



Prevailing wage laws allow for fair competition

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Your article on our state Prevailing Wage Law is in need of some correction. The law sets out minimum wage rates for construction workers employed where tax dollars are used. There is a similar federal version called the Davis-Bacon Act.

First, it is incorrect to say there is a 'feud' among workers about prevailing wage laws. If there is a dispute, it's typically between contractors who pay low wages with no benefits and either their higher wage competitors or construction workers in general. Therefore I was disappointed to see the author did not talk to any of the numerous contractors or contractor associations that support the existing prevailing wage law.

Further, I was surprised the author did not talk to one economist who has performed a comprehensive study on prevailing wages. While the economists quoted are certainly knowledgeable, they have no specific expertise in the prevailing wage discussion.

Finally, the story confused the federal version of the law which applies to all federally funded projects while the West Virginia law applies to state, county, municipal and other projects funded by taxpayers. The West Virginia Department of Labor conducts a wage survey every year and sends out thousands of surveys to contractors and unions. In contrast, the federal government conducts surveys much less frequently but will do updates for a specific project if needed. I laughed when I read the comment saying the Labor Department, rather than conducting a wage survey, "... just ask the unions what they want next year." This is completely false and only shows the base level of debate from those opposing a common sense approach to public spending.

Without prevailing wage, communities see their taxpayers' dollars drained from the local economy because low-wage contractors, usually from out of the region, have the advantage and the savings claimed by the low-wage industry never returned to the taxpayers' pockets. Prevailing wage laws allow fair competition for our tax-funded construction projects. The result is a highly productive construction industry that provides an excellent value for taxpayers and keeps our tax dollars in the economy because it promotes local hiring.