



Meeting packed in hopes of prevailing wage debate



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By [Hoppy Kercheval](#) In [News](#) | January 29, 2015 at 3:42PM

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Construction workers and contractors packed the Senate Government Organization Committee meeting room at the Capitol Thursday afternoon to oppose a bill that eliminates prevailing wage for state-funded projects.

However, committee Chairman Senator Craig Blair (R-Berkeley) pulled the bill from the agenda. Blair said staff is still working on the controversial legislation and he expects to take up the bill Tuesday.

Under current law, contractors performing work on state-funded projects in West Virginia must pay hourly wages determined by the state Division of Labor based on annual surveys. Supporters argue the rates reflect the market and they keep out-of-state contractors from undercutting West Virginia contractors.

Opponents, including Blair, contend the prevailing wages are artificially high, driving up the construction cost to taxpayers. Blair's bill, SB 361, would eliminate prevailing wage.

Labor is hoping for a compromise. Steve White, director of Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation, said he is willing to make adjustments to current law, including a review of how the wages are determined and the setting of a project cost threshold so smaller jobs would be exempt.

White said he hopes to meet with Blair to discuss a compromise, but Blair said Thursday he is not planning to meet next week with the bill.

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Senate Minority Leader Jeff Kessler (D-Marshall criticized the bill during Thursday's floor session. He said business leaders in Marshall County don't want it.

"There are businesses in my community who say, 'Stop this train. It is the wrong thing to do,'" Kessler said. "It is radical, it is reckless and it is wrong."

Kessler called on Senate President Bill Cole to require a economic jobs study as part of the legislation.

Cole tweeted after Wednesday's floor session:

"We're stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, & it's improper to artificially set a high rate for a state job."



Hoppy Kercheval

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The radio "dean" of West Virginia broadcasters, Hoppy Kercheval joined West Virginia Radio Corporation in 1976.

46 Comments

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Charlie

Since non union pay is determined by what prevailing wages are, go ahead reduce the prevailing wage and don't be surprised when your pay gets cut too. Companies will make there money even if you can't . Let's go back to no overtime pay, no holidays, and a 7 day work week and live happily ever after.

February 3, 2015 at 7:44 pm | [Reply](#)

Robert Hinkle

Then Cole needs to look at there wages compared to days they work. I myself have never been allowed to vote on a raise for myself. Does he not realize he is trying to take the no eg out of the hands of the people that spend there money here in this state that generates the tax dollars he likes to waste

February 3, 2015 at 12:32 pm | [Reply](#)

David