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

New Trades Bill Package Introduced in WV House

Earlier this month, a three-bill package authored in part by representatives of the WV Building and Construction Trades (WVBCT) was introduced in the WV House of Delegates.

The three bills offer good construction policy and represent the intent of the Trades to partner with Republican officials toward the betterment of West Virginia's construction industry.

All three bills were originally sponsored and introduced by Republican Labor Caucus Chairman Delegate Evan Worrell (R-Cabell). However, since that time they have picked up the following sponsors:

Delegate Mark Dean (R-Mingo), Delegate Chris Toney (R-Raleigh), Delegate Bill Flanigan (R-Ohio), Delegate Erica Moore (R-Roane), Delegate Bryan Smith (R-Taylor), Delegate Jordan Bridges (R-Logan), Delegate Dave Foggin (R-Wood), Delegate Andy Shamblin (R-Kanawha), Delegate Jimmy Willis (R-Brooke), Delegate Ryan Brownning (R-Wayne), and Delegate Jeff El-

dridge (R-Lincoln).

While other Delegates were also interested in adding their name to

the sponsorship list, they were so popular that the list was maxed out prior to introducing the bills.

HB 3184, also known as The Local Government Freedom Act, gives

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George Capel (at podium), WV Building and Construction Trades Government Relations Director, unveils the WVBCT Bill Package during the annual Legislative Briefing at the WVBCT Legislative Conference on February 27. Also pictured are: Justin Williams (left of podium), Director of the WV Affiliated Construction Trades; Chuck Parker (right of podium), WVBCT President; and John Epperly (far right of podium), WVBCT Secretary-Treasurer.

By Justin Williams, ACT WV Director

Op-Ed: Investing in WV's Workforce

West Virginia's economy has always relied on hardworking men and women who build the infrastructure our communities depend on every single day. A new report from the Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER)

reinforces just how vital our state's skilled trades workforce is—not only for the projects they build, but for the economic strength they bring to West Virginia.

The numbers tell a clear story: over the past two years alone, the

West Virginia Building and Construction Trades (WVBCT) Council's members generated more than \$8.1 billion in total economic impact. That's a staggering contribution—and it speaks volumes about the value skilled union labor brings

to our state's economy and future.

These aren't just numbers on a page. They represent the livelihoods of thousands of West Virginians who go to work every day to support their families while strengthening their

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WV Building and Construction Trades Hold Annual Legislative Conference

Last month, the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council (WVBCT) held their annual Legislative Convention in Charleston, West Virginia.

Representatives from every craft, hailing from across the state, were in attendance to hear from legislative leaders, industry officials, as well as the Trades' leadership about proceedings during the 2025 Legislative Session at the WV Capitol.

To begin the Conference, ACT Director Justin Williams discussed ongoing public relations efforts, upcoming projects, and continued work with local & state governments.

In addition, Williams spoke on the Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research impact study and the results the West Virginia Building Trades have on the state.

Next, attendees heard from

WVBCT Government Relations Director George Capel, as he gave a presentation on the current state of affairs at the Capitol related to the Trades.

Capel said while the Trades have been on the defense for the past several years, this year the organization has the opportunity to go on offense as it relates to construction policy.

"We have spent years gaining support for our cause," said Capel. "Now, it's time for us to run our own bills to help the construction industry and tell our story, defining who we are on our own terms."

The bills Capel referred to are HB 3184 (The Local Government Freedom Act), HB 3185 (The Taxpayer Protection Act), and HB 3186 (The WV First Act).

All three bills we authored in part by WVBCT representatives. (*Editor's Note: For more information on

these bills, see this edition's top story on Page 1.)

After Capel's presentation, Ross Meridian from the North American Building Trades Union (NABTU) gave an overview on what is happening on the federal level in Washington D.C.

Meridian explained that the top priority for the trades in D.C. is encouraging lawmakers to protect the clean energy tax credits, made available through the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

Next, attendees heard from Andy Walters, Secretary-Treasurer for the WV AFL-CIO.

