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West Virginia Legislature's Policies – Including Right-to-Work – Are Making a Difference

Charleston, W.Va. – With the West Virginia Legislature entering its third full week of the 2021 Legislative Session it is important to take a moment and appreciate how the actions of our 134 elected legislators can impact the health and well-being of our state.

West Virginia Chamber President Steve Roberts stated, “West Virginia’s economy hit a low point in 2015. Federal regulations coupled with a changing economy caused major downturns in the industrial sectors of our economy. It was that same year that a new legislature, elected by the citizens of West Virginia with a mandate to change course, began a significant policy overhaul. Major changes included comprehensive legal reform, regulatory reform, education improvement and small business assistance. The 2016 Legislature took the important step of making West Virginia the 26th state to adopt a Right-to-Work law, and that law was upheld by the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals in Spring 2020, clearing its way for full implementation.”

Roberts continued, “The results of these actions are clear: From January 2015 to January 2020 **total employment rose from 728,200 to 764,300 – the highest level since 2008**. At the same time, **labor force participation** – the number of people employed or actively looking for a job – **topped 800,000 for the first time since 2008**. Our unemployment rate steadily dropped from 6.6% to 5.0% during that period.”

In 2017 several people called for the raising of various taxes in West Virginia to cover a projected budget shortfall. The Legislature resisted those calls. Roberts added, “From Fiscal Year 2017 to Fiscal Year 2019, West Virginia’s General Revenue Collections increased by almost \$600 million. Personal Income Tax collections increased \$280 million and the Corporate Net Income Tax brought in \$80 million more. **Again, this occurred without tax increases, signaling a vibrant economy.**”

Roberts concluded, “While the COVID-19 pandemic was undoubtedly a body-blow to our state, indications are that we are recovering better than initially anticipated. West Virginia’s unemployment rate, which is typically above the national average, is currently tied with it, and our rigorous vaccination program is setting us up to emerge stronger than ever. As the 2021 Legislature continued its work, I would encourage legislators to keep up the progress. Their policies make a difference!

Members of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce are your small business neighbors. Chamber members employ over half of our state’s workforce and are found in every county and region of our state.

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