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A Division of the WV State Building Trades, AFL-CIO | Brad Winans, President | John Epperly, Secretary-Treasurer | Justin Williams, Director

## Successful Session at WV Capitol for Building Trades

On Sunday April 13th at 12:00am the 60-day West Virginia Legislative Session officially came to a close.

Overall, it provided great outcomes for the trades.

All major bills that could have negatively impacted West Virginia Building and Construction Trades (WVBCT) crafts were successfully defeated.

Some of these negative bills included licensing regulation rollbacks, unemployment cuts, attacks on wind power projects, and excessive water use regulations which could have impacted building trades projects. (See page 3 for a list of bills)

On another positive note, a FY 2026 budget appropriation to fully fund the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Nontraditional Degree Program (STAND), which covers the cost of associate degrees for trades members at WV community and technical colleges, was passed by the legislature.

"We are extremely proud of what

we were able to accomplish this session with the leadership of our

friends on both sides of the aisle," said George Capel, Government Re-

lations Director for the West Virginia  
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Members of WV Building and Construction Trades crafts hold exhibits in the WV Capitol Rotunda on April 8th. The exhibits were part of Construction Trades Day, an annual event to educate lawmakers about craft apprenticeships and the union construction industry.

## Trades Sign Letter of Intent for Bottling Facility, Defend Project at Legislature

Earlier this year, the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council signed a Letter of Intent with Sidewinder Enterprises to build the Mountain Pure water bottling facility in Jefferson County, West Virginia.

The proposed 1 million square foot facility would be built in Middleway, West Virginia on the old 3M plant property, which Sidewinder

purchased roughly four years ago.

According to an economic impact study completed by the West Virginia University Bureau of Business and Economic Research, the project would create roughly 850 construction jobs and 150 manufacturing jobs once the project is completed.

The WVU study also anticipated the project to be a \$150-\$175 million

capital investment.

However, some eastern panhandle activists have rallied opposition to the project, claiming the factory, which would use groundwater as the source of water, could affect residents' wells in the greater Jefferson County area.

Because of this, several members of the Jefferson County legislative

delegation pushed multiple bills during this year's West Virginia Legislative Session, which would have jeopardized the project and could have even hurt other industries such as coal mining in the process.

The legislative fight was related to requirements placed on any "commercial entity that withdraws

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# Funding Passed to Cover Tuition for Trades Associate Degrees: “STAND” Program

During the 2025 West Virginia Legislative Session, new funds were made available to cover tuition costs for associate degrees at WV community and technical colleges for members of the trades.

HB 2026, also known as the Budget Bill, included a \$1,033,650 budgetary appropriation to the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education, which covers associate degree tuition costs for individuals who are currently enrolled in or have completed a Department of Labor-registered apprenticeship program.

The funds are marked specifically for the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Nontraditional Degree Program (STAND), which was originally

passed into law during the 2024 legislative session. Although at the time, the program did not receive any official funding.

Now, the program is set to be funded for the 2026 fiscal year, after Governor Patrick Morrisey approved the budget earlier this month.

“We are very appreciative of our friends in the legislature for making this happen and thankful that the Governor has approved the funding,” said George Capel, Government Relations Director for the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council.

“The sky is the limit for this new program, and we have very high hopes for it in the years to come.”

Capel said the Speaker of the

House Roger Hanshaw, Deputy Speaker Matthew Rohrbach, Republican Labor Caucus Chairman Evan Worrell, and House Finance Chairman Vernon Criss were instrumental in getting the funding approved by the legislature.

“We could not have done this without our friends in leadership of the West Virginia House of Delegates,” said Capel.

“House leaders made this issue a priority, and we believe it will pay dividends by increasing the amount of college degrees conferred in West Virginia’s workforce reports.”

Capel said that while pursuing an associate degree is not required, the STAND Program provides an avenue for craft workers to do so if they wish.

“We know our apprenticeship programs are top notch and already deliver every advantage to provide careers to the hardworking craftsmen and women who complete them,” said Capel.

“The STAND program simply provides an opportunity to our members to use the skills they learned in apprenticeship programs to receive academic credit, and ultimately get an associate degree, if they choose to do so.”

Capel says that anyone who is interested in taking part in the STAND program should email him at [george-capel@actwv.org](mailto:george-capel@actwv.org) with subject line STAND Program to be kept in the loop on all updates as progress continues. ■

## Trades Sign Letter of Intent

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groundwater in a quantity that would qualify it as a large-quantity user.”

