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A Division of the WV State Building Trades, AFL-CIO | Chuck Parker, President | John Epperly, Secretary-Treasurer | Justin Williams, Director

2024 Legislative Session Underway at WV Capitol

On Wednesday, January 10 lawmakers began the 2024 legislative session at the West Virginia Capitol building in Charleston.

The same day, the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades (WVBCT) held an informational day at the Capitol, which culminated in the WV House of Delegates passing a proclamation, officially declaring January 10, 2024 as West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Day in the state.

WVBCT craft representatives, as well as other partner organizations, held exhibits at the Capitol throughout the day to educate lawmakers, and the general public, about the benefits of craft apprenticeship programs.

“We began holding this annual event last year and plan to continue doing so each year going forward,” said George Capel, Government Relations Director for the WVBCT.

However, Capel says this year is different as the WVBCT holiday has

never been declared in the past, as it was this year.

“I think this speaks to the progress

we have made politically as an organization as well as the good relationship we now have with House leader-

ship,” said Capel. “We have partnered with House leaders on a number of

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West Virginia House of Delegates leadership presents a proclamation to WVBCT leaders, declaring January 10, 2024 as West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Day at the Capitol building in Charleston, West Virginia.

White House Mandates Project Labor Agreements on Large Federal Projects

Last month, the White House announced the implementation of an executive order to require project labor agreements (PLAs) on federal construction jobs above \$35 million.

This announcement will likely result in PLA requirements on a majority of federal construction projects.

President Joe Biden first enacted this rule change in February 2022, but it will not go into effect until 30 days after it is published in the Federal Register on Friday, due to formal rule change processes by the Federal Acquisition Regulatory Council.

The executive order's implemen-

tation replaces an Obama-era rule that encouraged PLAs on federal jobs but did not mandate the practice.

This new order has been met with high praise from those in the construction industry.

Sean McGarvey, President of North America's Building Trades

Unions, claims the new rule will be a positive change for the industry.

“With this latest action to strengthen economic security, labor-management relations and family-sustaining job opportunities, President Biden is yet again demonstrating his rock-

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18.9 MW Capacity Ribbon-Cutting Held for Fort Hill Solar Project in Madsville, West Virginia

On January 4, a ribbon-cutting ceremony was held at the recently completed Fort Hill Solar installation in Madsville, West Virginia next to the Fort Martin Power Station.

The project is the first of five sites planned by Mon Power to be built in different areas, and was entirely union built by more than 100 union construction workers.

Fort Hill Solar has a generating capacity of 18.9 MW, and officials say nearly 50,000 solar panels are now generating renewable energy at the approximately 80-acre Fort Martin site.

“We’re proud to have achieved our goal of completing this solar site

using local union workers,” said Jim Myers, President of West Virginia Operations.

“It is important to have this voluntary option available to customers, as renewable energy is a large economic driver in both attracting new industry to West Virginia and keeping existing companies that now require a portion of their electricity to come from renewable sources.”

The five sites, when they are operational, are expected to generate up to 50 megawatts of renewable energy.

Along with the Fort Martin solar site, two others in Rivesville, Marion County (5.5 MW), and Marlowe, Berkeley County (5.7 MW), were ap-

proved by the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) in August.

Construction of those sites is expected to be complete by the end of 2024.

Mon Power and its sister company Potomac Edison plan to seek final approval from the PSC later this year to build the additional two solar sites in Davis, Tucker County (11.5 MW), and Weirton, Hancock County (8.4 MW).

They expect to complete construction of the final two sites by the end of 2025.

Both Mon Power and Potomac Edison are owned by FirstEnergy Corporation.

Mon Power serves about 395,000 customers in 34 West Virginia counties, while Potomac Edison serves about 275,000 customers in seven counties in Maryland and 155,000 customers in the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. ■

Legislative Session

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initiatives and look forward to continuing our work with them.”

The ongoing legislative session will include various bills of interest to the trades. Sources speculate that the session will include another push to cut unemployment benefits from 26 weeks to 12 weeks (in a calendar year) in the state of West Virginia.

The proposal was passed two separate times in 2022 and 2023 by the WV Senate. However, it has never gained enough traction to pass through the House of Delegates and become law.

