

Immediate Release

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It’s Time for West Virginia to Invest in Infrastructure: New Report Details Why

(Charleston, WV) – Now is the time for West Virginia to reverse years of neglect and step up investment in state-of-the-art school facilities; up-to-date water treatment plants; better highways; and other public infrastructure—which is vital to creating good jobs and promoting full economic recovery. That’s the crucial message in “[It’s Time for States to Invest in Infrastructure](#),” a new report from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities that concludes every state needs infrastructure improvements that have the potential to significantly boost private sector investment and long-term economic growth.

The author, Senior Fellow Elizabeth C. McNichol **warns** that neglecting infrastructure has serious consequences for a state’s growth and quality of life. “States must turn their attention back to the type of infrastructure investments that will boost productivity, support business growth, create jobs, provide a healthier environment, and improve opportunities for all of their residents,” McNichol wrote. “The specific investment needs will differ from state to state, depending on factors like the condition of the existing infrastructure and the mix of industries in the region. But states continue to ignore needed investments at the country’s peril.”

The report’s findings show that investment in unmet infrastructure needs will improve West Virginia’s economy now and in the future. Modernizing transportation systems and other infrastructure boosts productivity by supporting businesses and residents, improving the education and job readiness of future workers, and helping communities to thrive. Key infrastructure improvements also will provide immediate job opportunities for Americans who are working less than they would like and making less than it takes to get by. Infrastructure investments typically bring higher wages and better quality of life for years in the future.

“With interest rates low and unemployment high - and our roads and bridges deteriorating at an alarming pace - investing in infrastructure will pay off now and into the future,” stated Ted Boettner, Executive Director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. “This is a timely report that comes at a point when we have to make choices about how we are going to train our future workers, support our businesses, improve our communities and put our state on solid financial ground.”

Despite persistent evidence of the benefits of infrastructure investment, West Virginia has increased funding to maintain its infrastructure by just 0.09% as a share of its economy from 2002 to 2013. While this is more than most states, spending on all types of capital improvements is vital to creating good jobs and promoting full economic recovery. It matters because states and localities own 90 percent of the nation’s non-defense public infrastructure, so this problem can’t be solved by the federal government. Federal spending on infrastructure has fallen by half in the past 35 years, making the problem worse.

“Even though West Virginia is facing a weak economy and is struggling to balance its budget, now is the time to step up our investment in public infrastructure,” explained Sean O’Leary, Senior Policy Analyst with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. “Maintaining our roads and bridges supports businesses and provides immediate job opportunities for West Virginians, while creating lasting benefits that will make the state’s future economy stronger.”