After months of discussions, Cogentrix Power has committed to use local union workers to build its proposed power plant in Marshall County.

Construction of the $600 million, 1100 mega-watt plant will employ about 1,000 workers for 18 to 24 months.

“We’ve negotiated an NMA [National Maintenance Agreement] for the project,” said Bill Dean, President of the Upper Ohio Valley Building Trades.

“This means any work done inside the gates of the site will be done by local union craftsmen.”

Currently Cogentrix is looking to the huge multinational construction firm Kvaerner to build the plant. However, Kvaerner doesn’t have the job yet.

On December 7 Cogentrix and ACT appeared before the West Virginia Public Service Commission to present the details of the agreement in support of Cogentrix’s application.

“We had urged the Commissioners to examine the potential economic impact of this project,” said Vince Trivelli, ACT’s attorney. “We argued that without local construction workers the value to the community would be minimal.

“With this commitment to the
Trades Get Ready for Legislative Session In 2002

With the start of the new legislative session quickly approaching, the WV State Building Trades and ACT are preparing a legislative agenda.

According to ACT’s Legislative Representative “B.B.” Smith, there are a number of legislative issues to promote, watch or try to defeat next year.

Promoting apprenticeship on public projects is a big priority. Recognizing state construction contracts set the standards for the industry, many states have taken actions to make sure apprentices are used.

For example, Washington State requires that state projects use fifteen percent apprentices.

This could lower construction cost for the state and help apprentices get the real world experience they need,” said Smith.

Economic development accountability will again be a topic for debate. New reports from the WISE administration confirm what ACT has claimed many times in the past. Huge sums of tax payer dollars are being spent, or not collected, in the name of economic development but no one knows where the money goes or what jobs are created.

Legislation will be reintroduced to require more data be collected and more focus be put on local jobs for all economic development initiatives.

Public campaign financing has been an issue on the national level and it will be one on the state level as well.

“The state needs to set up a system where you don’t have to be a millionaire or a slave to corporate America to get elected,” said Smith.

Other states have systems in which a candidate can choose to run a clean, publicly financed campaign and it’s been successful.

Infrastructure needs are always an important issue. A number of projects have been identified that would be good business for the state but don’t have much of a chance given our current highway funding.

“We would like to see a review board set up solely for the purpose of reviewing these partnership possibilities,” said Smith.

“As long as these remain prevailing wage projects we can support this legislation.”

As for issues ACT may fight against, tort reform and gambling issues top the list.

“We expect big business to be back with tort reform proposals like they have for many years.

“They have convinced doctors that taking away our rights to a fair trial will save them money. Tort reform proposals will help insurance companies and their clients to never have to pay out, even when they do terrible things.”

The fight at the Cross Lanes Dog Track has many in the trades calling for an end to labor support for gambling initiatives.

“We support jobs, but when our jobs are stolen we have no reason to help out the gambling industry,” said Smith.

Smith points out that Wheeling Downs and Mountaineer Race Track have lived up to their commitments to use local union workers.

Bill Thomas, ACT Representative, added, “If the gambling industry doesn’t have organized labor’s support, they will fail.”

Leaders Elected To AFL-CIO Board At Convention

Four Building Trades members were recently elected to the West Virginia AFL-CIO Executive Board.

Dan Poling of Painters Local 1144 was elected to the Executive Board for the first time. “I’m honored to be chosen for this position,” Poling said. “I look forward to serving with the other dedicated members of the Executive Board in promoting a unified labor movement in West Virginia.”

Re-elected members were Ronnie Burdette, Business Manager of IUOE Local 132; Steve Burton, Business Manager of the Tri-State Building Trades Council and member of Asbestos Workers Local 80; and Raymond “B.B.” Smith ACT Representative and member of Boilermakers Local 667 who had been appointed to fill a vacancy in October.

Also re-elected to the positions of President and Secretary-Treasurer were Jim Bowen and Kenny Perdue.

ACT would like to congratulate these leaders for their victories and applaud their commitment to serving the state’s working families.
Ohio Trades Call For Political Action

Is the State of Ohio sliding down that slippery slope to become a right-to-work state?

Without political participation from Ohio union members as well as support from members in West Virginia, it just might.

Ohio lawmakers have already taken prevailing wage from public school projects.

