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

## Legislative Session Begins at the WV State Capitol

The 2025 West Virginia Legislative session official began on Wednesday, February 12 and the House and Senate both look very different from years past.

To begin, the West Virginia Senate now has a new leader in Senate President Randy Smith, who was elected among members of the chamber after former Senate President Craig Blair lost his primary election last year.

Senate President Randy Smith (R-Preston) says he hopes to address some problems that have been impacting West Virginians for years.

"You know, there's a lot of problems to fix, as always," Smith said. "All healthcare has skyrocketed, so everyone is feeling that. We're going to dig into that. I'm a big roads guy, also broadband, infrastructure and water. We've got areas in the state that struggle with providing safe water."

On the other side of the Capitol, the House of Delegates now has a new bill process, implemented by Speaker Roger Hanshaw.

The new system requires that bills receive 3 days of consideration

in committee, while in the past this requirement was only subject to bills being considered on the House floor.

Hanshaw says he believes this process

will help give more time to discuss bills and members of the trades support the process as well.

"We believe this will make sure

there are less fire drills over at the Capitol," said George Capel, Government Relations Director for the West

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George Capel (left), Government Relations Director for the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council, speaks with Delegate Andy Shamblin (R-Kanawha) about a bill at the West Virginia state Capitol building. The 2025 WV Legislative Session began on February 12 and runs for 60 days, ending on April 12.

## Marshall U. Study: WV's Skilled Trades Drive Over \$8 Billion in Economic Impact

A new report from the Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) highlights the powerhouse economic contributions of the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades

(WVBCT), which has generated an estimated \$8.1 billion total economic impact from 2022-2023.

The study, which examines the wages, benefits, and employment supported by West Virginia's skilled

construction workforce, underscores the critical role of union trades in the state's economy. The report found that WVBCT members worked an average of 17.4 million hours annually, with wages and benefits contrib-

uting \$2 billion in total labor income.

According to Justin Williams, Director of the Affiliated Construction Trades, the research arm of the WVBCT, the findings reaffirm what

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# WV Senate Energy Committee Passes Bill to Repeal Tax Break on Wind Projects

The state Senate Energy, Industry, and Mining Committee passed SB 439 out of their committee, which would ultimately increase the tax on wind projects, potentially threatening over \$1 billion in planned industry investments in the state.

During its first meeting of the 2025 regular legislative session, the committee approved legislation, which if enacted, would repeal state code providing a pollution control facility designation to wind power projects for tax purposes.

Under the current definition, up to 79% of the total value of wind turbines would be appraised at salvage value. This was a tax break implemented for wind projects back in 2007.

Representatives from Clearway Energy Group, a partner developer with the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades, were on hand during the meeting to testify against the bill.

Clearway representatives warned that investments and jobs would be

“endangered” by SB 439 and that it would “undercut the state’s reputation for being a stable, reliable business partner.”

One of those planned projects that could be endangered is the newly proposed Catamount Wind Farm, which as the ACT Report goes to print, the trades are currently in negotiations with Clearway for a Memorandum of Understanding on the project to use building trades labor.

Other business-centric organizations, such as the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, are also opposing the bill, stating that it deters economic development.

“SB 439 has the potential to destroy significant investments in our state,” said Justin Williams, Director of ACT WV. “We will do all we can to educate our lawmakers as to the local jobs and investment that will be threatened by this bill.”

After passage from the Senate Energy, Industry, and Mining Committee, the bill now heads to the Senate Finance Committee for consider-

ation.

If passed there, it then would head

to the Senate floor for the full Senate consideration. ■



A flyer circulated to drive support for the planned Catamount Wind Farm project in Grant and Tucker Counties by developer Clearway Energy. The West Virginia Building and Construction Trades are currently in talks with Clearway for a Memorandum of Understanding to use union trades labor on the project. If built, it could create up to 175 construction jobs. Projects like this are jeopardized by SB 439, which would repeal wind tax incentives for developers.

## Marshall U. Study

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industry leaders have long known: skilled tradespeople aren’t just building infrastructure—they’re building West Virginia’s economy.

“When you invest in skilled trades, you invest in West Virginia’s future,” Williams said.

