

WEST VIRGINIA COAL INDUSTRY

Grants providing retraining for dislocated miners

Nearly 1,200 participants funded through end of 2015

By Clint Thomas
METRO STAFF

In early October, West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin shared encouraging news that the state would receive an additional \$7.6 million in federal grant funds to pay for job training and career services for dislocated mine workers and their families.

The \$7.6 million are an extension of a 2012 National Dislocated Worker Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor to assist coal miners and their families in securing new careers -- and livelihoods -- with training, in the wake of mass layoffs and mine closures in the coal industry in recent years.

"We have worked hard



An informative video about assistance for miners is available for viewing on the workforcewv.org website.

over the years to build and strengthen our state's diverse portfolio of workforce training programs," Tomblin said in a media release announcing the grant extension last fall. "Mine closures and layoffs have left many of our state's hard-working miners unemployed and in need of help. I will continue to fight for our miners and the coal industry, but this additional

funding will strengthen our efforts to provide them with retraining and re-employment opportunities, should they need them."

The initial federal grant of \$1.8 million was presented to WorkForce West Virginia in 2012, with a \$5.6 million supplement bestowed two years later.

"As of Dec. 31, 2015, 1,177 dislocated coal miners and

displaced homemakers have received funding for training from the National Dislocated Workers Grant," said Martha Craig-Hinchman, Assistant Director of the Employment Service Division of WorkForce West Virginia. "Some of the retraining programs build on skills that mine workers already have, such as electrical work. The retraining capitalizes on their current skills and provides them with other opportunities to learn new skill sets. That helps them become employable in high-demand fields such as health care, commercial truck driving, welding, electrical engineering, HVAC repair, diesel technology and chemical processing.

"The people who have taken advantage of this program tell us they couldn't have afforded the training without this grant, and they're excited about the opportunities to get back in the workforce," Craig-Hinchman said.

The October 2015 extension provides tuition assistance of

up to \$5,000 per participant for classroom or online skills training and supporting 25 on-the-job training positions. It also funds a stipend of as much as \$100 weekly to assist with meal, travel and child-care expenses incurred during training. Miners' spouses and children living at home are also eligible for the program.

Along with classroom studies, online training can be implemented for many of the vocational opportunities offered.

WorkForce West Virginia aid

Last year, WorkForce West Virginia unveiled a redesigned website as a comprehensive, catch-all destination for all of the workforce development programs and services available in the Mountain State.

More information, specific to laid-off miners and their families, is posted on the website at [http://workforcewv.org/job-seekers/training/laid-](http://workforcewv.org/job-seekers/training/laid-off-coal-miners.html)

off-coal-miners.html.

Information can also be obtained by calling WorkForce West Virginia at 1-800-252-JOBS (5627).

Free services WorkForce West Virginia provides to unemployed individuals include:

- career assessment and guidance
- access to training and education programs, job fairs and workshops
- assistance with job searches
- résumé, cover letter and interview preparation
- computer and Internet access.

WorkForce West Virginia also offers referrals to job seekers and maintains the largest database of job opportunities in the state.

Local WorkForce West Virginia offices are located in Charleston, Huntington, Logan, Beckley, Elkins, Princeton, Morgantown, Fairmont, Bridgeport, Fairlea, Moorefield, Summersville, Weirton, Wheeling, Welch, Parkersburg and Martinsburg.

WEST VIRGINIA COAL ASSOCIATION

Coal still has a future in state if allowed to become competitive

By Bill Raney

WEST VIRGINIA COAL ASSOCIATION

With these challenging times, West Virginia coal is desperately trying to continue being a major contributor to the state's economy, but we need immediate help.

If we're going to continue to extract our coal with more than 15,000 of the best coal miners in the world, we've got to be able to sell our coal in today's ever-restricting market.

We're passionate about maintaining our efficient and compliant coal-based, electric-generating plants, modernizing them throughout the state and doing everything we can to protect our people's jobs, while making sure we continue to be a significant component of our economy. We continue to be blessed with some of the finest metallurgical and thermal coal in the world and the best miners and managers that help us maintain our position as the nation's second-leading coal-producing state.

However, we need immediate help to reduce our tax burden in West Virginia which makes our coal more expensive than any of the



Raney

other coal-producing states across Appalachia, which have been and continue to be dramatically affected by the anti-coal policies of this current federal administration.

While there have historically been ups and downs in the cycle of business, this time is different in that it's a perfect storm of pressures that threatens the jobs of our people, the mining of our coal, the reliability of our nation's electric grid and our country's security.