WVBCT leaders say the unemployment cuts are the main fight faced by the trades this session.

“We believe a form of [the proposal to cut unemployment] will be brought again this session” said Capel. “Lawmakers need to understand how devastating this is to seasonal workers, like our members in construction.”

Capel says proponents of the bill point to the low workforce participation rate in West Virginia as justification for the bill. However, he also said the proposal will not help with that problem.

“Cutting these benefits for workers laid off through no fault of their own will not impact the low work-

force participation rate we have in West Virginia,” said Capel.

“Individuals who receive unemployment compensation checks are considered a part of the active workforce, as they have had to work within the past 18 months to even receive unemployment compensation.”

Capel went on to explain the trades are willing to work with lawmakers to make the unemployment system more effective but notes that the trades will not support any cuts to benefits for workers.

Despite the proposal to cut unemployment, WVBCT leaders remain optimistic about the session related to positives it could bring.

Among those is a proposal to engage public school guidance counselors with local apprenticeship and technical programs and other bills which could help advance apprenticeship programs.

“We are doing everything we can to work with our lawmakers to ensure the best outcomes for the trades and promote workforce development,” said Capel. “We have made a tremendous amount of progress, but we still have a long way to go.”

The West Virginia legislative session will run for 60 days, ending on March 9 at midnight. ■

Senator Mike Caputo Honored by Trades



State Senator Mike Caputo poses for a picture with Building Trades attendees of the 2024 WVBCT Legislative Conference at the Four Points hotel in Charleston, West Virginia.

Senator Caputo is retiring after this year and will not seek reelection for the first time since 1996.

Because of this, Building Trades leaders wanted to honor him for his service to the labor movement.

“Mike has done so many great things for the labor movement and for the trades,” said John Epperly, Secretary-Treasurer for the WV Building and Construction Trades. “We wanted to show our appreciation for all he has done. He truly has been a real fighter for those of us in labor.”

WV Construction Trades Day Event Held at the Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia

On Wednesday, January 10, WV Construction Trades Day was held at the Capitol in Charleston, West Virginia. The annual event was host to representatives from across the trades as well as partner organizations that are construction industry adjacent.

The event is part of an ongoing initiative by the trades to educate lawmakers about the benefits of craft apprenticeship programs as well as workforce development issues.

“This is the second year in a row we have held the event,” said George Capel, Government Relations Director for the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council. “It is important for us to

have our members come to meet with lawmakers to help them understand the issues surrounding the construction industry.”

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George Capel

Government Relations Director

West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council

Throughout the day, the organizations who participated held exhibits, displaying information about their group and answering questions about their respective line of work.

Those in attendance included: Painters District Council 53; WV Laborers Training Center; the West Virginia Jumpstart Program; Millwrights Local 443; Sheet Metal Workers Local 33; Cement Masons Local 926; the Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers Local 23; IBEW 446; IBEW 596; IBEW 317; IBEW 968; International

Union of Operating Engineers Local 132; Ironworkers Local 787; Boilermakers Local 667; the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF); the WV Pipe Trades Association; the United Union of Roofers, Waterproofers & Allied Workers; Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 625; Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 152; Trades-

Futures; Helmets to Hardhats; the Charleston Building and Construction Trades Council; WV Carpenters Training Center; WV Women Work; and Insulators Local 80.

West Virginia Building and Construction Trades leaders say they plan to hold the event again next year during the 2025 legislative session. ■



Representatives from the WV Building and Construction Trades hosts exhibits at the Capitol during WV Construction Trades Day.

Charleston IBEW 466 Now Accepting Applications for Apprenticeship Program

The Charleston Joint Electrical Apprenticeship and Training Committee will accept apprenticeship applications from 8:30AM until 4:00PM Monday through Friday until March 6th.

Applications will be accepted at the Charleston JATC Building, located at 810 Indiana Avenue, Charleston, WV 25302. Applications can also be submitted at the IBEW 466 Satellite Office located at 316 Mercer Street, Princeton, WV 24740.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 466 and the WV-Ohio Valley National Electrical Contractors Association work

together to deliver the highest quality training available for electrical apprentices in all phases of commercial, industrial, instrumentation, and tele-data work.