Uncertified Crane Operators Caught Red Handed On I-81

Outlaw crane operators beware!

The state’s Division of Labor (DOL) wastes no time in enforcing the new crane operator certification law.

There is also a bill (Senate Bill 114) pending before the Insurance, Commerce and Labor Committee that would eliminate prevailing wage from all state-funded projects.

As if that weren’t enough, the state wants to eliminate the pressure piping inspectors Office, leaving its duties to the Building Inspection office.

This is not a good idea because it would allow a person who is not necessarily qualified to inspect high pressure pipes to do those inspections as a general building inspector.

Construction history shows that removing prevailing wage costs more in the long run than paying decent wages for quality work.

That’s been proven recently in Ohio as the school boards have had problems with bad contractors doing shoddy work,” said Walter “Fuzz” LaRue, ACT Representative.

For example a company installed a gas well incorrectly and did an inferior welding job on the pipes inside a school, leaving children in danger of a deadly gas explosion. The school board now has to pay to have the well redone.

“All Ohio building trades members need to be aware of this problem and take action by calling and writing letters to their legislative representatives,” said Dave Williams, President of the Ohio State Building Trades.

“Remind your legislators that Senate Bill 114 is bad for Ohio’s working people and taxpayers. It compromises safety, costs taxpayers more money, and deprives qualified local workers of the work they desperately need.”

COGENTRIX

NMA agreement between Kvaerner and the Building Trades was presented as part of the official record. The letter also stated that if Kvaerner does not get the job, Cogentrix will still require any contractor to use the NMA agreement.

“This agreement is the result of many local union members, county commissioners and state senators getting involved and spending a lot of time and energy ensuring this project had the right result,” said ACT’s Walter “Fuzz” LaRue.

“The key to our success was early intervention in the permit process by ACT and the local effort to work towards an agreement.”
Not once. But twice, the manager of Tri-State Greyhound Park lied to the Charleston Building and Construction Trades Council.

When nonunion contractors were hired to build the project union building trades workers took to the streets. Track owners wanted the pickets down and the ads stopped.

After reaching an agreement with the Council to build the $12 million expansion and do future repair and maintenance, Tri-State Greyhound Park awarded the construction of the metal outer shell to Orders Construction which is signed with the Steel Workers.

“Dan Adkins (manager of the dog track) told me to have a couple of my contractors to bid on the job after the agreement was reached,” said Bubby Casto, Business Manager of Ironworkers 301.

“The next thing we know Orders Construction was bidding on the project.”

“The people at the track lied to us,” said Mike Matthews, Business Manager of the Charleston Building and Construction Trades.

“In a good faith effort we took down our pickets twice and trusted their promise that our members would get the work.”

The track employees had been supportive of the building trades efforts to secure work. However, after the track agreed to use building trades contractors, in an apparent double cross of the trades, the Steel Workers leadership insisted their contractor get the work.

“The other issue here is with the Steel Workers construction division,” said Matthews.

“Where were they when we were standing on the picket lines?”

Charges have been filed through the Building Trades Department of the AFL-CIO for violating the Harmony Agreement, which is an agreement between the Building Trades and the Steelworkers stating that a company can’t bid on a project that is outside of its area of expertise or using wages lower than the standards for the area.

“The complaint over wages was filed because we believe Orders is paying their employees much less than prevailing wage,” said Matthews.

“Every union worker should wonder what might happen if they go on strike, will these same Steel Workers take their jobs?”

The remaining contracts on the project have not been let for bid.

Track officials earlier had stated they promised 90 percent of the work would go to building trades contractors. “With about a third of the project already gone we still do not have one member on the job or one contractor who has a future portion of the job,” said Casto.

“It is clear to us the track can not be trusted.”

A number of actions are being planned by the Charleston Building Trades and the ACT Foundation to fight both the Track and the construction Steel Workers.

“We respect the plant Steel Workers and don’t want a fight with them but having the construction Steel Workers take our jobs and ask us to approve because they are ‘union’ just is not right,” said Bill Thomas, ACT Representative.

“In the past, ACT has supported the gaming issues before the legislature because we believed expansion of gambling meant expansion of union building and construction trades jobs.

“This issue may effect the entire gaming industry in West Virginia,” said Thomas.

“We are prepared to use what ever resources it takes for as long as it takes to rectify this injustice.”