and more tax dollars being exported out-of-state.

Some of the study's key findings include:

- Construction worker earnings have fallen 6% while average construction industry CEO pay increased 54%.

- Repeal had no impact on the average cost per mile of resurfacing roads in Wisconsin.
- There has been a 60% increase in Wisconsin DOT projects being awarded to out-of-state contractors, primarily from Iowa and Michigan (both states without PW).
- Bid competition has decreased – road construction projects have seen 16% fewer bidders.
- Construction workers health care and pension coverage has declined.
- Post-repeal saw fewer women and minorities working construction.

The report examined the per-mile cost of state highway projects both before and after the 2017 repeal of Wisconsin's prevailing wage law.

The data shows the inflation-adjusted per-mile highway cost has increased by \$52,000 following repeal of prevailing wage.

"The actual observed changes in public construction spending since repeal of prevailing wage in Wisconsin underscore the longstanding academic consensus that the substitution of high-skilled local workers by lower-skilled, lower-wage, nonlocal workers does not produce cost savings," said study co-author and CSU-Pueblo Economist Dr. Kevin Duncan.

"Instead, it creates new inefficiencies in the form of workforce turnover, quality, cost overruns, and safety problems. And this does not even include the added cost shown in prior research that lower wages for construction workers increase reliance on public assistance programs."

Because prevailing wage laws also promote long-term investments in workforce training, the study suggests Wisconsin's repeal has also created new burdens for its construction industry.

Between 2016 and 2019, growth in the number of Wisconsinites completing state registered apprenticeship programs in construction has lagged apprenticeships in neighboring states with strong prevailing wage laws by 25%.

The diversity of the state's construction workforce also changed significantly, with the share of people of color in the trades lagging neighboring states and the number of Wisconsin women working as construction workers dropping by 32% relative to neighboring states.

To read the full report go to ACT's website [www.actwv.org](http://www.actwv.org). ■

# '20 Endorsements

<u>1st Congressional District</u>		8th	<b>Glenn Jeffries (D)</b>
David McKinley (R)		9th	David 'Bugs' Stover (R)
<u>Governor</u>		10th	Bill Laird (D)
Ben Salango (D)		11th	Denise Campbell (D)
<u>State Treasurer</u>		12th	Doug Facemire (D)
John Perdue (D)		13th	Mike Caputo (D)
<u>Attorney General</u>		14th	David Childers (D)
Sam Petsonk (D)		16th	Pete Dougherty (D)
<u>Secretary of State</u>		17th	Andrew Robinson (D)
Natalie Tennant (D)			
<u>State Auditor</u>			
Mary Ann Claytor (D)			
<u>Agriculture Commissioner</u>			
Bob Beach (D)			
<b>State Senate</b>			
1st	Randy Swartzmiller (D)		
2nd	Josh Gary (D)		
3rd	Robin Wilson (D)		
4th	No Action		
5th	Bob Plymale (D)		
7th	No Action		

8th	<b>Glenn Jeffries (D)</b>
9th	David 'Bugs' Stover (R)
10th	Bill Laird (D)
11th	Denise Campbell (D)
12th	Doug Facemire (D)
13th	Mike Caputo (D)
14th	David Childers (D)
16th	Pete Dougherty (D)
17th	Andrew Robinson (D)

<b>House of Delegates</b>	
1st	Pat McGeehan (R)
	Jack Wood (D)
2nd	<b>Phillip Diserio (D)</b>
3rd	Shawn Fluharty (D)
	Erikka Storch (R)
4th	Christian Turak (D)
	Lisa Zukoff (D)
5th	Dave Pethtel (D)
8th	Andrew Alvarez (D)
10th	Vernon Criss (R)
	Trish Pritchard (D)
	Luke Winters (D)

11th	Mark Pauley (D)	39th	No Action
13th	<b>Scott Brewer (D)</b>	41st	Duane Bragg (D)
14th	Chris Yeager (D)	42nd	Cindy Lavender-Bowe (D)
15th	Tess Jackson (D)		Jeff Campbell (D)
16th	Mark Bates (R)	43rd	Bill Hartman (D)
	Sean Hornbuckle (D)		Cody Thompson (D)
17th	Chad Lovejoy (D)	44th	Robin Cutlip (D)
	Matthew Rohrbach (R)	46th	Bob Stultz (D)
18th	No Action	47th	Ed Larry (D)
19th	Ric Griffith (D)	48th	Ryan Deems (D)
	David Thompson (D)		Robert Garcia (D)
20th	Nathan Brown (D)		Richard Iaquina (D)
21st	Mark Dean (R)		Josh Maxwell (D)
22nd	Joe Jeffries (R)	49th	Mike Mannypenny (D)
	Zack Maynard (R)	50th	Michael Angelucci (D)
23rd	Rodney Miller (D)		Joey Garcia (D)
24th	Susan Perry (D)		No Action between Ron
	Timothy Tomblin (D)		Straight (D) & Guy Ward (R)
25th	Tony Paynter (R)	51st	Barbara Fleischauer (D)
26th	Ed Evans (D)		Evan Hansen (D)
27th	Tina Russell (D)		Rodney Pyles (D)
28th	Ryne Nahodi (D)		Danielle Walker (D)
30th	Mick Bates (D)		John Williams (D)
31st	Chris Toney (R)	52nd	Junior "JR" Wolfe (D)
32nd	Mark Hurt (D)	53rd	Cory Chase (D)
	Margaret Staggers (D)	55th	Jarod Shockey (D)
34th	Brent Boggs (D)	58th	George Miller (R)
35th	Kathy Ferguson (D)	60th	Brad Noll (D)
	Doug Skaff Jr. (D)	61st	Jason Barrett (D)
	Rusty Williams (D)	62nd	Debi Carroll (D)
	Kayla Young (D)	63rd	Daniel Bennett (D)
36th	Jim Barach (D)	65th	Sammi Brown (D)
	Amanda Estep-Burton (D)	66th	Storme Frame (D)
	Larry Rowe (D)	67th	John Doyle (D)
37th	Mike Pushkin (D)		
38th	Nikki Ardman (D)		