In some instances, the language singled out only the project itself, while in other bills the language would have affected commercial entities such as coal mines and data centers as well.

Prior to this year’s legislative session, opposition activists rallied against the project at a Jefferson County Planning Commission meeting, an entity which ultimately rejected Sidewinder’s concept plan at their meeting, despite the efforts of Sidewinder to ease their concerns.

“There’s a lot of water around here that 3M and (prior to that ) Kodak were using for years,” said Sean Masterson, Managing Partner for Sidewinder LLC. “They were pulling over a million gallons a day. It’s a number that sounds like a lot, but it’s been used for years by those two prior operators.”

Masterson said the company conducted significant stress tests on the water table, which indicate the business could extract 1.728 million gallons a day before reaching an inflec-

tion point.

“We’re permitted for a thousand gallons a minute,” said Masterson.

Masterson went on to say that while the company could extract up to 1.7 million gallons a day, the company only plans to use up to about 950,000 gallons per day, far less than the maximum amount.

Masterson insists Sidewinder is doing all it can to ensure the wells of residents and farmers are not impacted by the project and even went further to address their concerns by establishing a trust at the Bank of Charles Town.

“The trust will hold a million dollars. Anyone whose well is impacted, they will write a form. Bank of Charles Town will release the money to whomever they want if a well is impacted based on certain criteria.”

Masterson also said the company plans to install groundwater monitors to ensure the water table is not negatively impacted.

“We don’t believe there will be any issue, but we want to make sure that the community knows we are aware of it, we acknowledge their concerns,

and we are putting safeguards in place,” said Masterson.

Additionally, the company entered into a contractual agreement with the Charlestown Utility Board to provide a new water treatment plant.

“We will pay for the water treatment plant. We will pay for the construction of the pipeline. We will pay for the maintenance of the pipeline. They will own the pipeline. We are going to give them the water treatment plant,” Masterson said.

“We are also giving the citizens of Middleway in that area 50,000 gallons a day for if and when the Charles Town Utility Board ever decides they want to provide municipal water to that area.”

Ultimately, the trades and company representatives were successful in defeating the damaging bills and anti-economic development language during legislative session.

However, the legal battle continues as Sidewinder filed suit against the Jefferson County Planning Commission earlier this month.

The Sidewinder legal complaint,

which was filed in Jefferson County Circuit Court on April 10, claims in part that the planning commission has no authority to reject or deny any project concept plan and is legally required to provide “direction” for the next phase of their project’s planning process.

Sidewinder’s suit argues that authority for determining the plan’s compatibility with the county’s zoning code rests with the county’s zoning administrator and planning commission staff, both of which approved the plan. The complaint asserts that providing “direction” is the only purpose of the public workshop held by the planning commission because the zoning determinations have already been made by that point in the process.

The suit further argues that even if the planning commission had the authority to reject concept plans, it was wrong to find Mountain Pure incompatible with the county’s zoning and subdivision regulations.

While construction was originally slated to begin in 2025 and conclude in 2026, the lawsuit is still ongoing. ■

# 2025 Legislative Session Bill Summary

Bill #	Trades Position	Description	STATUS
HB 2014	N/A	Certified Microgrid Program	PASS
HB 2048	Oppose	Removing requirements from WV Jobs Act	FAIL
HB 2029	Oppose	To exempt out of state employees from plumbing license if under supervision of licensed employer	FAIL
HB 2154	Support	Performance metrics for the WV Division of Highways	FAIL
HB 2577	Oppose	Reducing amount of time for receiving unemployment	FAIL
HB 2637	Oppose	Raising bidding threshold for counties from 25k to 50k	FAIL
HB 2714	Oppose	Establish setbacks for windmills from residential properties	FAIL
HB 3025*	Oppose	Relating to State Water Resources Management Plan	FAIL
HB 3026*	Oppose	Relating to zoning ordinances and their effects	FAIL
HB 3174*	Oppose	Requiring cities to take actions when customers apply for water/sewer services (NOTE: Original bill ok. Amended bill = bad)	FAIL
HB 3184	Support	Local Government Freedom Act	FAIL
HB 3185	Support	Taxpayer Protection Act	FAIL
HB 3186	Support	West Virginia First Act	FAIL
SB 439	Oppose	Relating to taxation of wind power projects	FAIL
SB 790*	Oppose	Requiring quarterly water reporting by certain water and wastewater utilities (NOTE: Original bill ok. Amended bill = bad)	FAIL
SB 871	Oppose	Removes requirement of contractor license for individuals performing drywall services	FAIL
BUDGET	Support	\$1,033,650 appropriation for Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Nontraditional Degree Program (STAND)	PASS

