UNION BUILT DORMS SHOWCASED

About 75 members of the Tri-State Building Trades Council were on hand to celebrate the opening of two new freshman dormitories on the Marshall University campus.

The combined 161,000-square-foot, 782-bed residence halls have been open since the start of the fall semester.

Mascaro Construction Company of Pittsburgh was the general contractor.

The dorms are part of an $82 million public-private venture put together by Capstone Development Corp. of Birmingham, Alabama.

According to Tri-State Building Trades Business Manager Steve Burton the project was built with 100% building trades union members.

“The financing may have come from Alabama but the construction workers came from right here in the Tri-State area,” said Burton.

“And we appreciate the relationship we have with Marshall, they have always recognized us as a valuable partner.”

Burton also pointed to legislation allowing the public-private venture that was crafted by Senator Bob Plymale (D-Wayne). “Senator Plymale was key to getting this job off the ground and making sure local workers had a chance.”

Work began in May 2007 and was completed less than 15 months later on August 15, 2008. At the event Marshall President Stephen Kopp made a point of thanking the Trades.

“The buildings were completed two weeks early and within budget,” said Kopp.

“I am pleased and proud of the members of the building trades on this project.”

Also on hand was Governor Joe Manchin.

Each building is four floors and includes a theater, conference room, laundry, study areas and a lounge/café.

The buildings will be turned over to Marshall in 2038 when the bonds have been paid off.

ELECTION FOCUS TURNS TO ECONOMY

SHOW IN WEST VIRGINIA BONDS

With the November election days away, the collapse of Wall Street has all eyes on the economy.

Many parts of West Virginia have not felt the full financial shock because the key components, sub-prime housing bust and related effects on risky financing schemes, are not part of the West Virginia economy.

But shaky financial markets have affected construction financing of at least two major initiatives.

The sale of $75 to $80 million in bonds to finance community and technical college projects in the state may be in doubt according to news reports.

The legislature earlier this year passed a measure to fund needed school projects across the state.

Similarly the sale of bonds to finance continued work on U.S. Route 35 has been delayed.

A project recently bid for construction of a portion of Route 35 in Mason County went to a union contractor, Kokosing Construction.

But the sale of $200 million in bonds used to finance the job has been delayed.

The funding method, a type of bond called a Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle, universally known as a GARVEE, was already in jeopardy because it relies on promised federal funds that may not materialize.

Highways officials remain confident the bond sale will go through when the market ‘settles down.’

The economy is also affecting the Presidential race with most polls showing concern over the financial crisis leading to Democratic candidate Barack Obama taking a lead over Republican John McCain.

Continued on p. 3

This election has some important races, but perhaps the most significant for West Virginia is our State Supreme Court of Appeals.

I am urging members to vote for the two Labor endorsed candidates Menis Ketchum and Margaret Workman - and here’s why.

Two seats are open on this five person court, and the term of office is twelve years for both people selected.

The choices you make will have a direct impact on your job, your ability to take care of your family, and your right to a fair court.

A recent decision by the court shows how important it is. Your ability to make a living took a hit, and the vote was 3 – 2 against you.

The case centered on fair wages and open bidding when tax dollars are used for construction projects.

It has long been the law that tax funded projects costing more than $25,000 must be advertised for public bidding.

In Tucker County a project far in excess of $25,000 was undertaken without any bidding. The county chose to hire a number of workers to perform the project themselves, and then to get rid of those workers once the project was over.

The law clearly states a county can use its own regular workforce to perform projects but can’t hire temporary workers to do so when the job exceeds $25,000.

Three of five Supreme Court Justices, Elliot ‘Spike’ Maynard, Brent Benjamin and Robin Davis chose to ignore the bidding law and have opened a potential flood of abuse for public contracts.

Their decision also effected the wages paid to construction workers like you.

Prevailing wage laws ensure wages paid on tax funded projects are common in the local area.

The law is aimed at protecting communities from low wage, imported employees and contractors.

Tax funded projects should never drive down local living standards.

In the Tucker County case, because the project never went to bid – contrary to state law – no wage protections were followed.

Allowing the County to lower community wage rates will hurt us all.

The Tucker County case is just one example of how imbalanced our Supreme Court has become.

Of course it is now well known the connection some Supreme Court Justices have with corporate interests such as Massey Energy and its CEO Don Blankenship.

If you vacation on the French Riviera perhaps this court will protect your interests.

But if you work for a living, pay attention to the candidates in this race.

Both Menis Ketchum and Margaret Workman have been endorsed by labor. Their actions show they understand average folks and will judge the issues of working families in a fair manner.

Beth Walker, the lone Republican, is being supported by the same crowd that put Spike Maynard and Brent Benjamin in office.

It is critical that each and every one of us, our families, friends and neighbors, get out and vote this election.

I urge all Building Trades members and their families to vote. And before you do, please look at issues affecting the Trades.

