The 2012 session of the West Virginia Legislature got underway on Wednesday, January 11.

Issues for ACT and the WV State Building Trades will include legislation aimed at apprenticeship, safety, fair bidding, crane certification and funding infrastructure.

The initiative for apprenticeship training focuses on legislation passed a number of years ago to provide a tax credit to employers who employ registered apprentices.

The Trades are proposing increasing the tax credit for hiring apprentices to $2 per hour from the current $1 per hour. It does not matter if the apprentice works on a public or private project. However they must be indentured in an approved program regulated by the federal government.

Sen. Orphy Klempa (D-Ohio) was the lead sponsor when the Apprenticeship tax credit first passed and he is taking the lead again.

After the mining disaster at Upper Big Branch Mine the Trades put forward a law to require workers on Public construction projects to have OSHA safety training for the construction industry.

The 10 hour class has been... Continued on p. 4

The 2012 legislative session

Apprenticeship, Safety, Bidding, Cranes, Roads

Legislation on Marcellus Shale environmental regulation passed in the December Special Session also included a report to be created about employment.

The law calls for a number of agencies to gather data on the jobs created by the Marcellus Shale extraction and processing.

The agencies are to examine the total number of jobs created, the total payroll and average salary, and how many workers come from West Virginia, surrounding states or far away.

“We know there are many jobs being created by the drilling, piping and processing of Marcellus Shale gas,” said Ed Boone, Business Manager of Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 152 in Morgantown.

“But the question we have is why are so many workers being imported when we have a qualified workforce right here who need these jobs?”

The gas industry has denied they are importing workers and point to their existing employee numbers as proof.

But anyone from the region knows the out-of-state work related vehicles are easy to find and motel rooms fully booked.

“Industry fought this provision, probably because they know the truth and didn’t want more evidence,” said Boone.

“Hopefully this report can get to the truth.”

Del. Tim Manchin (D-Marion) created the reporting requirement due to the many constituent calls he got about the out-of-state workers.

Manchin was co-chair of the interim committee that examined the Marcellus issues after the regular session of the legislature was unable to pass a bill regarding much needed environmental regulations.

ACT had proposed additional regulations requiring the use of apprentices, compliance with state drug and alcohol testing rules, and more local workers.

The report is due by November 1 and must be done each year through 2016.

Recommendations for how to improve hiring, training and contracting opportunities for local workers and businesses are expected.
Members of the Kentucky Building and Construction Trades Council attended workshops in three locations on how to participate in a new federal Davis-Bacon wage survey.

The workshops were held in Ashland, Central City and Louisville during the week of January 9.

US DOL representatives were on hand as well as George Jones of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO.

Kentucky participated in a federal wage survey in 2007 but because of numerous data problems revealed when it was published in 2010 the state is undergoing a new survey in 2012 for both Heavy and Building construction.

West Virginia went through the data collection portion of the survey which concluded almost two years ago.

The data is still being analyzed and the results have yet to be published.

The Davis-Bacon law makes sure federal government construction projects do not drive down area wages for workers by determining what wage rates prevail in each county.

The concept is often referred to as the Prevailing Wage law.

All federal projects valued at more than $2,000 must pay construction workers at least the Davis-Bacon or prevailing wage rate.

According to Larry Roberts, Executive Director of the Kentucky Building Trades, approximately 140 people attended the events.

“The Kentucky Building Trades and Larry Roberts put together a very informative workshop,” said Steve Burton, Business Manager of the Tri-State Building Trades Council.

According to Burton the US DOL will be conducting similar wage surveys in Ohio later this year.

West Virginia Construction Laborers’ Offer Apprenticeship Opportunities

The West Virginia Construction Craft Laborers’ Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee accept applications year round.

Those interested can apply at any WorkForce WV Employment Services Office on the third Friday of each month.

Applicants must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma or GED, a valid driver’s license and must be physically able to perform the work of the trade.

Applicants will be given a test administered by the WV Job Service office and if they pass may be interviewed.

A substance abuse test will be required at some point in the process.

Documents such as a copy of a birth certificate, a valid driver’s license, transcripts of grades and proof of a high school degree or GED will be requested at a later date.

The apprenticeship program consists of a combination of on-the-job training and hands-on classroom training.

The WV Laborers’ Training Center in Mineral Wells provides 408 hours of classroom and hands-on training free of charge including meals and lodging.

Apprentices will also learn on the job in their home areas while earning a paycheck, for a total of 4000 hours, approximately two years.

Upon completion of the program apprentices will have earned Journeyman status and receive a certificate from the U.S. Department of Labor.

