

Still no fiscal note with prevailing wage repeal bill

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Some members of the state Senate tried unsuccessfully both in committee and on the floor of the Senate Monday to require the bill that would repeal the prevailing wage to include information on how such a move would financially impact the state.

The bill, which has already passed the House, came out of the Senate Government Organization Committee with no changes Monday morning even though a few Democratic senators, including Sen. Bob Williams (D-Taylor) wanted a fiscal note attached.



Sen. Bob Williams (D-Taylor)

“If wages go down then state income tax is going to go down. There’s no question about that,” Williams said during the committee meeting. “It’s going to have an impact on the state’s resources and we need to know how much that’s going to be before we move forward on this.”

A similar attempt by Sen. Ron Miller (D-Greenbrier) was turned down later on the Senate floor.

The prevailing wage is what is paid to workers on large, expensive state-financed construction projects. A bill last year reworked how the wage is figured, this year it’s the repeal bill that has the momentum.

Affiliated Construction and Trades Foundation Executive Director Steve White told the Government Organization Committee there’s evidence that repealing the prevailing wage will result in more inexperienced workers on West Virginia jobs, which may increase deadly accidents.

“In comes a new workforce without the training programs, without the experience, without the knowledge that is critical for a safe job site,” White said.

Bryan Hoylman with the Associated Builders and Contractors of West Virginia told the Senate committee Monday there were four projects last summer when there was no prevailing wage. He said out-of-state companies bid on all four but in-state companies received the contracts.

“We cannot find any research, any data, in West Virginia or otherwise that concludes the absence of a prevailing wage law gives out-of-state contractors an advantage over in-state companies or the presence of one gives in-state contractors an advantage over out-of-state companies,” Hoylman said.

Saving money on construction jobs will leave money for more money and increase the number of construction jobs bill supporters have said.

The bill could pass the Senate and be on its way to the governor's desk by the end of the week.