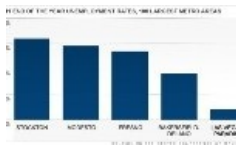


WEST VIRGINIA REQUIRES EMPLOYMENT REPORTING



A controversial provision for employment regarding West Virginians was changed this past week. "At the urging of the administration, we met with industry representatives and looked for some compromise language, and that's the result that you see," said Steve White, director of the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation. "While we're not entirely pleased with the result, we didn't want the reporting piece to get in the way of important environmental regulatory legislation." The new bill, which was drafted on November 18 after months of work, created an employment reporting requirement. The bill was drafted by the Joint Select Committee on Marcellus Shaft, according to [The State Journal](#). "Our citizens are asked to withstand environmental damage and damage to the beauty of our state, and to be imposed upon by large truck traffic, by deterioration of roads and temporary impassability — and this is all done for jobs," said Delegate Tim Manchin, D-Marion, co-chairman of the Joint Select Committee. "The question is, are we really getting those jobs? Wetzel County has the highest rate of unemployment in the state, and yet they're inundated by Marcellus well sites. As a Legislature, I think we need accurate information in order for us to react." White claims that the purpose of the bill is to learn which areas of the state are seeing job increases and which areas need improvements. "I've heard some things that I think are rather silly: that, while the vehicles have out of state plates, the people inside them are local workers," White said. "At least we would get more factual information out there." Members of the gas industry feel that it is being singled out by the state's government. "I've got a problem with the fairness of it," said West Virginia Oil and Natural Gas Association Executive Director Nicholas DeMarco. "The casinos would be another good one. They're border businesses, except for the one in the Kanawha Valley. But no one's asked them." White claims that reporting is required for many projects that receive state funding. "Forward-thinking industry, who are looking at billion-dollar investments, are not going to focus on that type of reporting," he said. "I think that's just for posturing purposes." Each year through 2016, the Department of Commerce's Workforce Investment Council would have to submit reports that detail the "direct and indirect economic impact of employers engaged in the production of horizontal wells in the state," according to the bill. The reports would include statistics that detail total payroll, jobs created, number of employees living in the state, average salary per job type and the recommendations for a public education agenda. "And I think it would have been an excellent opportunity for employers to show their contribution to the local economy and to work with other stakeholders to improve the positive impact on the local economy," White said. "There are many companies, contractors and subcontractors from far away working in our state that we don't think are properly registered for payroll tax purposes: unemployment and income tax and the use tax."