

THE ACT REPORT

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A PUBLICATION OF THE AFFILIATED CONSTRUCTION TRADES

A Division of the WV State Building Trades, AFL-CIO | Bill Hutchinson, *President* | Dafe Efav, *Secretary-Treasurer* | Steve White, *Director*

Our Jobs are on the Line



Thousands attend rally last winter at Capitol for working families.



Union workers attend hearings on prevailing wage.

The next 60 days – our state legislative session – will be the most challenging of any we have had to date.

Last session was difficult and many members of the trades made a difference by showing up at the Capitol, writing letters, making phone calls and sending emails.

Because of that effort we succeeded in saving our state prevailing wage law, although some tough changes were made.

This year we must do more.

Republican leaders have openly and repeatedly stated they will repeal our state prevailing wage law.

This is just bad business for many reasons (see bullet point list).

In addition these same leaders say they will pass the so-called right to work law. If you haven't figured it out yet, right to work gives you no rights or work – instead it is designed to decrease your bargaining power and drive down wages.

If prevailing wage is repealed and right to work passed, it is clear wages will go down, benefits will be in trouble, and workers from outside our area will have the upper hand to take our jobs.

This special issue of the ACT Report is designed to give you informa-

tion on your elected representatives. We urge you, and your family members, to contact these state senators and delegates to let them know your thoughts on both prevailing wage and the so-called right to work law.

You *must* be courteous, yelling or cursing *will not help* our cause, and you must be direct. A simple message is best: "Prevailing wage helps me make a living, pay my bills, and keep my job. – I hope you support keeping our prevailing wage law."

Let legislators know you live in their district, and that you and your family members vote. Contact them often, ask others to do the same.

We are working closely with our contractors to save our industry, our jobs and our paychecks – and we have solid facts on our side. Our industry provides great value to taxpayers, prevailing wage does not cost taxpayers more! And as highly skilled, drug free local workers we pull our own weight in our communities. So-called right to work is a wage killer not a job creator.

These messages will not be effective if we don't insist politicians listen.

Thank you for all that you have done and please make the extra effort during these coming weeks. ■

Visit WestVirginiaPrevails.org, SupportWVLocalBusinesses.com, StopWVPaycuts.com for more information

Prevailing Wage: 10 reasons against repeal!

1. Contractor, Subcontractor, Supplier Default

Many locally owned and operated construction companies **without a level playing field** will be hurt and some will be forced to close down.

2. Job and Wage Loss

Local contractors create local jobs for construction workers. Repeal will result in lost job opportunities and wages for local workers estimated at **\$51.3 to \$77.3 million annually**.

3. Significant Losses in Taxes

State income taxes will fall **\$3.1 to \$4.6 million annually**; State sales tax collections would decrease **\$1.4 to \$2.1 million** each year.

4. Payments from Benefit Funds will Decline

Construction related health funds pay approximately **\$60 million** per year to local hospitals. An equal amount goes to local doctors. Repeal of prevailing

wage means hospitals and health care professionals will be hurt.

A 20% drop in hours to local retirement funds may push these funds, already struggling with a poor economy, to **insolvency**.

5. Training

Prevailing wage supports training programs and **saves taxpayers millions** each year.

6. Advantage Goes to Out-of-Area Companies

Companies that take the place of local contractors will likely be from out of the area and import their workers.

The decline of local contractors and subcontractors will be felt by their employees, vendors, suppliers and communities.

7. No Savings

Claims of great savings have been repeatedly debunked. A comparison of surrounding states revealed we build schools on a per-square foot cost less than

non-PW states like North Carolina and Virginia.

From July to October there was no PW requirement and a number of school projects were bid. No project saw savings! But some saw wage cuts.

8. Safety

States without PW have more workplace fatalities. Skilled workers leave the industry or the area and unskilled people, without ac-

cess to quality training programs take their place.

9. Drug and Alcohol Programs Squeezed

Long standing programs to address drug and alcohol abuse will be cut due to lower standards and competitive forces.

10. Changes Made Last Year

Significant changes were made last year; there is no need for another bill this year. ■

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So-called RTW wrong for West Virginia

1. Lower Wages

Workers in right to work states earn up to \$6,000 less and have fewer benefits than those in free bargaining states. While the decrease won't happen overnight, the gradual decline in wages and benefits will mean a significant decline in family income. Proponents of right to work defend the lower wages saying more jobs will be created. But in order to earn the same wages, some people will have to **work two or three jobs**.

2. Safety Decline

According to statistics from the federal Department of Labor, in the right to work states the average **fatality rate was 54 percent greater** than the average fatality rate in the free bargaining states. Why? Employers care less about employees when there's less of a chance they may join a union.

3. Government Intrusion

Right to work forces companies to remove clauses in the employee agreements relating to dues for services. A union must still provide services to all workers but cannot require any dues or fees for those services. **Government interference** in worker contracts is unnecessary.

4. Freeloaders

The real intent of right to work is to force union members to **pay for freeloaders**.

5. No Economic Benefit

Plenty of quality studies show right to work doesn't create jobs. Proponents cannot point to any company that will locate in the state if it passes. They also cannot explain why companies like Proctor & Gamble and Macy's – two recent large investors in the state – located here regardless of the non-RTW status.

6. Anti-Democratic

Right to work is an anti-democratic measure as it **removes the majority rule** in union workplaces. Workers are never required to join a union but they must pay for services received.

7. Hurts Unions

The goal of right to work is to **put labor unions out of business**. Labor unions are key to a middle class, to making a safer workplace and to making sure workers have a voice.

8. False Promises

The slogan, created by a Texas conservative extremist who hated unions, child labor laws, integration, women's rights and FDR's New Deal programs, **misleads**

people into wrongfully thinking there will be new "rights" and new "work."

9. Billionaires' Agenda

Right to work legislation is being pushed by **out-of-state billionaires** intent on eliminating labor unions.

10. Wrong Priorities

The West Virginia Legislature must **focus on critical issues** facing our state, issues that prevent economic growth. More jobs will be created by addressing the problem of drug abuse, repairing our crumbling infrastructure, promoting the energy sector and focusing on workforce preparation than any right to work legislation. ■



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