Walters gave a recap on the 2024 election and also gave a preview of what other AFL-CIO affiliates would face this session.

The next speaker was Delegate Evan Worrell (R-Cabell), Chairman of the West Virginia Republican La-

bor Caucus.

Worrell spoke about the huge gains the Caucus has seen over the past 5 years and also spoke about how the Caucus planned to introduce the WVBCT Bill Package during this session.

Finally, attendees heard from Deputy Speaker Matthew Rohrbach (R-Cabell), who spoke about the new bill process in the House of Delegates as well as other construction-related issues.

The day concluded with a Legislative Reception, in which many lawmakers and industry officials were in attendance.

"We look forward to holding this convention every year," said Capel. "The trades are in a great spot on the legislative front and we look forward to progressing even further, and gaining more support, in the years to come." ■

Op.Ed by Justin Williams, ACT WV Director

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communities. According to the report, WVBCT members work an average of 17.4 million hours per year, earning \$2 billion in total labor income, which includes good benefits. And that income doesn't stop at the paycheck—it's spent at local businesses, supports healthcare services, bolsters retail, transportation, and professional industries, and keeps money circulating right here in WV.

What makes this impact even more remarkable is our trades' commitment to workforce development. In many industries, workers are expected to pay for their own training or take on student debt to advance their careers. In contrast, West Virginia's union trades invest directly in the next generation through apprenticeship programs, safety training, and industry advocacy. Over the past two years alone, we've invested \$58.3 million to ensure workers have access to debt-free, high-quality training programs that prepare them for

lifelong careers. With state-of-the-art apprenticeship training centers in South Charleston, Huntington, and across the state, we're not just building infrastructure—we're building West Virginia's future workforce.

When you invest in skilled trades, you invest in West Virginia's future. Our union construction workers aren't just building roads and bridges—they're earning good wages, supporting local businesses, and raising their families right here in West Virginia. With an average wage of \$35.50 per hour, and \$54 per hour when including benefits like healthcare and pensions, these careers offer more than just a paycheck—they offer stability and opportunity.

Today, WVBCT members account for nearly half of all construction jobs in West Virginia, directly and indirectly supporting more than 36,800 jobs statewide. From roads and energy infrastructure to schools and industrial facilities, our mem-

bers are building the foundation for a brighter future. With demand for energy growing and our need for improving infrastructure, the need for a skilled, reliable, and well-trained workforce has never been more important.

The report highlights some impressive achievements including: \$5 billion in direct economic output from construction activity, \$3 billion in indirect and induced impacts across other industries, and over \$1 billion in labor income—supporting middle-class families across the state.

This kind of economic impact doesn't happen by chance. It's the result of strong union training programs, fair wages, and a commitment to safety and excellence. Investing in union labor isn't just good for workers—it's good for our economy, our communities, and the quality of life for all West Virginians.

With new energy projects, industrial growth, and commercial devel-

opments on the horizon, the skilled men and women of the WVBCT are ready to deliver high-quality projects on time and within budget. Our proven track record speaks for itself, and with continued investment in apprenticeship training, safety programs, and industry partnerships, we will keep West Virginia competitive in a rapidly evolving economy.

As West Virginia embarks on this exciting era of growth and opportunity, we must recognize and support the vital role of union trades. We are not only building roads, bridges, and power plants—we are building the economic backbone of our state and securing a more prosperous future for the next generation.

Now is the time to invest in the workforce that has always invested in West Virginia. Together, we can ensure a stronger, more resilient economy—one built by skilled tradesmen and tradeswomen who are proud to call West Virginia home. ■

CONSTRUCTION TRADES DAY AT THE CAPITOL

SHOWCASE YOUR BUSINESS, APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM, LOCAL UNION HALL, OR OTHER CONSTRUCTION ORGANIZATION TO EDUCATE LAWMAKERS ABOUT THE UNION CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

APRIL

8

8:00AM-12:00PM

WV CAPITOL ROTUNDA

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New Study: Project Labor Agreements Increase Bid Competition, Lower Costs

A new study has found that project labor agreements (PLAs) increase bid competition and lowered costs to the state on public construction projects.

