

WV Jobs Act On Session Agenda

The 2003 West Virginia legislative session is underway and as always there are many issues that will concern union construction workers.

The main goal of ACT and the Building Trades will be to renew the West Virginia Jobs Act.

Carefully monitoring Workers Compensation, medical malpractice and tort reform, and prevailing wage bills will also be high priorities.

• The West Virginia Jobs Act — Two years ago the Jobs Act was passed but it expires in March of this year. The bill requires that local construction workers be hired when state tax dollars are at work.

“We want to pass a new Jobs Act that improves on the old



ATTACKS ON PREVAILING WAGE could lower the wages and benefits of workers like these at the Clay Center in Charleston.

one,” said BB Smith, ACT Legislative Representative.

The improvements include making sure county and city projects get to use the local hiring requirements. The current law applies to state projects and some local projects with state funding. With projects often getting a mix of funding

confusion can result.

• Workers Compensation Reform — It’s official, the 1995 workers compensation reforms failed. Labor argued in 1995 that the system was broken because too many companies were not paying their premiums. ACT lawsuits collected \$50 million out of \$450 million

owed by big coal companies. But the debt and continued cheating has pushed the system further into crisis.

State employment officials recently announced a deficit of \$2.4 billion, due to unfunded liability growth of about \$570 million.

Top legislators are left asking, “What went wrong?”

“The state would not be in this situation if it had pushed lawsuits against big coal companies and held them responsible for their bankrupt subcontractors’ unpaid debts,” said Bubby Casto, Business Manager, Iron Workers Local 301, Charleston.

“It didn’t help matters when Governor Underwood pushed through an 8.4 percent rate cut for employers two years ago over the objections of labor.”

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Anti-Worker Associated Builders and Contractors Attacks New 2003 State Prevailing Wage Rates

With the stroke of a pen the anti-worker, antiunion Associated Builders and Contractors West Virginia Chapter (ABC) has stripped workers of wage increases that would have come from new 2003 prevailing wage rates.

The ABC filed an official protest with the West Virginia Department of Labor halting any new rates.

The letter of protest from Tom Hardiman, Executive Director of ABC, to Labor Commissioner Jim Lewis, dated January 2, makes several accusations.

Hardiman wrote, “I believe your office relied almost exclusively on the use of collective bargaining agreements to determine the rates, and be-

lieve that, since organized labor groups represent less than 19 percent of the construction industry, your data is unreliable.”

the DOL of counting wages twice by writing, “I believe that the surveys your office may have received from licensed West Virginia contractors are

No documentation was supplied to back up these accusations. Labor leaders are already refuting these baseless claims by ABC.

“Even though this will be another example of the ABC making accusations they can’t back up, the effects are no new wage rates for now,” said State Building Trades President Steve Burton.

“The only thing construction workers have to thank the ABC for is to freeze our standard of living,” said Burton. “The ABC wants lower wages and benefits.”

The letter requests a hearing on the matter. This means until

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The ACT Foundation is a division of The West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades Council, with offices in Charleston and Clarksburg. Steve Burton, President; Roy Smith, Secretary-Treasurer; Steve White, Director.

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Hardiman goes on to accuse

likely to be from union contractors, whose employee wages have already been considered by the use of the collective bargaining agreements in your determination.”

Target Corporation Targeted By MARCC

Target Corporation is the target of a media and telephone campaign by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council of Carpenters (MARRC).

The Carpenters are using newspaper ads, telephone calls and emails to convince Target officials to use West Virginia workers and contractors to build Target department stores in West Virginia, specifically at the Meadowbrook Mall in Bridgeport.

"We think it is very important that projects built in West Virginia be built by West Virginia workers," said Leroy G. Stanley, Director of Organizing for MARCC-WV.

MARRC members are handing out flyers to Bridgeport area shoppers urging them to call Target headquarters at 1-612-304-6073 or 1-800-440-0680, and ask that Target use local workers to build the Meadowbrook Mall superstore.

In addition, MARCC is encouraging concerned citizens to email Target telling them to hire West Virginia Workers for the construction of West Virginia Stores.

If you would like to email Target, go to ACT's website at www.actwv.org and click on the Target link and send a message.

Bridges Construction, a non-

"It's bad enough that Target uses out of state contractors, but those contractors also bring in mostly out-of-state workers," said Stanley. "We have many highly skilled local construction workers who need these jobs."

So far, MARCC has generated at least 50 calls to Target's corporate headquarter-

ers, but they need as many as possible, according to Stanley. MARRC is not depending solely on flyers to get the word out about Target not supporting local workers.

"We have also taken ads out in the Clarksburg Exponent Telegram to inform citizens of the chain store's apparent lack of concern for local people," said Stanley.

