

## **Daily Mail editorial: Governor should sign right to work, prevailing wage bills**

Sitting on Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin's desk in the state Capitol building are two bills passed by the Legislature he would probably rather not have to deal with.

Senate Bill 1, establishing the Workplace Freedom Act, makes it illegal for any worker in West Virginia to be required to join a union as a condition of keeping a job.

House Bill 4005 would repeal the state government-dictated prevailing wage on public construction projects. Under the new law, market conditions, not bureaucrats, would dictate the wages the companies pay for public projects such as schools, highways and government buildings.

Both bills passed both the House and Senate in relative high speed without a single Democratic vote.

While Tomblin is expected to veto both bills, he should alter expectations and sign both bills into law.

To veto the bills is to desperately cling to West Virginia's past. The laws that the new bills will replace, particularly the forced unionization law, are vestiges of another day, when the state's economy relied on labor-intensive manufacturing industries. Back then, management of such industries exploited a largely manual workforce. Workers could be easily replaced with another untrained laborer.

The laws may have been appropriate when they were enacted, but the times — and West Virginia's economy — have moved on.

Now the economy is based largely on information, intelligence and data. Business competition, not government interference, drives improvements and pricing in business. The major employers that exploited West Virginia's abundant natural resources in the 20th century are largely history — as is a big and waiting workforce to fill the jobs.

Laws of the 1930s don't necessarily fit today's needs.

Gov. Tomblin has 11 months remaining in his term. His actions on these bills can decide if he is remembered as a governor who worked with a new generation of lawmakers and shepherded West Virginia into the future, or desperately clung to antiquated concepts of the past.