**Bold** = Building Trades member

# Early Voting Starts on October 21

Election day is Tuesday November 3, but those who want to vote early can do so starting Wednesday, October 21.

Each county has at least one location, usually the County Courthouse, and some counties have multiple locations for early voting. Early voting will continue through October 31.

To find out where you can vote early in your county go to govotewv.com. You can also request the absentee ballot at the govotewv.com page or find contact information for your county clerk's office.

A voter easily can track their absentee ballots through the website.

You can see when your ballot application is received, when your ballot is mailed to you and when your clerk gets your ballot from you.

"We encourage all members and their families to vote, and to look at the endorsed candidates who must prove they care about working families before they receive an endorsement," said Dave Efaw, Secretary-Treasurer of the WV State Building and Construction Trades Council.

"We are very focused on state legislative races and getting enough votes to stop the constant attack we have faced at the legislature the last few years." ■

**Important Dates**

**Absentee Ballot Application**  
Now thru October 28

**Early Voting**  
October 21 thru October 31

**Election Day**  
Tuesday, November 3



Mark Johnson, Business Manager for the Tri-State Building Trades Council in Ashland is a candidate for the Ohio House.



# Restore WV Campaign Brings Awareness to Value of a State Prevailing Wage Law

ACT and the WV State Building Trades have launched a new campaign to educate West Virginians about the economic value of the prevailing wage law.

Prevailing wage laws are one of the best economic tools available, yet many people are unaware of how a strong prevailing wage law impacts many aspects of our economy.

ACT's Research Director Lesly Messina is heading up the project. According to Messina the new campaign, called Restore WV, will help West Virginians "connect the dots"

on the positive impact that prevailing wage makes.

The goal is to get the prevailing wage law restored in West Virginia.

The Restore WV campaign includes a series of commercials, which will air on television and social media over the coming months.

The effort also includes a comprehensive website and an educational Facebook page.

The message of Restore WV is clear. Prevailing wage laws bring nothing but positives to the states that have them in place.

The campaign shows the connection of prevailing wage to a strong state economy and the best value for tax payers. That means more local contractors and local workers, higher wages for all workers, increased state and local tax revenue, better roads

employment rate is rising and college tuition is skyrocketing.

A short-term goal of the campaign is to get citizens to ask the question "why did leaders in West Virginia get rid of this important and essential economic development tool

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The new Restore WV website features a petition to show support for bringing back the prevailing wage law.

## Brooke County

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The \$5.5 million loan was to fund transmission infrastructure needed for the project.

The EDA was to bring the issue before the board in June. However, the issue was postponed from the June monthly meeting to July. Then from July to August. Each time there was a technical reason given but when the August meeting was held the issue was pulled once again.

Governor Justice was asked about it during an August press conference and admitted he caused the delay citing several questions similar to what

the coal industry had been saying.

A group funded by Murray Energy had challenged the project at the Public Service Commission and at the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals and lost each time.

"It is amazing the disregard the coal folks have for local construction workers and the gas industry," said White. "They keep saying no local workers will build it when we have a signed agreement to use local union workers which will put almost \$100 million in wages and benefits in people's pockets."

and public infrastructure and better access to health care and a stronger health care network.

Restore WV also puts a spotlight on how prevailing wage laws support high quality apprenticeship training, granting access to a free education to West Virginians that choose a path in the trades at a time when the un-

and how can we get it back?"

One way to accomplish that goal is to sign the petition in support of restoring prevailing wage.

The petition can be found on the website.

For more information visit [www.restorewv.com](http://www.restorewv.com) and on Facebook at Restore West Virginia. ■

### Affiliated Construction Trades

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Charleston, WV 25301  
(304) 345-7570  
[www.actwv.org](http://www.actwv.org)



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Ultimately a special meeting of the EDA was called because Brooke County officials, the gas industry, the trades and even the Chamber of Commerce sounded the alarm about losing a huge economic development prospect. The EDA approved the loan in mid-August, over the objections of the Governors representative. But the attacks never let up.

By the September EDA meeting the loan was still not in place.

"We believe EDA staff had been directed by the Governors office to drag their feet and to keep changing

the terms of the loan," said White.

"The loan delay, the prospects of endless attacks together with the uncertainty in the economy put the final blow to the project," said White.

There is hope someone can salvage something from the project, so the official word is the project is suspended. But the time for plants like this one are soon coming to an end.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to see surrounding states will welcome you for these projects and West Virginia will use its power to stop you," said White. ■