

West Virginia Legislature
LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT COMMISSION
ON WORKFORCE INVESTMENT FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FINAL REPORT
to
Joint Committee on Government and Finance
2013 - 2014 Interims

January 5, 2014

Members

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The Legislative Oversight Commission on Work Force Investment for Economic Development (hereinafter referenced as the “Commission” is a statutorily-created body, authorized and composed pursuant to the provisions of West Virginia Code §5B-2B-7. The principal duty of the Commission, as defined in Code §5B-2B-8(a), is to “make a continued investigation, study and review of the practices, policies and procedures of the workforce investment strategies and programs implemented in the state.”

I. Commission Programming and Activities

In furtherance of this duty, the Commission received testimony and presentations from state officials, agency personnel, Commission staff, and private volunteers to examine West Virginia’s current situation with regard to workforce participation, the effectiveness of collaboration between state agencies, innovative programs in the public and private sector to increase workforce participation and retention of state resident workers, and volunteer efforts within the state.

The Commission heard from the following agency personnel regarding West Virginia's economic situation, worker availability and state employment programs:

Russell L. Frye, Acting Executive Director, Workforce West Virginia

Jeff Green, Director of Research, Information, and Analysis, Workforce West Virginia

The following agency officials gave presentations regarding the collaborative efforts and goals for state agencies and the availability of, and plans for the expenditure of special purpose funds for workforce development.

Beth Nogay Carenbauer, Director of Business Services and Human Resources for Workforce West Virginia

Valerie Comer, Deputy Executive Director

These personnel gave presentations and answered questions regarding specific programs of certain state agencies with regard to promoting worker readiness and reducing the ranks of unemployed persons:

Pam Baldwin, Unit Manager, Charleston Work Release Center, WV Division of Corrections

Bobby Williams, Case Manager, Charleston Work Release Center, WV Division of Corrections

Monica Hamilton, Bureau for Children and Families, WV Department of Health and Human Resources

The Commission received presentations from the following persons regarding innovative worker training programs in this and other states:

Kathy D'Antoni, Assistant State Superintendent of Schools

Dr. James Phares, State Superintendent of Schools

Doren Burrell, Legislative Commission staff

In addition, the Commission heard from participants in a volunteer, collaborative program to increase the attractiveness of West Virginia's professional environment and to support young professionals with an interest in establishing themselves in West Virginia:

Paul D. Daugherty, Generation West Virginia

M. R. Rowe, Generation West Virginia

Ryan White, Generation West Virginia

II. Commission Findings

In the course of preparing the preceding programs and questioning the presenters, the Commission discovered that certain persistent problems hampered the effectiveness of the state's efforts to develop and retain a ready and active workforce.

A. Efforts to Develop the Workforce Need Appropriate, State-specific, Quantifiable Goals and Objective Criteria to Evaluate the Success of the State's Programs

Although Workforce West Virginia regularly receives high marks for meeting federal performance standards, the labor participation rate among the West Virginia populace remains very low in comparison with other states. This suggests that some of the federal performance standards may not relate well to our state's particular economic situation. The Commission recommends that all state agencies involved in workforce development should to develop objective, state-specific goals for each program with measurable criteria to evaluate the success of those programs.

B. Communication and Cooperation Between Agencies is Hampered by Changes in Personnel

In the process of discussing cooperation and relations between agencies involved in workforce development, the Commission's staff encountered frequent problems with the change of key agency personnel. In one case, this was due to a delay in the appointment of an agency head. More often, problems arose when a key player retired from a state agency and there was little or no continuity with the subsequent person in that role.

Respectfully Submitted,

Senator John Unger
Co-Chairman

Delegate Doug Skaff, Jr.
Co-Chairman