



# 2024 BUSINESS SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS

DAY BY DAY  
KEY DISCUSSIONS &  
INSIGHTS

POWERED BY:



AUGUST 28-30



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For 88 years, the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce Annual Meeting & Business Summit has been a cornerstone of our state's business community—a dynamic platform for collaboration, innovation, and growth. This year's 88th Annual Meeting & Business Summit, themed "Uniting Business, Igniting Prosperity," captured the essence of the West Virginia Chamber's mission and our vision for the state's future.

Held from August 28 to August 30, 2024, at The Greenbrier Resort, this three-day event demonstrated the power of collective expertise and strategic partnerships. With over 1,200 attendees, the Chamber celebrated a record-breaking turnout, bringing together business and industry leaders, policymakers, higher education experts, gubernatorial candidates and thought leaders. The summit again served as a crucial forum for fostering economic growth, job creation and community well-being across West Virginia.

With more than 60 speakers across various sessions, the summit included businesses representing all sectors of the economy. Leading companies demonstrated their commitment to West Virginia through investments in infrastructure, job creation and workforce development.

United States Senators Joe Manchin and Shelley Moore Capito delivered impactful presentations on national





issues affecting West Virginia and stressed the need for ongoing federal support for state initiatives. Sen. Manchin, speaking for the final time as an elected official at the Business Summit, expressed his gratitude to the Chamber members for what he described as the “experience of a lifetime.”

The summit also highlighted West Virginia’s strong international relationship with Canada, showcasing billions of dollars in exports and job support. We were pleased to welcome Canadian Ambassador to the United States Kirsten Hillman to discuss the country’s commitment to continue fostering growth with West Virginia.

Energy leaders discussed recent investments in energy infrastructure and projects that enhance reliability and support economic growth. The importance of collaboration between the private sector and government in fostering innovation was a key theme. One energy CEO provided an update on his company’s new factory in West Virginia.

National political leaders shared insights into the growing shift away from free market support, urging executives and stakeholders to remain vigilant and proactive in defending the free market system through engagement with local and national chambers of commerce. An analysis showed the significant importance surrounding American politics today, including voter dissatisfaction, swing states, polling trends and promoted reforms to enhance civic engagement, stressing the importance for business leaders to stay informed.

Healthcare panels highlighted progress in West Virginia, emphasizing innovative healthcare solutions developed through collaborative efforts. Speakers stressed that investing in community health contributes to economic prosperity and by supporting health initiatives and partnering with healthcare providers, businesses can help ensure a healthier workforce.

Education leaders discussed the power of purpose, focusing on the unique challenges faced by West Virginia universities. Plans were outlined to evolve educational models to meet the needs of today’s students and workforce. Speakers showcased efforts to make higher education more accessible, with West Virginia’s institutions serving as a model for economic development and attracting businesses and workers to the state.

As we reflect on the insights and connections made during these transformative days, we are reminded of the power of unity and collaboration. The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce remains committed to driving progress and igniting prosperity for our state. Through partnerships, initiatives and smart policies, we will continue to work towards a brighter future for West Virginia.

The success of the 88th Annual Meeting & Business Summit would not have been possible without speakers sharing their time and expertise and the support of our record-breaking number of sponsors. Their commitment was pivotal in making the event a resounding success. We also extend our gratitude to the many journalists who covered the Business Summit and provided live broadcast coverage.

Thank you,



# WEST VIRGINIA GOVERNOR & GUBERNATORIAL CANDIDATES TAKE THE MAIN STAGE



West Virginia Governor Jim Justice provided the Business Summit with his economic development announcements:

- \$35 million investment from Prime 6 to establish new manufacturing facility in Upshur County
- \$59 million investment in Berkeley County from HandCraft Services creating 220 new jobs
- \$125 million investment from Babcock & Wilcox's in Mason County

West Virginia gubernatorial candidates Attorney General Patrick Morrisey and Huntington Mayor Steve Williams shared their vision for West Virginia's future with attendees of the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce 88th Annual Meeting & Business Summit.



