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Ironworkers Search For Jobs

Staff

**New Martinsville**

Workers in two counties with an average unemployment rate of 11.5 percent are wondering why a Texas contractor will not hire them.

Members of the Ironworkers Local 549 protested for several hours along Route 2 in New Martinsville Thursday trying to bring attention to a pair of natural gas compressor station projects taking place in Wetzel and Marshall counties.

The Marcellus Shale work is being done by the Holloman Corporation of Houston, Texas as a contractor for Chesapeake Energy.

Ironworkers union spokesman Jim Flanigan says workers from many different states are on the job while Holloman refuses to hire local workers.

We have tried to put applications in. WE have tried to contact Holloman and Chesapeake to get people on that site," Flanigan said. "But it's a never ending process and it seems like we're not getting anywhere.

The Holloman Corp. had no specific comment to the protest when it was contacted by MetroNews Thursday.

Flanigan says some of the local workers have been told they aren't qualified to do the welding work. He disagrees. "We have people who are more than qualified," he said. "We have qualifications that these people have probably never heard of."

Most rig welders go from job to job in state to state taking with them their own equipment.

Flanigan says it makes no sense to bring workers in from other areas when that part of West Virginia has double-digit unemployment and workers who are qualified.

"They jump these people from site to site and flat refuse to hire local workers," he said.