WV AFL-CIO Endorsed Candidates

Barack Obama - President
Menis Ketchum, Margaret Workman – WV Supreme Court
Joe Manchin – Governor Jay Rockefeller – U.S. Senate
Alan Mollohan, Anne Barth, Nick Joe Rahall – U.S. Congress
Darrell McGraw – Attorney General Natalie Tennant – Secretary of State
John Perdue – Treasurer Glen Gainer - Auditor

State Senate
1st Jack Yost
2nd Jeffrey Kessler
4th Rocky D. Holmes
5th Robert Plymale
6th John Pat Fanning
10th James McNeely
11th William R. Laird IV
12th Douglas Facemire
15th Clark Barnes*
17th Dan Foster

House of Delegates
1st Randy Swartzmiller
2nd Roy Givens
3rd Orphy Klemper, Tal Hutchins
4th Michael Ferro
5th Dave Pethel
7th Ron Nichols
8th Charley Webb
9th Jim Marion
10th Dan Poling, John Ellem, Brenda Brum
12th Jo Bogess Phillips
13th Dale Martin, Brady Paxton
14th Karen Coria, Jeff Martin
15th Carl Eastham, Jim Morgan
16th Amy Martin
17th Don Perdue, Richard Thompson
18th Larry Barker
19th Greg Butler, Jeff Eldridge, Ralph Rodighiero, Josh Stowers
21st Harry Keith White
22nd Daniel Hall, Linda Goode Phillips
23rd Cliff Moore
24th Mike Vinciguerra, Jr.
25th John Frazier
27th Louis Gall, Virginia Mahan, Ricky Moye, Sally Susman, Bill Wooton
28th Thomas Campbell, Ray Canterbury
29th Tom Louisos, David Perry, Margaret Staggers
30th Bonnie Brown, Nancy Guthrie, Bobbie Hatfield, Mark Hunt, Sharon Spencer, Danny Wells
31st Carrie Webster
32nd Jon Cain Sr, Carmela Ryan-Thompson
33rd David Walker
34th Brent Boggs
35th Sam Argento
36th Joe Talbott
37th Bill Proudfoot
39th Bill Hamilton
40th Mary Poling
41st Ron Fragale, Richard Laquinta, Tim Miley
42nd Mike Manypenny
43rd Mike Caputo, Linda Longstreth, Timothy Manchin
44th Barbara Fleischauer, Charlene Marshall, Alex Shook
46th Stan Shaver
48th Donna Kuhn
50th Ruth Rowan
52nd Mike Roberts
54th Walter Duke
58th Tiffany Lawrence

* WV State Building Trades
CRISIS

Continued from p. 1

At issue is the long-standing Republican push for less regulation of markets confronting revelations that lax regulations are partly at fault for the current financial meltdown.

In addition huge losses in the stock markets are clearly taking their toll on pension, annuity and other retirement funds.

The fate of health care funds is also a major debate between the candidates.

Both candidates have plans to address the rising cost of health care.

The Obama plan claims to provide affordable, accessible health care for all Americans, build on the existing health care system, and use existing providers, doctors and plans.

According to the Obama plan, patients will be able to make health care decisions with their doctors, instead of being blocked by insurance company bureaucrats.

Under the plan, if you like your current health insurance, nothing changes, except your costs will go down by as much as $2,500 per year.

McCain’s plan gives single taxpayers a tax credit of $2500 and married taxpayers $5000 per year to purchase health insurance on the open market.

However the plan stipulates the amount paid by your employer for your health insurance shall be considered taxable income.

EARLY NO-EXCUSE VOTING HAS STARTED

Starting October 15 West Virginia voters who want to cast their ballot early are able to do so.

“No excuse” voting takes place at each county clerk’s office during regular business hours.

Unlike absentee ballots, which are still available for people who just can’t make it to the polls, no excuse voting allows any registered voter to cast their ballot early.

In Ohio early voting started even earlier, on September 30.

Ohio voters can go to their county board of elections office to cast their ballot.

For construction workers who are often on the road, working a late shift or unexpectedly called out of town, early voting can ensure their vote will be cast and counted.

“We are urging all Trades members to take advantage of early voting and make sure their vote is cast,” said Dave Efaw, newly elected Secretary-Treasurer of the WV State Building Trades.

Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia do not allow early, no-excuse voting. Maryland voters will decide in November whether to amend the state constitution to allow no-excuse absentee voting and early voting beginning in 2010.

Early voting will end in West Virginia and Ohio on Saturday, November 1 to give election workers time to prepare for election day on Tuesday, November 4.
ELECTRICIANS LOCAL 968 HOLDS SOLAR DAY EVENT IN PARKERSBURG

IBEW Local 968 in partnership with local contractors held a “Solar Day” event in Parkersburg on Saturday, September 27.

The purpose was to invite the public to watch an installation of a solar array on the Local’s building and to show Solar Power is viable in the area.

About 40 members of the Local came by to volunteer their time helping on the installation.

The solar array consisted of 30 solar panels, each about three by five foot, that can produce 6000 watts of electricity.

“At that’s enough to cut our electric bill by approximately 25 percent,” said Jeff Fox, Business Manager for Electricians Local 968.

When the system produces more power than the building needs the extra power is sent onto the power grid and a meter on site records the amount of extra power produced.

“We get credit for the extra power against our bill,” explained Fox.

At current energy prices the $30,000 investment will pay for itself over the 25 year life of the panels, and sooner if energy costs go up.

The event was sponsored by Mid-Ohio Valley Electrical Solutions, MOVES, a partnership of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 968 and the West Virginia-Ohio Valley Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association.

Local 968 will also host a Solar Power training event in late October.

This train-the-trainer event will be aimed at preparing members, some from as far away as New York, to become solar power instructors for rank and file members of their local unions.

According to Fox the IBEW is making big strides in becoming part of the emerging Solar Power industry.

“Our local contractors can offer very competitive services because they can take advantage of special pricing offers through the National Photovoltaic Construction Partnership,” said Fox.

The Partnership helps with design, material lists, and financing [http://www.npcpsolar.com/].

For more information contact Fox at 485-7412.

INTERVIEWING JEFF FOX, Business Manager of IBEW Local 968, about Solar Day is Leslie Cebula, reporter for local TV station WTAP.