Supporting local construction workers is very important to the local economy.

Wages from construction generate hundreds of millions of dollars for the local economy because the workers spend their money with local businesses.

"The bottom line is if Target expects us to spend our money there it should give us the chance to earn our money there," said Scott Brewer, Service Representative, MARCC.

'WE THINK IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT PROJECTS BUILT IN WEST VIRGINIA BE BUILT BY WEST VIRGINIA WORKERS.'

LEROY STANLEY, DIRECTOR OF ORGANIZING, MARCC, WV

union general contractor from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, is building the Bridgeport store. Bridges has also hired an interior systems contractor from Pennsylvania.

Legislature

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Underwood claimed savings from a new program would make up for the rate decrease. The program was never implemented.

"Legislators are going back to the drawing board on this issue," said Steve White, ACT Director.

Governor Wise in his State-of-the-State speech asked labor and business leaders to see if common ground could be found to address the many problems faced by the Workers Compensation system.

However, just like in 1995, a workers comp bill focusing on benefit cuts is being railroaded through the House of Delegates.

• Tort Reform — The 'malpractice insurance crisis' has pulled the old tort reform debate back to the front burner.

This debate basically pits lawyers, doctors and insurance

companies against each other with working men and women caught in the crossfire.

Doctors say they are paying too much for medical malpractice insurance, if they can get it at all.

The insurance companies say that rates are high because of lawsuits.

One, the public gives up the right to seek fair compensation for others' negligence.

Two, tort reform means bigger profit for insurance companies, not lower rates.

In several states that have adopted forms of tort reform such as Nevada, insurance carriers have refused to lower rates saying, "Tort reform is only part of the puzzle."

"We are going to have a very difficult time maintaining the

rights of our members to address the courts in the way they should," said Roy Smith, Secretary-Treasurer, West Virginia State Building Trades. "The doctors have mounted a strong campaign with support from Governor Wise and several legislators.

'MY FEAR IS THAT THE LEGISLATURE WILL ACT TOO QUICKLY JUST TO PACIFY THE DOCTORS.'

ROY SMITH, SEC.-TREASURER, WV STATE BUILDING TRADES

"The attorneys who represent victims have done nothing to counteract the doctors' strong push. They haven't been proactive in protecting people's rights."

Insurance reforms should be a big part of solving this problem along with getting rid of bad doctors who cause most of

the malpractice lawsuits, according to Smith.

"My fear is that the legislature will act too quickly just to pacify the doctors," said Smith. "Solving a problem like this takes time and a lot of work. I hope they can coordinate a solution that's reasonable for everyone."

•Prevailing wage attacks — In meetings leading up to the legislative session two serious attacks to subvert the state prevailing wage laws were fought off.

First an attempt was made to lower wages of construction workers by using average wage rates rather than those that 'prevail.'

When this attack failed to gather support a bill was writ-

ten to force contractors, particularly low wage ones, to send in wage surveys. The result would again be to lower wages.

There are more nonunion contractors in the state, including thousands of sole proprietors.

However, union contractors are larger and do the majority of construction work when you add up the dollar volume of all projects.

"We've stopped both these attacks. But Senator Herb Snyder, (D-Jefferson), the key proponent of these changes, was just picked by Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin to head the Senate Labor Committee.

"It seems that every year the legislature wants to attack prevailing wage," said Mark Smithson, Business Manager for Plasterers and Cement Masons Local 887.

"We can't allow this to happen."

Credit Union To Host Open House

The Union Trades Federal Credit Union (UTFCU) will hold an open house in Charleston on Saturday, January 25 in the WV State Building Trades office from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The State Building Trades Office is located at 600 Leon Sullivan Way (formerly Broad St.) exit #100 off Interstate 64 in downtown Charleston.



to answer questions regarding the credit union. Refreshments will be served and gifts will be given away. Guests can also register to win \$100 cash.

It takes as little as \$25 to open an account. Members of participating locals and their immediate family or anyone not related but sharing a household are all eligible to open an

Savings

- Loans such as auto, recreational vehicle, home improvement, home equity and others
- CDs
- Visa credit and check cards
- Discount theatre and theme park tickets
- Kids club

“It’s a good opportunity for interested union members to get all of their questions answered while meeting our staff and the members of the board,” said Joyce Fox,

UTFCU Manager.

Based in Parkersburg, the UTFCU will open an office on the first floor of the State Building Trades building as soon as renovations are complete.

“I am glad the credit union is



finally coming to Charleston,” said Ronnie Burdette, Business Manager, IUOE Local 132. “Now union trades members can help each other reach financial goals as well as work goals.”

If the Charleston office is successful the UTFCU will consider other locations in the state.

