

# Hundreds attend rally against prevailing wage, right-to-work bills

By Paul J. Nyden



F. BRIAN FERGUSON | Gazette

Union workers and supporters showed up in force at the state Capitol for a rally Monday afternoon. The rally, called by Senate Minority Leader Jeff Kessler, D-Marshall, was

to protest several bills in the Legislature, including those to make West Virginia a “right to work” state and to cut the state’s prevailing wage.

Hundreds of people packed the steps on the Kanawha River side of the state Capitol at noon on Monday to protest new legislation they believe threatens wages, working conditions and public schools.

Senate Minority Leader Jeff Kessler, D-Marshall, organized the “Show Up, Stand Up” rally. “It’s time for hardworking West Virginians to come directly to the Capitol and stand up to the West Virginia GOP’s attack on our hardworking West Virginia families. Your voices need to be heard,” Kessler said.

Steve White, executive director of the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation, said, “Given the terrible weather and driving conditions, to get as many as 2,000 people to the Capitol shows there is serious concern among citizens about what is going on.”

White said that during their election campaigns last year, “few Republican candidates even mentioned prevailing wages or right-to-work legislation. They won based on an agenda about creating jobs. But what these bills will do is cut pay.”

Some people came from as far as Wheeling and Morgantown, White said, although he said there weren’t many public employees, teachers or coal miners at the rally.

Josh Sword, secretary treasurer of the West Virginia AFL-CIO, said, “It was a great turnout, especially getting more than 1,000 people to show up on a day like today.

“These folks feel like they are under attack. I don’t think there is any other way to describe it.”

Delegate Mike Caputo, D-Marion, said, “It was very emotional to see so many concerned working men and women who braved the cold and fought the elements to come down here because of the extreme agenda that the new Republican majority is pushing. It shows there is deep concern about what is going on,” said Delegate Mike Caputo, D-Marion, a United Mine Workers official.

“I think this is the tip of the iceberg. There is more to come,” Caputo said.

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