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

ACT Leads Apprenticeship Tours Across the State

Over the last two months ACT has been coordinating tours of craft apprenticeship facilities across the state in an effort to educate legislators about the benefits of apprenticeship programs.

ACT knew the passage of a federal infrastructure bill was likely, and it would create a great opportunity for local workers and contractors.

The apprenticeship tours have provided an opportunity to begin conversations with elected officials about construction training and why apprenticeship is so successful.

During the tours lawmakers learn:

- Apprenticeship receives no taxpayer funds and is the largest private sector training program in the state.
- Apprentices do not pay tuition, so they have no debt burden.
- Apprentices get paid a decent wage with benefits while they are in two to five years of on-the-job training.

- Apprentices work under the direct supervision of two to four journeymen to one apprentice.

- Apprenticeship is more than training; it has many components to provide a career.
- Apprenticeship is regulated

by the Federal DOL and available to both union & non-union employers.

Cont. on p. 3>>



Tours for three to six legislators at a time were held in October and November at (Clockwise from top left) Charleston Plumbers and Pipefitters 625; Operating Engineers 132 in Medina; Ironworkers 549 in Wheeling; Plumbers and Pipefitters 521 Huntington; Plumbers and Pipefitters 152 Morgantown; and IBEW 466 Charleston. (Not pictured but in last month's ACT Report – IBEW 317 Huntington).

PSC Approves AEP Request, Keeping Coal-Fired Plants Operational Beyond 2028

On October 12th, the West Virginia Public Service Commission issued an order granting approval for environmental upgrades to be made to three coal-fired power plants, keeping them federally compliant past 2028 and possibly operational through 2040.

Federal rules passed by the EPA

would have required the companies to shut down the three plants if upgrades were not made.

The PSC originally approved the upgrades in August of this year. However, separate rulings by utility regulators in Virginia and Kentucky forced Appalachian Power Company (APCo) and Wheeling Power, sub-

siaries of AEP, to petition the PSC to reopen the case to confirm a rate increase to cover the costs of the upgrades.

The three plants are owned by multiple divisions of AEP which operate in different states, placing them under shared jurisdiction. The John Amos and Mountaineer plants

are subject to regulation by the WV PSC and the Virginia State Corporation Commission, while the Mitchell plant is under the jurisdiction of the WV PSC and the Kentucky PSC.

While all state regulatory authorities approved costs to the first of a two-phase upgrade plan, the Virginia

Cont. on p. 4>>

Epperly Appointed Secretary-Treasurer to WV State Building Trades, Efaw to Retire

Dave Efaw, Secretary-Treasurer of the West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades Council has announced he will retire at the end of 2021.

At their November 10 meeting the State Building Trades Executive Board appointed John Epperly, Business Manager for IBEW 466, to temporarily fill the position starting December 1 until the next convention in September of 2022 where an election will be held.

Epperly began his career in 2001 as an electrician apprentice at IBEW Local 466, Charleston. After serving the local in a variety of capacities including chairman of the executive board and assistant business manager Epperly was elected as business manager of IBEW 466 in 2019.

The chance to take on a statewide position is a challenge Epperly is looking forward to.

"I am honored and grateful for

the opportunity to be the secretary-treasurer of the West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades," said Epperly. "I am committed to strengthening its future."

Efaw's announcement puts the cap on a nearly 42-year career in the construction industry. Efaw started as a member of Laborers Local 1353, Charleston in 1979. In 1982 he began his apprenticeship with IBEW Local 466 and served in a variety of offices within the local. He was elected Business Manager in 2001, a position he held until 2007.

Efaw was elected as Secretary-Treasurer of the West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades in 2008 and most recently re-elected in 2020. "I appreciate the opportunity to serve our members and work with a great Executive-Board," said Efaw.

At the 2022 State Building Trades Convention an election will be held to fill the remaining two years left

on the Secretary-Treasurer four-year term which runs until 2024.

Chuck Parker remains the President of the WV SBT until 2024. ■



Outgoing Secretary-Treasurer Dave Efaw swears in new, incoming Secretary-Treasurer John Epperly during the November 10th WV State Building Trades Executive Board meeting in Charleston.

Erikka Storch Named Executive Director for Northern Panhandle's Project BEST

In mid-October Project BEST in Wheeling announced Erikka Storch will be their first executive director.

Project BEST was created in 1982 as a joint, non-profit venture between the Upper Ohio Valley Building Trades Council and the Ohio Valley Construction Employers Council to promote public and private union construction and facilitate industry development throughout the Ohio Valley.

Storch boasts a long resume with experience in construction, economic development, and government.