Gubernatorial candidate, Attorney General Patrick Morrisey



Gubernatorial candidate, Huntington Mayor Steve Williams



# WVU: THE POWER OF PURPOSE

**Dr. Gordon Gee**  
**President, West Virginia University**



Dr. Gordon Gee is a seasoned university president with a career spanning over 45 years. He has held leadership roles at several prestigious institutions, including Brown University and Vanderbilt University, and is known for his advocacy for accessible education and his involvement in collegiate athletics.

## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- The university's role in transforming the lives of students from small towns and Appalachian communities.
- The need for higher education institutions to adapt to rapid changes in society and technology.
- Introduction of new programs like the Mountaineer micro-credentialing to connect university resources with community needs.
- The financial challenges facing higher education and the need to make education more affordable.
- Importance of rebuilding trust in universities, as public perception of higher education has significantly declined.

## REFERENCES TO DATA/FACTS:

- Mention of Gallup poll showing a decline in public trust in higher education from 95% in 1980 to 35% recently.
- Statistics on student debt, highlighting that 45% of West Virginia University students graduate without debt.

## PREDICTIONS:

- Significant changes in how education is delivered over the next 5, 10, and 15 years, requiring universities to rethink their models.
- Continued evolution in collegiate athletics and its integration with University goals.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REFERENCED:

- The Gallup Organization rankings for universities.
- The Mountaineer micro-credentialing program at West Virginia University.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- Universities need to develop new programs and initiatives that align with the needs of students and communities.
- Higher education institutions must focus on making education affordable and accessible to all.

## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- Highlighting the importance of higher education in rural areas like West Virginia, where educational opportunities can significantly impact local communities. Discussion of the university's strategic transformations aimed at better serving the state's population.

# WVU: THE POWER OF PURPOSE



communities.

- Discussion of the university's strategic transformations aimed at better serving the state's population.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Gordon Gee, President of West Virginia University, delivered an engaging overview of the significant transformations taking place at the university. Gee emphasized the unique role of West Virginia University as a state land-grant institution dedicated to providing unparalleled opportunities for students, particularly those from small towns and Appalachian communities, like Zach Ellis from Rennick, WV. Gee highlighted how the university's mission is to "untap the potential of our people," offering educational opportunities that help students from all backgrounds thrive.

Gee's discussion centered around the evolving landscape of higher education and the need for universities to adapt to new realities. He acknowledged that while institutions like West Virginia University have charged too much tuition in the past, they are now working towards creating more affordable educational pathways, such as the Mountaineer Micro-Credentialing Program. He pointed out the financial challenges facing higher education, the demographic shifts due to declining birth rates.

For West Virginia University, the focus is on regaining this trust by maintaining transparency, promoting diverse programs, and ensuring that education remains accessible and relevant. Gee highlighted the university's efforts to control costs and reduce student debt, noting that 45% of their graduates leave without any debt, one of the highest rates in the country. He stressed the importance of transparency and rapid action in addressing financial and operational challenges, stating that West Virginia University is now a much

stronger institution than it was several years ago.

The session also delved into the vital role of collegiate athletics in shaping university identity and community spirit. Gee highlighted the deep passion for sports at West Virginia University, comparing the enthusiasm of its fans to that of major programs like Nebraska and Arkansas. He shared anecdotes illustrating the lengths to which fans will go to follow their team, emphasizing the "synergy and beautiful marriage" between collegiate athletics and university culture.

Gee also discussed the future of higher education and athletics, predicting a momentous shift in the way education is delivered and the continuing transformation of collegiate sports. He mentioned his involvement in the college football playoff system and the dynamic changes within the Big 12 Conference, illustrating the fast-paced and ever-evolving nature of college athletics.

