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

Republican Labor Caucus Announced at WV Capitol

On November 15, Republican lawmakers from both the House and Senate gathered to announce the newly formed West Virginia Republican Labor Caucus at the state Capitol.

According to caucus Chairman Evan Worrell (R-Cabell), the West Virginia Republican Labor Caucus will focus on supporting and advancing legislation that improves and strengthens worker requirements throughout the state.

“We need to make sure we’re supporting contractors and our West Virginia workers,” Worrell said. “We have seen, unfortunately, some legislation passed that hinders worker requirements, so we felt that we needed to come together and create a group that supported West Virginia workers.”

Since 2014, Republican leadership has led many attacks against the trades, sponsoring legislation such as Right-to-Work and the repeal of prevailing wage laws. However, there is

a faction of Republicans that do not agree with policies such as these.

In fact, Worrell has worked toward the formation of the caucus alongside many Republican legisla-

tors who have recently joined ACT on tours of apprenticeship facilities across the state, and he says promoting apprenticeship is a major goal of the group.

“The West Virginia Republican Labor Caucus was formally announced to support West Virginia workers and apprenticeship pro-

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Republican Labor Caucus Chairman Delegate Evan Worrell (R-Cabell) speaks during the caucus announcement at the state Capitol on November 15.

Federal Infrastructure Spending Bill Signed into Law, Prevailing Wage Required

Thanks to Congressman David McKinley and Senators Joe Manchin and Shelley Capito a long-anticipated \$1.2 trillion federal infrastructure bill was signed into law on November 15.

West Virginia will see \$6 billion in funding for a long list of categories such as highways, utility transmission, broadband, water and sewer

improvements, abandoned mine reclamation projects, and other spending initiatives over the next five years.

The largest segment of funds, \$3.7 billion, goes to roads and bridges. However, an additional \$2.3 billion is spread among many areas.

Expanding broadband was a major priority and will see \$600 million

in funding. \$475 million will be allocated for water and wastewater improvements throughout the state.

Funding for abandoned mine land reclamation is \$700 million and there is an additional \$100-\$200 million to cap orphaned oil and gas wells.

The funding will include about \$340 million for public transporta-

tion, which would consist of \$195 million to improve public transportation options across the state, \$46 million to build a network of electric vehicle charging stations, \$66 million to modernize and expand passenger rail and freight rail efficiency and safety and \$40 million for airports.

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\$500 Million for Bridges \$3.7 Billion of Federal Funding Available for West Virginia Roads and Highways

One of the major focus areas of the new federal infrastructure bill surrounds the construction of roads and bridges.

Of the \$6 billion West Virginia is slated to receive, approximately \$3.7 billion over five years goes to highways, secondary roads and bridges, resulting in a 35.2% increase in federal funding for these items.

“As long as we have a level playing field, we expect our contractors to get the largest part of these projects,” said Chuck Parker, Business Manager for Operating Engineers Local 132. One reason Parker is especially encouraged is the requirement of the Davis-Bacon Act for all projects.

“Davis-Bacon means the local prevailing wage rate must be paid and cheap imported labor has no ad-

vantage,” said Parker.

The funding will include: \$3 billion for roads and highways, \$500 million for bridges, and \$200 million for Corridor H improvements.

The Coalfields Expressway and the King Coal Highway, both in southern West Virginia are additional WV Division of Highways priorities according to news reports.

West Virginia can also expect to receive approximately \$73 million

“As long as we have a level playing field, we expect our contractors to get the largest part of these projects”

Chuck Parker

*Business Manager
Operating Engineers Local 132*

over five years to reduce transportation-related emissions as well as \$85 million over the same period to increase the resilience of its transportation system.

In addition to this new funding, West Virginia will also be able to compete for other federal dollars made available through two newly established programs created by the infrastructure bill.

The Bridge Investment Program will make \$12.5 billion available for

economically significant bridges across the country, and another program dedicated to megaprojects with substantial economic impacts makes \$15 billion available to states.

These programs will operate on a grant basis.

According to a memorandum published by the U.S. Department of Transportation, West Virginia has 1,545 bridges and over 3,222 miles of highway in poor condition, and on average each West Virginia driver pays about \$726 a year in costs due to driving on roads in need of repair.

Overall, the American Society of Civil Engineers gave West Virginia a D on its infrastructure report card, making the state one of the most in-need states when it comes to infrastructure improvements. ■

Parkersburg Trades Meet with Mid-Ohio Valley County School Superintendents

On December 1, representatives from the trades met with County School Superintendents and Technical Directors from throughout the mid-Ohio valley to discuss how to improve current CTE programs and build a stronger talent pipeline to the skilled trades.

