

Putnam to review contractor drug testing proposal

By Veronica Nett, Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Putnam County commissioners will review a proposal today to enforce mandatory drug testing of all contractors employed by the county.

The proposal stems from the West Virginia Alcohol and Drug-Free Workplace Act passed by the state Legislature in February.

The law went into effect July 1 and requires all businesses that are awarded public improvement contracts with the state to regularly test employees for drugs and alcohol.

The new law, however, does not apply to county-funded projects, said Roy Smith, secretary-treasurer of the state Building and Trades Council, an umbrella organization that represents unions across West Virginia.

"The number one place you find drug use is in the food service area, and number two place is construction," Smith said. "We are asking counties to adopt the state standard that they will hire contractors whose employees are certified to be drug free."

The resolution is aimed at major construction projects and the cost of the testing is to be paid by the employer.

Putnam County is not the first to review the proposal. Kanawha, Fayette, Greenbrier, Wayne, Harrison, Wyoming, Summers and Raleigh counties have all adopted the resolution.

"It's being very well received by the counties," Smith said. "Most people have come to realize what a terrible problem drugs have become and they want to promote a drug-free environment."

Putnam County Commissioner Gary Tillis said the proposal addresses safety issues and "if you got a drug-free workplace, you get a better product from taxpayers' money." Tillis said he could see no down side to the proposal.

The County Commission meets at 9 a.m. today at the Putnam County Courthouse.

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