Towards the end of the session, Gee reflected on his tenure and the legacy he hopes to leave at West Virginia University. As he prepares to step down, Gee expressed his commitment to the state's future, vowing to remain engaged from the sidelines. His closing remarks underscored his belief in the potential of West Virginia and its people, a sentiment that resonated deeply with the audience of business and community leaders.

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Moderated By: Mr. Tony Caridi, Sportscaster,  
West Virginia University Mountaineers



# STATE OF AMERICAN POLITICS

Mr. Chris Stirewalt  
Political Editor and Anchor, NewsNation



Chris Stirewalt is a former political editor for Fox News Channel, senior fellow at American Enterprise Institute, author of “Broken News: How the Media’s Rage Machine Divides America and How to Fight Back” and “Every Man a King,” which explores populism in American history.

## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Voter Dissatisfaction:** Stirewalt highlighted the ongoing dissatisfaction among American voters with their political options, emphasizing the cyclical nature of discontent with leadership choices.
- **False Idols:** He discussed the idea of “false idols” in politics, where voters place unrealistic expectations on political leaders and are perpetually disappointed.
- **Electoral Landscape:** Analysis of the upcoming presidential election, noting the potential outcomes based on swing state dynamics and national polling trends.
- **Political Shifts:** Examination of how both major political parties are grappling with internal conflicts and external pressures, particularly in adapting to changing voter expectations.
- **Populism and Political Behavior:** Stirewalt explored the influence of populism on political behavior, both in terms of policy and party dynamics, noting the impact on candidates and election strategies.
- **Importance of Civic Engagement:** He stressed the significance of civic virtue and voluntary associations in shaping a healthy democratic society, beyond just political engagement.

## REFERENCES TO DATA/FACTS:

- **Electoral College Dynamics:** Explanation of the current electoral landscape, with an emphasis on the importance of swing states and the national popular vote in determining the outcome.
- **Historical Comparisons:** References to past political strategies and election outcomes, including comparisons to the 1968 election and shifts in political alignment.

## PREDICTIONS:

- Stirewalt suggested that the outcome of the upcoming election will likely hinge on how effectively candidates can resonate with voters' desires for change while navigating the complex dynamics of party politics.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REFERENCED:

- **Books by Stirewalt:** “Broken News: How the Media’s Rage Machine Divides America and How to Fight Back” and “Every Man a King.”

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Reform in Politics:** Advocacy for political reforms, including potential changes to the primary election system and increased civic engagement to foster a more representative political process.



# STATE OF AMERICAN POLITICS



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Chris Stirewalt offered a deep analysis of the current political landscape in the United States, focusing on the shifting dynamics between political parties and voter expectations. He highlighted the recurring dissatisfaction of the American electorate, noting that Washington has consistently failed to deliver what voters truly want. From the historic election of Barack Obama to the populism of Donald Trump, and now the presidency of Joe Biden, Stirewalt underscored that none of these major political shifts have fully satisfied the American public. He framed this as a broader societal issue where voters are disillusioned with both government and the political system itself.

Stirewalt stressed that the nation has entered a period of political transformation, characterized by a redefinition of party ideologies and the role of candidates. He pointed out that while the country has expressed a desire for change, the political institutions remain trapped in cycles of dysfunction, often due to misplaced public expectations. He warned against the “worship” of politics and political power, arguing that this only leads to greater disappointment and frustration.

Stirewalt noted that both major parties are once again delivering candidates that do not meet the clear majority’s desire for new faces and ideas. He highlighted the paradox of Vice President Kamala Harris, who simultaneously represents both continuity and change, making her a complex figure in the current political arena. The challenge for both Democrats and Republicans lies in navigating a polarized electorate while offering tangible solutions to national issues.

West Virginia’s political relevance was emphasized through Stirewalt’s discussion on the electoral map, particularly focusing on swing states and the pivotal role rural voters can play. He called on business and community leaders to recognize the impact of these political shifts and to engage more directly in shaping policy that meets the needs of their communities,

rather than relying on national politicians to provide solutions.