**NOTE:** Bills listed with \* were part of a larger push to regulate the proposed Mountain Pure water bottling factory in Jefferson County, WV. (See story Pg. 1)

For more information on these bills, log on to: [www.wvlegislature.gov](http://www.wvlegislature.gov) and click on “Bill Status”

# West Virginia University at Parkersburg Opens Renovated Jackson County Facility

On April 23rd, the West Virginia University at Parkersburg (WVUP) administration held a ribbon-cutting event for their newly renovated WVUP Jackson County Center.

The new renovations to the Jackson County Center cost more than \$2 million, with \$475,000 invested by WVUP and \$1.6 million in grants from the federal and state government.

The Jackson County Center (JCC) of WVU Parkersburg was originally established in 1974 as an outreach program in Jackson and Roane counties.

However, in order to serve the growth in Jackson County and the surrounding counties, WVU Parkersburg President Dr. Torie Jackson and the WVU Parkersburg Board of Governors made the decision to renovate the Jackson County Center to create an Applied Technology Center.

At the newly renovated facility, two full degree programs will be offered, including Advanced Manufacturing

Technology and, in partnership with Constellium, Reliability and Maintenance Technology.

Also, in partnership with Constellium, the majority of a third degree in Multi-Craft Technology will be offered.

"We spoke with Constellium, Berkshire-Hathaway, and Timet to identify what we could do to support them as local employers," said Dr. Torie Jackson, President of West Virginia University at Parkersburg. "Those conversations helped lead us to beginning the process of renovating this facility."

This year, during the 2025 West Virginia Legislative Session, more than \$1 million was included in the budget for the Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Nontraditional Degree program.

The funding will cover tuition costs for individuals who are enrolled in or have previously completed a U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeship program.

WVUP has been a partner with

the Trades to support the development of the STAND program and the WVUP Jackson County Center could be a location where some of these classes would be held.

"We are still ironing out the de-

tions Director for the WV Building and Construction Trades. "However, we are proud to partner with President Jackson and the rest of the administration at WVUP.

We congratulate them on their



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tails for the STAND program," said George Capel, Government Rela-

opening of this great facility in Jackson County." ■

## Successful Session

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Building and Construction Trades Council.

Capel said the work members of the trades have been putting in to develop relationships with lawmakers paid off this session.

"We are finally getting to a point where we are able to work with lawmakers to not only stop bad legislation but pass good legislation as well."

Capel said the budget bill (HB 2026), which included a \$1,033,650 budgetary appropriation to the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education, for the STAND program, was a huge win for the trades.

The funds made available by HB 2026 will cover the tuition costs for associate degrees at WV community and technical colleges for individu-

als who are currently enrolled in or have completed a Department of Labor-registered apprenticeship program.

Earlier this month, Governor Patrick Morrisey signed the budget into law.

Meaning, the funding for the STAND program will become available on July 1, 2025.

Another area of interest this session was the newly introduced WVBCT Bill Package,

which includes three bills: The Local

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**George Capel**

*Government Relations Director*

Government Freedom Act, the Taxpayer Protection Act, and the West Virginia First Act.

These three bills provided flexibility in the public bidding process, the legalization of local project labor agreements, new regulations related to the misclassification of workers, and strengthening of the West Virginia Jobs Act, which prioritizes local workers on public construction

projects.

While these bills ultimately did not pass into law this session, Capel says they still helped provide positive outcomes for the trades.

"The introduction of these bills gave us an opportunity to tell the story of who we are as an organization in a positive light," said Capel.

"We look forward to working toward the passage of these bills during next year's legislative session."

Capel said next year the trades will continue to advocate for the new WVBCT bill package and continue defending against harmful legislation.

For more information on the proceedings at the West Virginia Capitol during the 2025 legislative session, log on to [www.wvlegislature.gov](http://www.wvlegislature.gov). ■