During the event, roundtable discussions were held consisting of members from the trades and officials from each county school system with the goal of strengthening the partnership between education, the trades, and Workforce WV. Counties in attendance included Calhoun, Clay, Jackson, Mason, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Wirt, and Wood.

Conversations during the roundtables ranged from how to attract potential talent to a career in the trades to what each delegation needed to know about how the others operate and provided a chance for networking among members of the groups.

“This was a great opportunity for everyone involved,” said Buddy Malone, Business Manager for the Parkersburg-Marietta Building and Construction Trades Council. “We look forward to working closely with our partners in education and at Workforce to help encourage students to explore a career in the skilled trades.”

After the roundtable discussions, Workforce unveiled their new partnership with TRANSFR, a hands-on simulation-based training software company.

The company was brought in to install craft-specific virtual reality training software on 50 new virtual reality equipment sets recently acquired by MOVWDB.

VR stations were made available to participants of the roundtable event to test the software, which will be implemented in the region’s county school systems as early as spring

2022. MOVWDB believes the new equipment will help provide high

school students with a clear path to the skilled trades. ■



Bill Monterosso, Executive Director of the Mid-Ohio Valley Workforce Development Board, speaks during the Education and Trades Roundtable Discussion event on December 1 at the MOVWDB headquarters in Parkersburg.

\$100 Million Investment 50 MW of Solar Power at Five Locations in West Virginia Proposed by FirstEnergy

Last month, FirstEnergy Corporation submitted an application to the West Virginia Public Service Commission (PSC) seeking approval to build five utility-scale solar energy projects that together would cost \$100 million and have the nameplate capacity of 50 megawatts of power.

In their application to the PSC, FirstEnergy committed to using local union construction workers from the Building Trades.

Talks are already underway with the North Central West Virginia Building and Construction Trades to provide labor for construction.

The proposal is the result of legislation passed in 2020, authorizing both FirstEnergy and AEP to build up to 200 megawatts of solar power

in 50 megawatt steps. According to the law, once the company sells 85% of the power from their first 50 megawatts of solar, they will be permitted to build an additional facility, in 50 megawatt increments, up to a total of 200 megawatts each.

Most of the proposed sites are located on property owned by FirstEnergy or its affiliates.

These sites include 26 acres in Berkeley County, 51 acres in Hancock County, 95 acres in Monongalia County, and 44 acres in Tucker County.

A fifth site in Pleasants County is still under review.

“We have had a great relationship with FirstEnergy for a long time and we are excited to work

with them again to build these solar projects,” said Natalie Stone, Executive Secretary for the North Central WV Building and Construction Trades Council. “The projects will provide work for our members and may help generate more economic development activity in the state.”

According to representatives from FirstEnergy, the addition of new renewable generation facilities encourages economic development in West Virginia, as many companies are

trending toward requiring a portion of their power purchases be gener-

ated by renewable sources.

“Many of our customers have expressed strong interest in solar power

in recent years, and we are excited about the opportunity to meet the growing demand for renewable energy in our service territory while supporting West Virginia’s economic development goals,” said Jim Myers, President of FirstEnergy’s West Virginia Operations.

Pending approval of the application construction could begin in late 2022,

with all five sites expected to be completed by 2025. ■

“We have had a great relationship with FirstEnergy for a long time and we are excited to work with them again to build these solar projects”

Natalie Stone

*Executive Secretary
North Central WV Building and
Construction Trades Council*

Worker Safety Topic at Interim Committee



George Capel (at podium), Government Relations Director for the West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades, speaks at the Committee on Labor and Worker Safety Issues during the December legislative interim committee meetings on December 6th.

Capel was joined by Labor Education and Development Program (LEAD) representatives Luther Lasure and Paul Pigott.

The group gave a presentation to the committee on various worker safety topics including policy and laws surrounding OSHA-10 certifications and drug-testing.

Infrastructure

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All of the funds require the payment of prevailing wage rates for construction workers under what is called the Davis-Bacon Act.

Not all federal funds carry this requirement, so it is important it is part of this major infrastructure bill.

“Having the federal prevailing wage law apply to these projects means these will be good paying jobs for local contractors and workers,” said Jessie King, Business Manager for the WV Laborers District Council.

In addition, there are a series of competitive grant opportunities for a wide range of infrastructure needs such as highway and road safety, low emission bus replacements, inland port improvements, and improving access to public transit for the disabled.

Also, funding was allocated to create a special program building clean energy on current and former mine lands and provide grant funding for manufacturers to build or retrofit their facilities to produce or recycle energy products in communities that have seen coal mines or plants close.

The bi-partisan bill, passed initially by the Senate, was finally approved by the US House of Representatives after much debate among Democrats and Republicans.