Stirewalt concluded with a call to action, urging political leaders and voters alike to recalibrate their expectations of government and to seek more practical, community-based solutions to the nation’s pressing issues. He highlighted the critical role that voluntary organizations and chambers of commerce play in creating a prosperous society, suggesting that such efforts are far more impactful than relying solely on government intervention.





# U.S. BUSINESS CLIMATE: WHERE WE ARE & WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

Mr. Neil Bradley  
Executive Vice President, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Neil Bradley, Executive Vice President and Chief Policy Officer of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, delivered a speech on the current and future state of the U.S. business climate. He discussed the erosion of support for free markets and capitalism due to growing influence from both progressive and populist ideologies. Bradley emphasized the importance of preserving free enterprise and outlined the strategies being used to challenge the neoliberal economic order. He concluded with a call to action for businesses to defend the principles of free markets. Neil has extensive experience in policy development and advocacy. He has served in various roles, including Deputy Chief of Staff for Majority Leaders Kevin McCarthy and Eric Cantor, and as Policy Director for Republican Whip Roy Blunt.

## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Shift in Support for Free Markets:** Bradley noted a growing unease about the future of capitalism, driven by both progressive and populist forces that question the current economic system.
- **Historical Context:** He provided a historical overview of the economic landscape from the 1970s to today, highlighting the shift from a heavily regulated economy to one favoring deregulation and free markets.
- **Emerging Threats:** The session identified well-funded efforts from various think tanks and foundations aiming to reshape capitalism and reintroduce government control in the economy.
- **Call to Action:** Bradley called on business leaders to recognize these threats and unite to defend the principles of free enterprise against increasing political interference.

## REFERENCES TO DATA/FACTS:

- **Historical Deregulation:** Mention of deregulation in the late 1970s and 1980s, which led to the current neoliberal economic order.
- **Funding for Economic Restructuring:** Over \$500 million has been invested by foundations to promote a new economic system that increases government intervention.

## PREDICTIONS:

- Bradley predicted that if left unchecked, these efforts could significantly alter the current free market system, resulting in increased government control and reduced economic freedom.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REFERENCED:

- Websites such as [uschamber.com](http://uschamber.com) for more information on efforts to protect free enterprise.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- Encouragement for business leaders to stay informed about these threats and actively participate in advocating for free market principles.

# U.S. BUSINESS CLIMATE: WHERE WE ARE & WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Neil Bradley, Executive Vice President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, offered a thorough examination of the current state and future trajectory of the U.S. business environment. His analysis highlighted the growing challenges facing free market principles and emphasized the critical role of businesses and community leaders in advocating for economic policies that support entrepreneurship and capitalism.

Bradley began by reflecting on the evolving landscape of U.S. economic policy since the 1970s, noting a significant shift from heavy government regulation to a more market-driven approach. He underscored how this shift, often referred to as the “neoliberal order,” has largely benefited businesses and consumers by fostering competition, reducing taxes, and encouraging trade. However, Bradley expressed concern over recent trends indicating a potential rollback of these free market policies, driven by both progressive and populist movements.

He highlighted the well-funded and coordinated efforts by various think tanks, foundations, and political groups to redefine the role of government in the economy. These efforts aim to challenge the primacy of free markets, advocating for increased government intervention in areas such as pricing, wealth distribution, and corporate governance. Bradley warned that if these initiatives gain traction, they could lead to a re-imposition of outdated policies that stifle economic growth and innovation.

Bradley pointed out that this shift is not limited to one political ideology. Instead, it is gaining ground across the political spectrum, with support from both conservative and liberal factions. He cited examples of recent policy proposals and regulatory actions that reflect this new approach, such as efforts to strengthen labor unions, impose higher taxes on corporations, and restrict free trade.