She has over 20 years' experience in the construction industry as an owner of Ohio Valley Steel, a union contractor, until 2014.

She also had served as a trustee of local Iron Worker retirement & health funds and a national pension fund.

Storch will be leaving as president of the Wheeling Area Chamber of Commerce, a role she has held since 2014.

In addition, Storch has served in the House of Delegates since 2010. Storch has also served on numerous boards and commissions including: the Ohio County Development Authority, Wheeling Heritage, the Wheeling Convention and Visitors Bureau, Wheeling Health Right, Wheeling Rotary Club, and the Regional Economic Development Partnership.

As executive director of Project BEST, Storch will work closely with the board of directors and staff to oversee the organization's rebranding and continue to adapt to serve the Ohio Valley's construction labor and management teams.

"I am happy to return to a focus on the construction industry," said Storch. "Our region has much to offer and building good relationships and public awareness is key to regional success."

The executive director position, which Storch will now hold, is a newly created position.

Prior to its creation, the administrative duties and responsibilities were overseen by two co-chairs: one representative from the labor-side and one representative from the management-side of Project BEST.

Storch will be the first-full time Executive Director.

Jody Bonfini, council representative to the Eastern Atlantic States Regional Council of Carpenters, serves as the labor co-chair of Project BEST.

Bonfini explained why he be-

lieves Storch will be a huge asset in her new role. "Her experience in the construction industry, legislature, and the Chamber of Commerce will enable Erikka to hit the ground running," said Bonfini. "We're excited to have her on board." ■



Erikka Storch

New WV Legislative Districts Established

Every ten years following the Census new legislative districts are drawn.

The process was recently completed and there are now significant changes to the state Congressional, State Senate and House of Delegates maps.

The most significant changes were made to the structure of the WV House of Delegates districts.

Historically, West Virginia has had a mix of single and multi-member districts, represented by anywhere between one and five representatives depending on the area of the state.

Now, the districts have been restructured into 100 single-member districts.

While the old multi-member districts could contain upwards of 100,000 people, the new districts will be much smaller and made up of about 17,000 people.

“You can throw away the old districts because in each case there are new boundaries, and in the House all single member districts,” explained Justin Williams with Operating Engineers Local 132. The Senate remains similar that it will have 17 districts and 34 member, but the districts themselves changed with some counties moving to new districts to give each district about 102,000 people.

Williams and ACT Government Relations Director George Capel are attending Building Trades Councils with the new maps in hand.

Changes in representation also came on the federal level as well. According to the results of the 2020 census, West Virginia has lost population since 2010, which resulted in the loss of a U.S. Congressional seat.

Prior to the 2020 census, the state held three seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, and it now only has

two.

For more information on redistricting, log on to www.wvlegislature.gov/redistricting.

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Justin Williams, attorney for IUOE 132, goes over the new legislative maps with members of the Upper Ohio Valley Building Trades Council.

Iron Workers 787 in Parkersburg Accepting New Applications for Apprenticeship

The Iron Workers Local 787 Joint Apprenticeship Committee will be accepting applications for the Iron Workers Apprenticeship Program during regular business hours, Monday thru Friday (except holidays), from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:30 pm.

The apprenticeship program usually takes four years to complete. Apprentices earn-while-they-learn with paid on-the-job training and attend unpaid classroom sessions throughout the year. Upon completion an apprentice will have learned all aspects of the trade including structural steel placement, welding, reinforcing rods, ornamental, rigging and more.

You must fill the application out in person at the Iron Workers Union Hall, 303 Erickson Blvd., Parkersburg, West Virginia. Please bring copies of related documents described below.

The following are the minimum requirements. Lack of any one of these will automatically disqualify

the applicant.

Must be at least 18 years old (Proof required).

Must be capable of doing work of the Iron Worker trade.

Must be a High School Graduate or have equivalent certificate (GED/TASC).

Must have a valid Driver's License.

Must live in the jurisdictional area of Iron Workers Local 787 for at least one (1) year previous to applying.

If selected for the Apprenticeship Program the candidate must submit to and pass the Substance Abuse Test offered by the Parkersburg-Marietta Contractors and Trades Educational and Development Fund.

The Iron Workers Local 787 JAC will pay the cost of the test.

The jurisdictional area covered by Local 787 is as follows:

OHIO: Athens, Meigs, Morgan, Noble, and Washington Counties.

WEST VIRGINIA: Boone, Braxton, Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Fayette, Gilmer, Greenbrier, Jackson,

Kanawha, Lewis, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Monroe, Nicholas, Pleasants, Pocahontas, Putnam, Raleigh, Ritchie, Roane, Summers, Upshur, Webster, Wirt, Wood, and Wyoming Counties, and the southern portion of Randolph County.