The study was conducted and published by researchers at the Illinois Economic Policy Institute (ILEPI) and the Project for Middle Class Renewal (PMCR) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

An analysis of more than 2,500 bids on 773 Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB) building projects between 2017 and 2023 has found that project labor agreements (PLAs) increased bid competition by an average of 14 percent, with each additional bid increasing the likelihood that projects would be awarded below their official engineer's estimates by 6 percent.

In addition, because PLAs statistically strengthened bid competition during a period with a tightening labor market and greater demand for construction services, they helped to lower costs for taxpayers—with each

additional bid improving the likelihood that projects would come in below their engineer's estimates by 6 percent.

Project labor agreements (PLAs) are pre-hire agreements that establish terms and conditions of employment for all crafts on large and complex infrastructure projects.

The mutual agreements are between construction owners—such as contractors, developers, governments, or public bodies—and coalitions of labor unions supplying skilled workers for the duration of specific projects.

The main purpose of PLAs is to promote predictability, productivity, and efficiency on construction projects.

PLAs can also enhance opportunities to bid on public works for previously underrepresented businesses while expanding employer access to new domestic labor supply pools.

The data from this new study shows that project labor agreements are valuable construction manage-

ment tools.

Project labor agreements serve as de-risking mechanisms that ban strikes and lockouts during construction, harmonize and coordinate workplace on complex projects,

ply pools.

PLAs encourage more bid competition, stabilize public construction costs, and expand business opportunities to more construction owners from all backgrounds.



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boost apprenticeship training, and deliver access to domestic labor sup-

To read the study in its entirety, log on to www.IllinoisEPI.org. ■

New Trades Bill Package

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codified legal protections to political subdivisions (counties, cities, etc.) to take the lowest responsible bidder on publicly bid projects.

Essentially, if this bill becomes law, cities and counties couldn't be sued for refusing to take the absolute lowest bidder on a public construction project.

In addition, HB 3184 gives authority to cities and counties to carry out Project Labor Agreements (PLAs) on locally bid projects.

In the past, many local authorities have lived in fear of lawsuits, being forced to take the absolute lowest bidder to avoid legal retribution.

The Local Government Freedom Act will provide protections for local governments to choose the "lowest responsible bidder" based on bid-

ding criteria that can include (but is not limited to): past performance, apprenticeship programs, drug-free policies, etc.

The second bill in the package is HB 3185, better known as the Taxpayer Protection Act.

HB 3185 creates a 3-part "ABC Test" to determine if a worker should be classified as an employee, rather than an independent contractor.

"For too long, many workers have been misclassified as independent contractors," said George Capel, Government Relations Director for the WV Building and Construction Trades Council.

"When workers are misclassified as independent contractors, it is possible for the state to miss out on tax dollars that would otherwise be owed

to them. During this time of financial hardship for the state, it is in their best interest to ensure taxes are being paid properly."

The third and final bill of the WVBCT Bill Package is HB 3186, also known as the WV First Act.

HB 3186 requires that all projects, with even a single state taxpayer dollar funding them, be subject to the WV Jobs Act, which gives priority to local workers on public construction projects.

In addition, this bill instructs the Department of Labor to create and maintain an online database for all certified payroll documents from public projects.

The database would be available to the public at all times.

WVBCT representatives say this

legislation is related to WV Economic Development Authority (EDA) projects, which has made deals with companies such as Form Energy and Nucor Steel.

"We fully support these projects created through public private partnerships," said Capel.

"We also believe the construction jobs should be manned by local workers, since WV taxpayer dollars funded them."

HB 3184 and HB 3186 are currently pending in the House Committee on Government Organization. HB 3185 is pending in the House Finance Committee.

For more information on these bills, and others being considered during the WV Legislative Session, log on to www.wegislature.gov. ■