

## Unions: West Virginians Better Qualified For Some Marcellus Jobs

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Many of the estimated \$2 billion worth of natural gas pipelines and compressor stations now or soon-to-be under construction in West Virginia because of the Marcellus Shale natural gas boom are being built by out-of-state contractors. The industry has argued that some out-of-state workers are better qualified. But Joe Bowen, organizer with the West Virginia Laborers District Council cites the case of a six-mile pipeline project for Chesapeake Energy. He says the work wasn't getting done, so Chesapeake called a local company with local workers.

"They ended up giving them like three miles of this work. Well, now as we speak, I believe the local contractor has finished up with his part and Holloman (a Texas-based pipeline construction firm) is still working on their three miles."

Bowen says flatland companies sometimes don't realize how hard it is to build pipelines in West Virginia, but local people have been doing it for years.

According to Bowen, West Virginia's mountains are a serious issue for pipeline construction.

"You know, it's different terrain than what's in Texas or Oklahoma. You get all these mountains, and you have a lot of rock in some areas. And it takes a skilled worker to know how to work in them kind of conditions."

Keith Hughes, business manager with Ironworkers Local 549 in Wheeling, points out that building compressor and processing stations is a lot like projects they have done for decades.

"Numerous chemical plants up and down the Ohio River, numerous scrubber projects at the power houses. All that same kind of work, just different process."

Hughes says the Ironworkers require that an apprentice put in three and a half years in training, 250 hours a year.

No one from the Texas company returned a call requesting comment. Chesapeake Energy says it has been hiring state workers, pointing to a successful job fair the company just ran in New Martinsville.