Apprentices receive five years of training, with a total of 900 hours of classroom instruction and 8,000 hours of paid, on-the-job training.

This provides affiliated contractors with craft workers who have the knowledge, skills, and attitude to remain competitive with honest wages and benefits.

Applicants for the apprenticeship program must be at least 17 years of age to apply and 18 years old at the

time of indenture. Applicants must be physically able to perform the essential functions of the trade, present evidence of possession of a valid driver's license, and provide proof of high school graduation or equivalent.

All applicants must also show evidence of completion of at least one full year of high school algebra, or one post-high school accredited algebra class, with a passing grade. All applicants must provide high school transcripts or equivalent records, whichever are applicable.

In addition, applicants must qualify for an interview using the electrical trade's aptitude test, devel-

oped and validated by the American Institutes for Research. Information for test preparation can be found at www.electricalprep.com.

If applicants have prior military experience, they may submit a DD-214 to verify their service, and their training and experience in the armed forces will be considered.

At the time of application, a fee of \$20.00 is required. No applications submitted after 4:00PM on March 6th will be considered.

For more information contact Training Director Dustin Vaughan at DustinV@ibew466.org (304) 345-5166 or log onto IBEW466.org. ■

USDOL Reaches Settlement with Nonunion Firm over Violations in Wheeling, WV

In an official release, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) announced it had reached a settlement agreement with a nonunion firm over 'willful violations' that were confirmed following an inspection of a project in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Ohio-based roofing and siding contractor Charm Builders Ltd. has been ordered to pay \$750,000 in penalties related to 12 citations issued by OSHA, following an inspection of a roofing project in Wheeling on March 29, 2022.

In the release, the Department of Labor described the 12 citations as "six egregious-willful, five repeat and one serious."

The March 2022 inspection be-

gan after OSHA received a complaint that alleged Charm Builders did not provide fall protection to workers replacing a roof atop a two-story office building in Wheeling.

OSHA cited the contractor for failing to ensure the use of fall protection and safety glasses, allowing unsafe use of portable ladders, and failing to provide training to employees on fall hazards.

According to the DOL, this is 12th time the agency has cited Charm Builders since 2009 for violations related to fall hazards.

As a result, the company was placed on OSHA's Severe Violators list in 2022.

In addition to the penalties that

must be paid, Charm Builders Ltd. has also been ordered to hire a safety consultant, be subject to random safety audits, and implement all recommendations listed in the OSHA report.

"This is another example of unsafe

practices employed by some non-union contractors," said Eran Molz, President of the Upper Ohio Valley Building and Construction Trades. "When a project is built union, you can be sure safety will always be a top priority." ■

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Charleston Trades Red Kettle Drive



(From left) Mike Kennedy, Jules Goffaux, Case Carter, and Jamie Bostic, members of Sheet Metal Workers 33 out of Charleston participate in the Salvation Army Red Kettle Drive outside Kroger in Charleston, West Virginia.

In a single day, the Charleston Building and Construction Trades raised \$3,494.19 for the Salvation Army by setting up red kettles around the city and ringing bells for donations.

"Between this and our Angel Tree this year, we have raised well over 10 thousand dollars for children in need with the Salvation Army," said Fred Chandler, Business Manager for the Charleston Building and Construction Trades. "We always look forward to this event and to giving back to the community that has given us so much."

White House

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solid commitment to American taxpayers and all workers — union and non-union — across the country," McGarvey said.

McGarvey's comments were also directed at those who claim the rule is meant to tip federal construction projects in favor of union construction outfits.

However, many experts claim that all subcontractors and contractors will still be able to compete for work, regardless of their experience with collective bargaining.

"This executive order is not re-

quiring you to be a union contractor, it's requiring you basically on a one-off basis to agree to a pre-hire collective bargaining agreement," said James Terry, partner at New York City construction law firm Zetlin & De Chiara.

According to a fact sheet circulated by White House representatives, the goal of the executive order is to increase efficiency by having all stakeholders — contractors, subcontractors, unions or other labor groups — negotiate the terms of each project ahead of time. ■