Some want to point to the geologic and geographic challenges resulting from 150 years of mining high-quality bituminous coal that fueled American victories in the World Wars and conflicts of the 20th century as well as the Industrial Revolution that provided the strong basis for the United States to become the true leader of the free world, or the oversupply of natural gas that keeps its price low, but the real factor most directly affecting our ability to mine and use more West Virginia coal is, unquestionably, the anti-coal policies of our own

"Since the Workers' Compensation debt has been successfully addressed, the 10-year-old additional severance tax of 56 cents per ton must be immediately removed, and the regular severance rate needs to be reduced by 3 percent..."

— Bill Raney, President of West Virginia Coal Association

federal government. This, in itself, is puzzling and amazing, since America has more coal reserves than any other country in the world.

It is only logical to think the centralized government of our country, which has for years cried for energy security and energy independence, would do everything possible to promote the extraction and use of our most prolific resource. If there are problems with its extraction or its use, one would, again, logically expect the government to undertake meaningful research and incentives to be sure America becomes a world leader in clean-coal-based energy.

Can anyone imagine Saudi Arabia, Iraq or any of the other Middle Eastern countries

treating their oil reserves the way this government is treating American coal reserves?

It's all about the cost of production and the ability of our coal to compete in the domestic and international markets. This is particularly critical, since we are competing with other countries that mine similar coals but do not have the same regulatory and financial challenges faced by our members here in West Virginia. We would never seek any reduction in safety requirements or performance or any diminution of environmental standards, as nothing is more important than the well-being of our professional miners and the health and welfare of their families.

However, there must be a

level of practicality injected into the current policies and laws in effect today or being proposed for the future. You see, our coal miners are the "best-practicing environmentalists" in the world as they do everything they can, each day, to protect the environment they work and live in throughout West Virginia. We are confident our operations are among the best, if not the best, in the world, given the conditions in which we mine and use our coal.

But, West Virginia taxes need to be reduced so we can compete with our surrounding coal-producing states. If we can't sell it, we won't mine it! And, we need to mine our coal because that is what keeps our people working. We have plenty of it, according to the West Virginia Geologic and Economic Survey in Morgantown, West Virginia has some 50 billion tons of remaining coal reserves. Since we began keeping records, we've mined some 14 billion tons of coal in West Virginia, so we literally have hundreds of years of coal we can mine and continue contributing to the state's well-being and America's energy security well into the future.

The ingenuity and devoted work ethic of our miners and

managers will find answers to the geologic and geographic challenges, and to the oversupply of natural gas which will likely develop its own set of challenges, but we must have a reduced severance tax if we are to compete in today's coal market.

Since the Workers' Compensation debt has been successfully addressed, the 10-year-old additional severance tax of 56 cents per ton must be immediately removed, and the regular severance rate needs to be reduced by 3 percent, which will enable us to provide West Virginia coal to our traditional customer power plants at a cheaper price, which will allow them to dispatch more of their electricity. Not only will this increase the need for more of our coal, it will accentuate the downstream employment and economic advantages of depending on a coal mine for their supply as opposed to alternative energy sources like gas, solar or wind that have few, if any, employees!

Making us more competitive will keep more of our people working and bring more revenues to our state. The time is now.

Bill Raney is president of the West Virginia Coal Association

COMMENTARY

Federal regulatory attitude must change

The EPA is forcing impossible-to-comply-with regulations on coal-producing states

For the past seven and one-half years, we have told the nation there is a real, true WAR ON COAL, being waged by this federal administration.

It started on Obama's first inauguration day when we received a federal EPA protest of a Mingo County operation that was going to provide construction-ready right-of-way for the King Coal Highway. Nearly eight years ago and that permit has still not been released by this federal government!

That was the first example, but there have many more since then and that same negative, anti-coal attitude has never changed. As a matter of fact, it has gotten worse!

This administration continues to "thumb its nose" at the other branches of government by using executive orders and administrative regulations from EPA and OSM that circumvent the laws and will of Congress. All of these vividly demonstrate the fact that this federal administration's lack of respect shown for our professional coal miners and managers and what they have done and continue to do for this country.

Previous administrations had respect for the West Virginia and American coal miners and managers -- and the tremendous job they do every day. The Bushes, Clintons, Reagans, Carters and Nixons, all the way back to President Truman -- each of them and their administrations knew that America has more coal than any other country in the

world, and they recognized the tremendous contributions West Virginia coal miners -- America's coal miners -- made to improve the quality of life of Americans everywhere.