No Applicant will be rejected because of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex.

Iron Workers Local 787 will take affirmative action to provide equal opportunities in apprenticeship.

For more information go to <https://ironworkers787.org/>

ACT Apprenticeship

Continued from Page 1

- Apprenticeship in the union sector is a partnership between contractors and labor.

To help explain the partnership a number of contractors participated in the tours including Dixon Electrical Systems Inc, ELCO Mechanical, Century Steel, JD&E Construction, Triton Construction, and more.

Tours have been held at the Plumbers and Pipefitters 625 in Charleston, 521 in Huntington, and 152 in Morgantown; IBEW 466 in Charleston and 317 in Huntington;

Ironworkers 549 in Wheeling; and IUOE 132 in Medina, WV.

“These tours have been a great way to talk with legislators who may not know much about our programs,” said Steve White, Director of the Affiliated Construction Trades.

“When we are done, they understand the difference between apprenticeship and other training like vocational schools and community colleges which depend on taxpayer or tuition funding and lack actual job experience.”

DEP Holds Public Hearing on Air Permit for \$1 Billion Gas-Fired Power Plant

On October 19th the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) held a public hearing on an air permit for Mountain State Clean Energy.

The project is a proposed billion-dollar, gas-fired power plant which would be constructed adjacent to Longview Power location in Monongalia County, West Virginia.

Proponents of the project say it will provide many good jobs for construction workers in the area, and it will be built with state-of-the-art technology.

The hearing was held virtually so the North Central West Virginia Building and Construction Trades organized three locations to not only make comments in support of the project but allow members to be seen in the background.

Bryan Raber, Business Manager for Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 152 made comments from their union hall in Morgantown during a membership meeting. Shane Ferguson, Business Manager for IBEW Local 596 in Clarksburg gathered members in his union hall and made comments there. Natalie Stone, Secretary-Treasurer of the North Central WV Building Trades rented

a meeting room for all the crafts to attend and show support while she made comments.

“This project will be a huge job creator for local workers,” said Raber. “With the owner’s written commitment to hire local union construction workers and a payroll during construction of over \$110 million, it would not only benefit the workers and their families but the community.”

If approved the project will result in the state’s first natural gas-fired combined cycle plant, generating up to 1,200 megawatts of power. The plant would feature two gas turbines, one steam turbine, and heat recovery steam generators with supplementary natural gas-fired duct burners. Pipeline connections to an existing gas interstate pipeline would also be required.

In addition to the new gas-fired project, the company plans to build a separate, 50-megawatt solar project. Most of the solar project will be in Pennsylvania.

There were comments opposing the project, many asking why not simply use renewable energy sources. After the meeting Shane Ferguson of IBEW 596 pointed out baseload

power plants like Mountain State Clean Energy are critical for renewables to exist.

“We are supportive of the wind and solar projects, but you can’t have renewables without baseload, the system just won’t work that way,” said

Ferguson.

The public comment period ended on Nov. 1. The DEP will review the comments, make any adjustments needed, respond to all comments, and is expected to issue a final permit before the end of the year. ■

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Shane Ferguson, Business Manager for IBEW 596, (Standing) speaks in support of the Mountain State Clean Energy project during a virtual public hearing alongside members of Local 596 at their Clarksburg union hall.

PSC Approves AEP

Continued from Page 1

and Kentucky authorities rejected the second phase of upgrades.

The first phase, approved by WV, VA, and KY dealt with coal ash disposal. The second phase, rejected by VA and KY, dealt with wastewater guidelines.

It was the rejection of the second phase by Kentucky and Virginia that required the WV PSC to make their recent decision. Approving the upgrades to the wastewater guidelines, as well as AEP’s request to increase rates to cover the associated costs allows the plants to stay in operation beyond 2028.

AEP has recently announced a Canadian-based utility company will buy Kentucky Power, which currently owns half of the Mitchell

plant. It has been reported that AEP will move the Mitchell plant operations under Wheeling Power, which currently owns the other half of the plant. After 2028 Wheeling Power will own 100% of the Mitchell facility.

Recently, the West Virginia Energy Users Group, made up of industrial power users, gave their support to a petition submitted by a group of environmental organizations asking the PSC to reconsider their decision, citing their opposition to the rate increase associated with the approved upgrades.

“We are relieved the PSC approved the projects but the constant pressure to close these plants still exists,” said Eran Molz, President of the Upper Ohio Valley Building Trades. ■