The office hours have not

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Parkersburg-Marietta Trades Hold Second Annual Career Expo

The Parkersburg-Marietta Building Trades will hold its 2nd annual Construction Career Trades Show on Friday, January 31 from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday, February 1 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The event will be held at the old Kroger store next to the Grand Central Mall in Vienna on Route 14.

Use either Interstate 77 exit Route 2—Emerson Ave. when coming from the south or the Williamstown exit when coming from the north. Then follow the signs to Route 14.

The show will include craft unions from all the trades, con-

tractors, equipment vendors and suppliers.

“Last year’s inaugural trades show was such a big success that we want to do it again,” said Sam Davis, Business Manager, Parkersburg Marietta Building Trades. “We plan to expand it this year from 30 booths to 50.

“Last year we were able to meet many new young recruits for the building trades and we hope to reach many more this year.”

The show will be open to the public and large groups, such as schools, are encouraged to attend.

“We are having the second day on a Saturday this year so that more of the general public

can attend,” said Davis.

Some of the highlights of the show will include:

- Crafts apprenticeships
- Safety workshops
- Construction seminars
- Equipment vendors
- School to Work Program

Door prizes will be given away throughout the exhibition.

“We hope that people will come out and see what an exciting career opportunity the building trades can offer, while offering decent wages and benefits,” said Davis.

For more information or to schedule a time for a large group to attend call the Parkersburg-Marietta Building Trades office at 304-424-6443.

2003 ACT/ WV State Building Trades Legislative Conference



Thursday, Jan. 30, 2003
10:00 a.m.
State Building Trades Office

*All members are invited.
For more information call your
business agent.*

First Kilian Felix Conlon Memorial Scholarship Awarded

Thanks to contributions made by the members of Boilermakers Local 667 and others the first scholarship from the Kilian Felix Conlon Memorial Scholarship Fund was awarded to Jason Wyke. He is now studying welding at WVU-Parkersburg.

The scholarship fund was established in memory of 19 year-old, Boilermakers apprentice Kilian Felix Conlon who was killed in a motorcycle accident on November 1, 2001.

Conlon's parents are pleased to see another young man benefiting from gifts given in his name.

"The workers of Boilermakers Local 667 were especially active in raising funds for Kilian's scholarship," said Conlon's mother Ellie Conlon.



KILIAN FELIX CONLON'S life was cut short by a motorcycle accident on Nov. 1, 2001.

"We are very grateful for their generosity, and for their kindness to Kilian while he worked with them."

The scholarship fund, which was fully endowed in January 2002, will provide many young people with the opportunity to study welding.

"Boilermakers believe in training and we are pleased to

play a role in getting the scholarship fund going," said George Pinkerman, Business Manager of Boilermakers 667.

The scholarship doesn't consider grade point average or ACT scores. Candidates must study welding and industrial maintenance at WVU - Parkersburg and show a financial need. Preference is given

to students who live in Wetzel, Tyler or contiguous counties.

"We want all of our family and friends to know that their generous gifts created a chance for another young person to develop a strong technical career," said Ellie Conlon.

Students interested in applying for the scholarship can contact the WVU Parkersburg

Foundation office at 304-424-8340 or visit the website at www.wvu.edu/foundation.

Additional gifts to the scholarship fund endowment can be made at any time. Donations to this fund may be eligible for a state tax credit.

For more information contact Beth McNally at 304-424-8340.

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ABC

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the hearing is held and the matter is resolved, higher 2003 prevailing wage rates can't go into effect. ABC wants the rates to remain the same as 2002.

The State Pipe Trades and the State Building Trades have intervened.

UTFCU

CONTINUED FROM P. 3

been set at this time because credit union officials want to use the feedback they get on the 25th to set the most convenient hours for members.

"We will make every effort to accommodate members needs," said Fox.

The Child Tax Credit

A Tax Benefit for Families
Money In YOUR Pocket... You Earned It!

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www.wveitc.com

What is the Child Tax Credit?

The Child Tax Credit (CTC) is a federal tax credit worth up to \$600 per child. New rules make the credit more available to working families, even if they did not earn enough to owe federal income taxes. The CTC can reduce or eliminate the tax you owe. For working families with higher incomes, CTC is reduced \$50 per \$1,000 for families with adjusted gross incomes of more than \$110,000 on a joint return, \$75,000 on a single return, and \$55,000 for a married person filing separately.

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Wellsburg
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11:00pm

CABLE CHANNEL 10
Wheeling, St. Clairsville &
Moundsville
daily @ 11:00am &
11:00pm

WEST VIRGINIA WORKS SHOWTIMES

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Oak Hill
Sundays @ 11:00am

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Huntington, Parkersburg,
Beckley, Bluefield
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Clarksburg &
Morgantown
Sundays @ 11:00am