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## **W.Va. Chamber Responds to CNBC Report**

**Charleston, W.Va.** – Yesterday CNBC released its “America’s Top States for Business” rankings. Unfortunately, West Virginia ranked 50<sup>th</sup> on the report. The West Virginia Chamber does not always respond to surveys and rankings of this nature, however, this report has received nationwide attention and should be addressed. The CNBC report focused heavily on the large decline in coal production in West Virginia, as well as the state’s drug epidemic and educational outcomes.

West Virginia Chamber President Steve Roberts stated, “As we closely examine the data and metrics by which CNBC made their calculations, we recognize that this survey measures past performance and does not take into account the substantial changes that have been made in West Virginia in recent years. Federal data sources can have a lag time of as much as two years, as state statistics are gathered and compiled.”

The top category in the CNBC rankings, “*Workforce*,” places significant weight on labor laws and whether or not a state is a Right-to-Work state. The Chamber notes that the Republican-led Legislature passed a Right-to-Work Law in 2016, but that law has not been implemented. Neighboring Kentucky, which recently enacted Right-to-Work, is already creating new high-paying manufacturing jobs at a significant rate.

The second most important category in the CNBC survey is “*Infrastructure*.” The West Virginia Chamber points out that just this spring, the West Virginia Legislature passed legislation which funds massive infrastructure improvements and gives voters the opportunity to authorize additional spending by passing road bonds.

Roberts continued, “The West Virginia Chamber is optimistic about West Virginia’s future and is focused on growing and diversifying our economy. Natural gas production is up, and the multiple gas pipeline projects offer opportunities for economic development in West Virginia. The West Virginia Chamber also expects the announcement of 1,000 new manufacturing jobs in West Virginia by year’s end. And while coal production steadily declined during the past several years, it has made a sharp upturn and we have already seen a 17% increase in coal production just since the beginning of 2017.”

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce encourages Governor Justice and the Legislature to remain focused on diversifying and growing the state’s economy. We must ensure that all children receive a quality education, we must take advantage of the abundant opportunities in natural gas production, work to revitalize our all-important manufacturing sector, and ensure that we have a solid infrastructure system to market our state to the world.

The West Virginia Chamber is the voice of business in West Virginia. Chamber members are found in every county and employ over half of our state's workers.

Roberts concluded, "The members of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce look forward to working with Governor-Elect Justice. We are hopeful that our state's economic picture will improve in the coming years. We eagerly await Governor Justice's budget proposal for the coming year, in light of his campaign pledge to balance the state budget without the need to impose any new taxes."

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