Each of those previous administrations sought to strengthen our country through the electrification of America with coal-powered electricity. They each knew that our coal provided the reliable, low-cost electricity that benefited Americans everywhere and became the envy of the world, dependable feedstock for domestic steel as well as America's manufacturing, chemical and technology industries. These former presidents didn't favor one region of this country over another. They didn't favor one fuel over another; they were simply depending on the one they knew that would bring energy security for America and improved lifestyles for all Americans. We must regain that "respect."

In addition, if American coal is going to compete with the other coal-producing countries, the regulatory and policy behavior of this federal administration has to change. This administration has to understand that a working West Virginian is a healthier West Virginian, and they want to work right here, not in North Carolina, Michigan, Georgia or Florida. They want to remain here doing what they do best, mining and using West Virginia coal so they can raise their families where they were raised.

Environmental stewardship

is not a concern, because our miners will protect the streams and mountains, because it's the ones they fished and hunted when they were growing up and they want their children and grandchildren to have the same rewarding benefit. There is no higher level of protection than this familial preservation.

But, again, we've got to be able to sell our coal if we are going to continue to mine it!

This administration's EPA is forcing impossible-to-comply-with regulations on states throughout this country. The standards being mandated cannot be met with existing technologies and, if it could, it would be so expensive that no one could afford electricity!

This federal government doesn't, in any sense, recognize the tremendous progress that's been made with power generation in our state and across the nation. Our utilities and our citizens have taken the lead over the past 10 years, providing enhanced air quality, efficient generation and state-of-the-art technologies in a concerted effort to preserve West Virginia jobs and perpetuate our people's health.

Since 2005, in West Virginia, one of our major coal-burning utilities has reduced SO₂ by 70 percent, NO_x by 64 percent and, unbeknownst to many, CO₂ has been reduced by 21 percent! Our other major coal-burning utility has made similar strides in state-of-the-art technology.

But, of course, none of this progress is recognized by this current federal administration, all to the demise of our

■ See FEDERAL Page 18

THE COAL SEVERANCE TAX

In 1987, West Virginia enacted a severance tax on coal. The tax amounts to 5 percent of the selling price of mined coal. Of this amount, the state retains 93 percent. The remaining 7 percent is apportioned among the state's 55 counties and its 228 incorporated municipalities. Three-fourths of the 7 percent share is divided among the coal-producing counties. This money is distributed according to each county's production level.

The remaining quarter of the 7 percent is

divided among all counties and municipalities, according to population. Each county receives an additional share, based on the population of the unincorporated areas of the county.

The total severance tax collections for 2013 amounted to more than \$400 million. A total of \$35.5 million was distributed to all counties and municipalities. Of this amount, \$27 million represented coal production in the 28 coal-producing counties.

— Source: WVCA's Coal Facts 2016

2014 Coal Severance Tax 75% Distribution and Reallocation (Coal Producing Counties)

Political Subdivision	75 % Distribution Amount	Reallocation Amount
Barbour County	157,346.02	\$48,150.31
Boone County	2,306,038.36	\$699,087.58
Braxton County	41,340.76	\$12,786.40
Clay County	404,249.20	0
Fayette County	117,761.65	\$123,361.15
Grant County	171,276.32	\$37,208.06
Greenbrier County	72,341.05	\$51,936.35
Harrison County	1,101,913.08	\$21,967.65
Kanawha County	627,598.76	\$332,844.85
Lincoln County	1,839,949.37	\$189,829.19
Logan County	2,109,490.52	\$563,654.17
Marion County	4,200,839.55	\$395,203.05
Marshall County	703,792.10	\$900,276.09
McDowell County	41,893.06	\$840,988.41
Mercer County	5,018.45	\$12,719.50
Mineral County	1,010,574.46	\$1,515.71
Mingo County	635,730.13	\$309,368.63
Monongalia County	178,256.98	\$191,553.31
Nicholas County	802,891.39	\$54,711.31
Ohio County	\$1,323,861.18	\$245,021.73
Raleigh County	\$269,860.60	\$405,510.14
Randolph County	\$220,742.37	0
Taylor County	\$89,300.67	\$84,500.42
Tucker County	\$269,403.44	\$64,883.84
Upshur County	\$231,955.57	\$26,473.52
Wayne County	\$841,583.01	\$82,044.98
Webster County	0	\$71,124.99
Wyoming County	0	\$252,819.63
Total 75 Percent Distribution	19,775,008.05*	
TOTAL REALLOCATION SEVERANCE TAX		\$6,019,540.97