



Search Help Search this site... go

Home » September 2012

Donate

Contact Us

3980 Broadway Suite 103 Box 139
Boulder, CO 80304
Phone: 303.448.9105
Toll free: 888.891.9416
Fax: 208.247.1830

Staff List

Deb Courson
Managing Editor
Contact

Chris Thomas
Western Editor
Contact

Mary Hulsebus
Senior Operations Associate
Contact

Kimberly Lavender
Development Director
Contact

Amber Wilson
Community Engagement Director
Contact

Matt Hemmendinger
Digital Development/Social Media
Director
Contact

Lark Corbeil
Founder
Contact

David Crandall
Business Manager
Contact

Analysis: Invest In the Workforce To Prepare For Economic Turbulence

September 10, 2012

CHARLESTON, W.Va. - One of the authors of a respected report on West Virginia's workforce says the state is facing a demographic crisis from an aging workforce, but he also says the state can have a positive impact on its economy by investing in its workers.

Ted Boettner, executive director of the West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy, helped write a report titled "The State of Working West Virginia." He warns that unlike many places, as the baby boomers here age, they are not being replaced by younger workers.

"Over the next two decades, West Virginia's workforce will shrink dramatically, and unless we can attract and retain working families, we're headed toward a real demographic disaster."

Boettner says part of the solution is to invest more in workforce training, which will make workers more flexible and improve the business climate for everyone. Some have argued the state can't afford to spend money on workforce development, but Boettner says if we can afford business tax cuts, we can afford workforce training.

He says nationally the unemployment rate is up because consumers are not spending, which means businesses are reluctant to expand. But he says in the long term, West Virginia needs to shift its focus toward steps that will build prosperity from the ground up.

"In the short term there's still about four unemployed workers for every one job opening. But in the long term, if we don't attract young people and attract more people to stay here, it's going to be harder and harder to grow the economy in the state."

He says lawmakers often approach the issue from the wrong end, trying to attract businesses by cutting taxes. He says that's actually low on their list.

"The single number one thing businesses look for is a well-educated work force, and this is the area we're not improving upon. We rank forty-eighth in the country with the number of workers who have a college degree."

- Public News Service - WV
September 2012
Budget Policy & Priorities
Education
Livable Wages/Working Families
Social Justice
Download audio
Print this article
Email This article

Like 0 digg it Share / Save f t e

He says an educated workforce will help the southern counties that face a coal bust.

"We must transition the workers in areas where they have seen the bust, so they get the skills they need and they can move on and get training, and transition these areas that are gonna be hit hardest by the decline in coal production."

The full report is available at the center website, www.wvpolicy.org.

Dan Heyman, Public News Service - WV

Copyright © 2012 Public News Service