“This report confirms that our members do more than show up at a job site. We create real economic impact, support local businesses, and ensure that every dollar earned is re-invested in our communities.”

Beyond wages, the study found that union-negotiated deductions generate \$58.3 million in additional economic activity.

These funds support workforce training, safety programs, and industry advocacy, helping sustain 366 jobs statewide.

These funds help sustain programs like: Apprenticeship training centers in South Charleston and Huntington, Safety and workforce development initiatives in Parkersburg, Wheeling, and Scott Depot, and Philanthropic programs supporting veterans and community service efforts.

Williams emphasized that these investments set union trades apart, ensuring that young workers have career paths, not just jobs.

“Our apprenticeship programs produce the next generation of skilled workers who are debt-free and ready to contribute to their communities,” Williams said. “Unlike other industries where training falls on the worker, we ensure our members have the tools they need to suc-

ceed—without raising student loan debt.”

The study also highlights how WVBCT workers represent nearly half of all construction jobs in West Virginia, with 46% of the industry’s workforce coming from union labor.

Their impact extends far beyond the construction sector, generating growth in retail, healthcare, transportation, and professional services.

“Through our research and analysis it is shown that WVBCT members aren’t just workers—they’re a driving force behind economic stability and expansion in West Virginia,” noted Justin Matthews, Senior Research Associate at CBER.

Williams echoed the sentiment, emphasizing the broader implications.

“Every project we take on—from roads and bridges to schools and hospitals—helps move this state forward,” he said.

“This study shows that investing in our workforce is the key to growing our economy and keeping West Virginia strong.”

As West Virginia continues to attract significant infrastructure investments, Williams believes that union labor will be key to delivering high-quality projects on time and on budget.

“Whether it’s new energy projects, broadband expansion, or commercial development, the demand for skilled labor is only growing,” Williams said. “Now more than ever, West Virginia needs a well-trained workforce ready to build the future.” ■

# CONSTRUCTION TRADES DAY AT THE CAPITOL

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WV CAPITOL ROTUNDA

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# Hydrogen Hubs in Limbo After Federal Funding Freeze for Energy Projects

Among President Trump’s first executive orders was the “Unleashing American Energy” order, which calls for all agencies to pause funding through the law related to energy projects.

Now, industry officials are questioning how this will effect the implementation of the nationwide \$8 billion Hydrogen Hub program, created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) from the Biden Administration.

The Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub coalition, of which West Virginian companies and organizations are members, was set to receive roughly \$1 billion for the development of a new Hydrogen Hub in the region.

However, now those plans could potentially be in jeopardy due to the recent Trump executive orders, which state that the funding must be

reviewed. ARCH2 has already received start-up funds (roughly \$25 million) for Phase 1; a period during which the public-private consortium will plan and obtain permits for large industrial projects.

According to representatives from Batelle, a company at the head of the ARCH2 program, the Hub is still a go and they are still operating under the assumption that it will happen.

“We have been awarded our \$25 million amount for Phase One and we’re going to continue on that phase and continue to do the work,” said Shawn Bennett, Energy and Resilience Division Manager for Batelle.

That work includes getting businesses to plan projects to make and use hydrogen in a way that lowers America’s carbon pollution.

When it’s used in industrial processes or transportation, hydrogen

creates no carbon dioxide emissions. Its only byproduct is water.

“That’s what makes it such a versatile, low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels,” Bennett said. “It’s really an opportunity to utilize a new fuel source

for industrial solutions.” For more information on the Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub and the national Hydrogen Hubs programs, log on to [www.ARCH2hub.com](http://www.ARCH2hub.com). ■

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## Trades Attend County Commissioner Event



Jacob Hively, Legislative Assistant for the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council (WVBCT), mans the booth for the trades at the annual County Commissioners Association Legislative Conference in Charleston, WV.

“Events like these are important for us to attend to network with our state’s county commissioners and help educate them on the public bidding process and the value of craft apprenticeship programs,” said George Capel, WVBCT Government Relations Director.

## Session Begins

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Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council.

“Giving bills more attention and legislators more time to understand the issues they are voting on is a good thing for everyone,” said Capel.

So far, there are several issues that the Trades are weighing in on includ-

ing taxation on wind projects, certified payroll document regulations, occupational licensing, and heavy highway regulations.

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

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