Congressman David McKinley was the only US House Representative from West Virginia to vote for the bill.

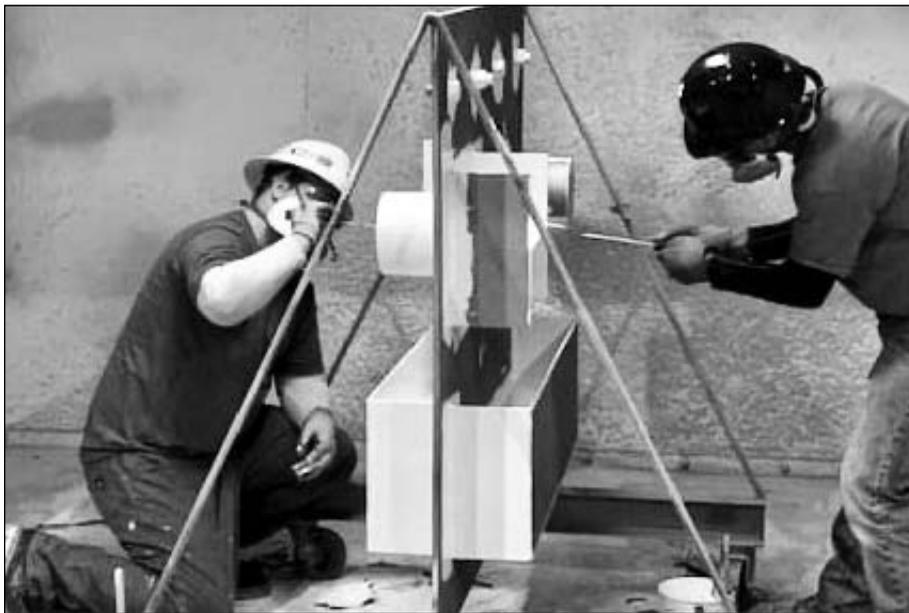
“I support infrastructure improvements that strengthen our economy, and I will always do what is best for West Virginia,” McKinley said in a statement. ■

Painters DC 53 Holds Event to Celebrate National Apprenticeship Week

On November 17, the IUPAT DC 53 held an event at their training center in Weston, WV to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week (NAW).



(From left to right) David Bland, Miss WV Alexis Bland, Caleb Bland, Wayne Bland, and Harold Keller pose for a picture during the event at the IUPAT training center in Weston, WV.



International Union of Painters and Allied Trades DC 53 apprentices paint a blast and coatings test panel during National Apprenticeship Week.

Labor Caucus

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grams that exist throughout the state," said Worrell. "This is how we grow West Virginia.

We do it from the inside. By increasing both job opportunities and a skilled, drug-free workforce, we can ensure a lasting legacy to those families in West Virginia."

Steve White, Director of the Affiliated Construction Trades, believes the announcement comes at a crucial time in our nation's history.

"We are encouraged by the formation of the Republican Labor Caucus because that means there are legislators willing to listen.

The timing couldn't be better given the passage of major infrastructure legislation in D.C.," said White. "With billions of dollars en route to our state for infrastructure there is a tremendous opportunity for local contractors and workers. But an opportunity is not a guarantee." ■

Public officials and technical education representatives were in attendance from across the state to tour the facility and meet with apprentices at the training site.

NAW is a nationwide celebration where industry, labor, and govern-

ment leaders host events to celebrate apprenticeship programs and showcase their value to our nation's workforce and economy. This year, the eighth annual NAW was held from Nov. 14-20 and events were held across the state and country. ■

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Operating Engineers 132 Apprenticeship

Operating Engineers Local 132 wants qualified candidates for their heavy-duty equipment operator apprenticeship program. The three-year program trains in all aspects of operating heavy equipment including bulldozers, backhoes, cranes and excavators.

"We want members to be well versed in all types of equipment," said Allen Nelson, Training Director. "We focus on safety and productivity."

Each year an apprentice spends five weeks at the training center located south of Parkersburg. Most of the training takes place during the winter. Apprentices must get at least 1,000 hours of paid on-the-job training to advance each year. Applications will be accepted online at www.iuoe132.org

or by calling 304-273-4852 from January 3-21, 2022.

In order to qualify a person must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or equivalent and have been a resident of West Virginia for at least one year.

A successful applicant will have a valid WV driver's license, be physically able to perform the work of the trade and pass a drug test. The recruitment, selection, employment, and training of apprentices shall be without discrimination because of age, race, color, religion, national origin, or sex and will conform to ADA regulations.

For more information call (304) 273-4852 or visit the website at www.iuoe132.org. ■