A significant portion of Bradley’s presentation was devoted to the implica-

tions of these trends for West Virginia. He emphasized the state’s reliance on a robust, free market economy to drive growth and prosperity. As such, he called on West Virginian business and community leaders to remain vigilant against policies that could undermine the state’s economic foundation. He encouraged them to actively engage in advocacy efforts, both locally and nationally, to support a business environment that fosters innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic freedom.

Bradley concluded with a clear call to action for the audience: to recognize the threats to the free enterprise system and to join forces with organizations like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in defending the principles of capitalism. He stressed the importance of educating the public and policy-makers about the value of free markets and the dangers of excessive government intervention. By doing so, Bradley believes that business leaders can help ensure a prosperous future for West Virginia and the nation as a whole.





Ms. Denise Dignam  
President & CEO, Chemours



Mr. Chris Jahn  
President & CEO, American  
Chemistry Council

# REGULATORY OVERREACH AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL



Denise Dignam, CEO of Chemours, and Chris Jahn, CEO of the American Chemistry Council, discussed the impact of federal regulatory overreach on the chemical industry during their session. They highlighted the essential role of chemistry in manufacturing and the economy, particularly in West Virginia, and the challenges posed by excessive regulation. They emphasized the importance of sound science and reasonable regulations to support innovation, manufacturing, and environmental standards in the United States.

## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Chemistry's Role in West Virginia:** Chemistry is a significant industry in West Virginia, contributing \$7 billion to the economy and supporting 6,000 direct jobs and 11,000 indirect jobs.
- **Regulatory Overreach:** The current approach to regulation is seen as excessive and not based on sound science, posing significant challenges to the chemical industry.
- **Permitting Challenges:** The permitting process has become cumbersome and inconsistent, resulting in delays and encouraging companies to move operations abroad.
- **Innovation and Environmental Impact:** The chemical industry is vital for developing new materials and technologies, such as Teflon fluoropolymers for semiconductor chips, which are crucial for advancing electronics and maintaining environmental standards.
- **Community Engagement:** Emphasized the importance of educating the public about the role of chemistry in daily life and its positive impact on communities and the environment.

## REFERENCES TO DATA/FACTS:

- **Economic Contribution:** Chemistry contributes \$7 billion to West Virginia's economy, supports 17,000 jobs, and generates \$65 million in state and local taxes.
- **Regulatory Costs:** More than a dozen new regulations could increase compliance costs by over 50% for the chemical industry.
- **Permitting Delays:** The EPA's new chemicals program has significant delays, with 95% of reviews behind schedule, affecting the introduction of new products.

## PREDICTIONS:

- Without regulatory reform, the U.S. risks losing its competitive edge in chemical manufacturing, with potential shifts in production to countries with more favorable regulatory environments.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REFERENCED:

- **Chemours' New Teflon Fluoropolymer Unit:** A new production unit in West Virginia, crucial for the semiconductor industry, highlighting the need for streamlined regulations.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Regulatory Reform:** Advocate for science-based, consistent regulations that support innovation and manufacturing within the U.S.
- **Community Involvement:** Increase efforts to educate the public and policymakers about the benefits of the chemical industry and the need for supportive policies.

# REGULATORY OVERREACH AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL



## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- Highlighted the importance of the chemical industry in West Virginia and recent developments like the Mountain Valley Pipeline and local manufacturing expansions.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The session highlighted significant challenges faced by the chemical industry, focusing on the impact of stringent regulations and the need for balanced policies to support domestic manufacturing. Participants emphasized the critical role of chemistry in the economy, particularly in West Virginia, where the industry is a major contributor, generating \$7 billion annually and directly employing over 6,000 people. The discussion underscored the importance of the chemical industry in supporting local jobs and providing essential materials for various sectors, including technology, healthcare, and clean energy.

One key theme was the growing burden of federal regulations, which are seen as increasingly onerous and misaligned with scientific standards. The industry's leaders stressed that the current regulatory environment is hindering innovation and competitiveness, leading to delays in project approvals and higher compliance costs. This situation has prompted concerns about the potential relocation of manufacturing operations overseas, which could result in job losses and economic decline in regions like West Virginia that are heavily reliant on the chemical sector.