The areas of training provide a wide variety of skills to ensure highly productive workers will have successful careers.

Topics include pipelaying, mason tending, instrument reading, environmental remediation and much more.

The recruitment, selection, employment and training of apprentices shall be without discrimination because of race, color, religion, national origin or sex.

For more information visit their web site www.wvccl.org or to receive a free brochure send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: West Virginia Laborers’ Training Center, P.O. Box 6, Mineral Wells, WV 26150.
Locally produced natural gas may soon be traveling overseas to countries where the United States does not have free-trade agreements (FTA’s) – like China – thanks to Dominion Resources.

Dominion announced its plan to ship liquefied natural gas (LNG) overseas in early September 2011. The company made its first application with the U.S. Department of Energy, seeking authorization to ship LNG to countries with which the United States maintains an FTA. This application was approved in early October last year.

At about that same time, Dominion filed a second application, requesting to ship LNG to countries that do not have an FTA with the United States. This application is still pending.

Dominion’s application to non-FTA countries seeks to export up to 1 billion cubic feet of natural gas daily by late 2016, from its Cove Point terminal in Maryland.

The company is seeking approval to export LNG because they say the natural gas supply is exceeding demand. But Dominion also sees that natural gas is selling overseas for much more than here at home.

The move has made some ask if Dominion has disregarded any consideration of how to make more use of the resource in the United States.

“Dominion is simply after a quick buck,” said Steve White, ACT Director. “We cannot depend on them to consider our national interests, let alone, our local interests.”

Dominion and other energy companies have campaigned for drilling all over the country by saying it will reduce energy dependence on foreign nations.

Dominion’s motive may be quick profits rather than contributing to America’s energy independence.

“You have to wonder if the company is only considering the short-term benefits of exporting LNG, which means bigger profits, and not the long-term interests of the entire country,” said White.

“Natural gas can be used right here at home. It’s counterproductive to export it, especially to a country like China that competes against America in the global market.”

China and other countries have already hurt American manufacturing by paying their workers substandard wages to work in dangerous conditions.

According to the Wall Street Journal, because natural gas prices are low right now, for the first time in almost 10 years, steel companies and plastics makers are building facilities in the U.S., taking advantage of the situation to better compete globally.

“It may help Dominion’s bottom line, but it hurts America by selling our own much-needed energy resources to our competitors,” said White.

If the natural gas being produced locally from the Marcellus Shale is used domestically American companies will have a competitive advantage to compete. The huge resource discoveries could prove to be the engine that helps grow the country’s struggling economy.

White commented that Dominion may claim it wants to create jobs, but would those jobs be here in the US – or in China?

More than 400 attended the Project BEST Breakfast event in Wheeling. The annual breakfast has become a major area event highlighting the positive contributions made by the construction industry through a cooperative approach by both Labor and Management.

A number of awards were presented for successful projects in the region.

Project BEST is the Labor-Management group servicing the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia and the Upper Ohio Valley.

The Co-Chairs of Project BEST are Orphy Klempa, a Representative for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council of Carpenters and a State Senator and Tom Cerra, Executive Director of the Ohio Valley Construction Employers Council.

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and numerous other political and business representatives attended.
Iron Workers Local 549 in Wheeling hosted an open house to dedicate their recently completed apprenticeship training center.

The event took place on January 5 and saw a good attendance from area politicians and news media.

Iron Workers representatives used the event not only to dedicate their new 5,000 square foot addition but to show-off their skills and training to work in the Marcellus Shale related industry. “We wanted folks to know the Iron Workers and other crafts have the skills needed to do all of the Marcellus Shale construction,” said Keith Hughes, Business Manager for Local 549.

Open house visitors got to see modern training tools like the state-of-the-art VRTEX 360 virtual hands-on training experience.

This computerized welding simulator provides real-time feedback similar to a video game to both trainers and student.

And the ‘green’ virtual welding system saves energy, reduces the use of costly materials and creates no waste or pollution.

The event had a positive impact on explaining the apprenticeship method of training. Outside of the Trades very little is known about craft apprenticeship.

“Most people think craft workers are trained only at vocational or technical schools,” said Hughes. “They are surprised to learn unions and contractors provide the training at little or no cost to the apprentices or taxpayers.”

The Iron Workers apprenticeship program usually takes four years to complete and teaches all aspects of the trade including steel erection, rigging, concrete reinforcing, welding, safety and more.

Journeymen can continue their training as well.

“Other than a mix-up where the press incorrectly said we do pipe welding the event went very well,” said Hughes.

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