

Romano, Facemire vote against right-to-work bill

by Jim Davis STAFF WRITER | Posted: Friday, January 22, 2016 3:00 pm

CLARKSBURG — Two area senators weren't among those who voted this week for a right-to-work bill that narrowly passed the upper chamber of the Legislature.

Sens. Mike Romano, D-Harrison, and Doug Facemire, D-Braxton, joined 14 other members of the minority party in voting against the bill on third reading Thursday.

Seventeen Republicans voted for the measure, which now goes to the House of Delegates.

“Once again, the Republican leadership has ignored the facts and instead made its priority another bill that hurts working West Virginians,” Romano said.

“I think any time we try to solve our problems by taking it out on working people, we're going down a slippery slope,” Facemire added.

Senate Bill 1, titled the West Virginia Workplace Freedom Act, eliminates the requirement that people pay union dues as a condition of employment.

Labor organizations or employers who violate the bill would be subject to fines between \$500 and \$5,000.

GOP lawmakers regard right to work as critical to bringing more businesses to West Virginia, while Democrats see it as an attempt to bust labor unions.

Republicans couldn't back up their claims that the bill would bring businesses to the Mountain State, Romano and Facemire said.

“If we continue to legislate based on speculation, West Virginia will never solve the problems that will keep it from moving forward,” Romano said.

“We should be talking about fixing potholes and training workers for employers who are here and those who want to come here,” he added.



State Sen. Mike Romano

Romano

Romano, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, also voted in the minority when the bill barely cleared that panel.

Testimonies that senators heard indicated right to work would lower wages by 17 percent, Facemire said.

Republicans countered that companies wouldn't locate in West Virginia because it doesn't have right to work, Facemire said.

"But they couldn't tell us one company that said that," Facemire said. "We felt as Democrats it's our job to protect working people."

Romano and Facemire represent the 12th Senatorial District. The district includes Harrison, Lewis, Braxton and Clay counties and part of Gilmer County.