# REGULATORY OVERREACH AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL



The session also highlighted the importance of regulatory consistency and the need for cooperation between federal agencies and state governments. It was noted that permitting challenges have become a significant obstacle for the industry, with companies facing prolonged delays in receiving necessary approvals for new projects. This issue was particularly relevant to West Virginia, where regulatory hurdles have impacted the expansion of chemical manufacturing facilities, affecting local economic growth and employment.

Another critical point discussed was the broader implications of regulatory overreach for the entire manufacturing supply chain. The industry leaders pointed out that excessive regulations could push production to countries with lower environmental and safety standards, undermining both economic and national security. The need for a balanced regulatory approach that ensures public safety while fostering innovation and growth was emphasized as essential for the future of American manufacturing.

The session concluded with a call to action for policymakers, industry leaders, and community stakeholders to collaborate in advocating for sound regulatory policies that support domestic manufacturing and protect jobs. The importance of educating the public and fostering a better understanding of the chemical industry's contributions to modern life was also highlighted, encouraging a collective effort to sustain the industry's role in driving economic development in West Virginia and beyond.





# WEST VIRGINIA IS FOR HOPE : AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM HOPE GAS

Mr. Morgan O'Brien  
CEO, Hope Gas, Inc. & Hope Utilities



Mr. Morgan O'Brien, CEO of Hope Gas and Hope Utilities, delivered a session highlighting the positive developments and future potential of West Virginia through the lens of Hope Gas, a 125-year-old company. He emphasized the company's recent growth, including job creation, acquisitions, and the establishment of a corporate headquarters in West Virginia. O'Brien introduced a new campaign to change West Virginia's image positively, focusing on the state's pioneering spirit, economic opportunities, and sense of community. The session concluded with a preview of a promotional video celebrating West Virginia's achievements and potential.

## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Company Growth and Investment:** Since Hope Gas was acquired, the company has added 250 jobs, established a corporate headquarters in West Virginia, and invested in pipeline projects that employ 400–500 West Virginians annually.
- **Rebranding and Community Engagement:** The company restored its original name, Hope Gas, to emphasize its deep roots in West Virginia and its commitment to the state's future.
- **Promotional Campaign:** Launched a new campaign to reshape West Virginia's image, highlighting the state's economic development, innovation, and community spirit.
- **Importance of Storytelling:** O'Brien stressed the need for residents and businesses to share positive stories about West Virginia to attract investment and foster pride among locals.

## REFERENCES TO DATA/FACTS:

- **Economic Impact:** Highlighted contributions to the state's economy through job creation and infrastructure projects.

- **Campaign Kickoff:** Announced the launch of a promotional campaign that includes a video to be shown on various media platforms, aiming to change perceptions of West Virginia.

## PREDICTIONS:

- O'Brien expressed optimism about West Virginia's future, predicting continued growth and positive changes as more businesses and individuals invest in the state.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REFERENCED:

- **Promotional Video:** A video showcasing West Virginia's achievements and opportunities, featuring various local leaders and businesses.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Engage in Storytelling:** Encourage community members and businesses to actively share positive stories about West Virginia to build a stronger, more unified state identity.
- **Support Local Initiatives:** Promote local economic development by supporting new businesses and infrastructure projects.

## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- **Highlighting Local Successes:** The campaign and video focus on recent economic developments in West Virginia, such as advancements in technology and manufacturing, and emphasize the state's role as a leader in innovation and economic growth.

# WEST VIRGINIA IS FOR HOPE : AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM HOPE GAS



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Morgan O'Brien, the President and CEO of Hope Gas, presented a compelling narrative about the company's commitment to West Virginia and its future. Emphasizing the importance of reinvesting in local communities, O'Brien outlined several initiatives that Hope Gas has undertaken since acquiring the company nearly two years ago. These efforts include the hiring of 250 employees, the establishment of a corporate headquarters in the state, and the development of a pipeline project that creates hundreds of jobs annually.

The session highlighted Hope Gas's dedication to changing the perception of West Virginia by showcasing the state's potential for growth and innovation. O'Brien discussed a new campaign launched by Hope Gas, which aims to reshape West Virginia's image by promoting the achievements of local businesses and communities. This initiative is designed not only to attract external investment but also to instill pride among West Virginians. The campaign's focus is on sharing stories of resilience, innovation, and progress that define the state, reinforcing the idea that West Virginia is not just a place to live, but a place to thrive.

A significant portion of the discussion centered around the need for collaborative storytelling. O'Brien emphasized the importance of all stakeholders—business leaders, community members, and government officials—actively participating in promoting West Virginia's narrative. This call to action is based on the belief that a unified effort to highlight the state's strengths and opportunities will attract more investment and foster a stronger economy.

The presentation also included a preview of a new video campaign set to air on various platforms, including television, radio, and social media. This campaign is part of a broader effort to celebrate West Virginia's culture, work ethic, and innovation, aiming to reach audiences both within and

outside the state. By leveraging this media strategy, Hope Gas seeks to influence perceptions and encourage economic development throughout West Virginia.

O'Brien concluded with a light-hearted anecdote about the upcoming promotional activities during a major sports event, emphasizing Hope Gas's commitment to spreading the positive message about West Virginia far and wide. This initiative aligns with the overarching goal of positioning West Virginia as a leader in economic growth and innovation while preserving its rich heritage and community values.







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**2024 Business Summit Day to Day Recaps  
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**Mr. Tom J. Hurney**  
Member, Jackson Kelly PLLC



**Mr. Marc Williams**  
Managing Partner, Nelson Mullins Riley  
& Scarborough, LLP



**Ms. Susan Deniker**  
Executive Committee/Member,  
Steptoe & Johnson, PLLC



**Mr. Joseph Ford**  
Member, Spillman, Thomas & Battle,  
PLLC

# COURTWATCH - AN OVERVIEW OF WV SUPREME COURT DECISIONS



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The session provided a detailed overview of significant legal trends and court decisions impacting West Virginia over the past year. Hosted by Kaitlyn N. Pytlak-Morra, this session featured insights from several legal experts, who discussed the implications of recent rulings by the Supreme Court of Appeals and the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA). These discussions focused on how these decisions affect businesses and community standards across the state.

A central theme of the session was the introduction and operational impact of the Intermediate Court of Appeals (ICA) on the judicial system. The ICA was established to address unresolved legal issues and alleviate the Supreme Court's docket. It was noted that while the ICA has grown in its role of handling civil cases, including those related to products liability, its overall impact on the number of cases heard by the Supreme Court has been minimal. This indicates a shift in how such cases are managed at the appellate level.

The discussion emphasized West Virginia's shift away from its previous reputation as a state with courts seen as excessively favorable to plaintiffs in civil cases. Significant rulings were noted that have contributed to this change, including the reversal of a \$2 million verdict against Speedway, which marked a critical shift towards more business-friendly legal interpretations in the state. This shift is seen as a positive development for West Virginia's business environment, reducing the liability risks for companies operating within the state.

The session also covered several key rulings in negligence, employment, and product liability cases. There was a noted trend of courts granting summary judgments in negligence cases, signaling a more stringent approach towards proving liability. This development is favorable for

businesses as it reduces prolonged litigation in cases where there is insufficient evidence of negligence.

Employment law was another significant focus, with discussions on notable cases that underscore the complexities of workplace litigation, particularly concerning wrongful discharge and discrimination claims. One highlighted case involved an employee's use of medical marijuana and the legal ramifications for employers regarding drug testing and workplace safety policies. The court's ruling, which upheld the employer's right to enforce drug-free workplace policies, reinforces the importance of clear and compliant employment guidelines.

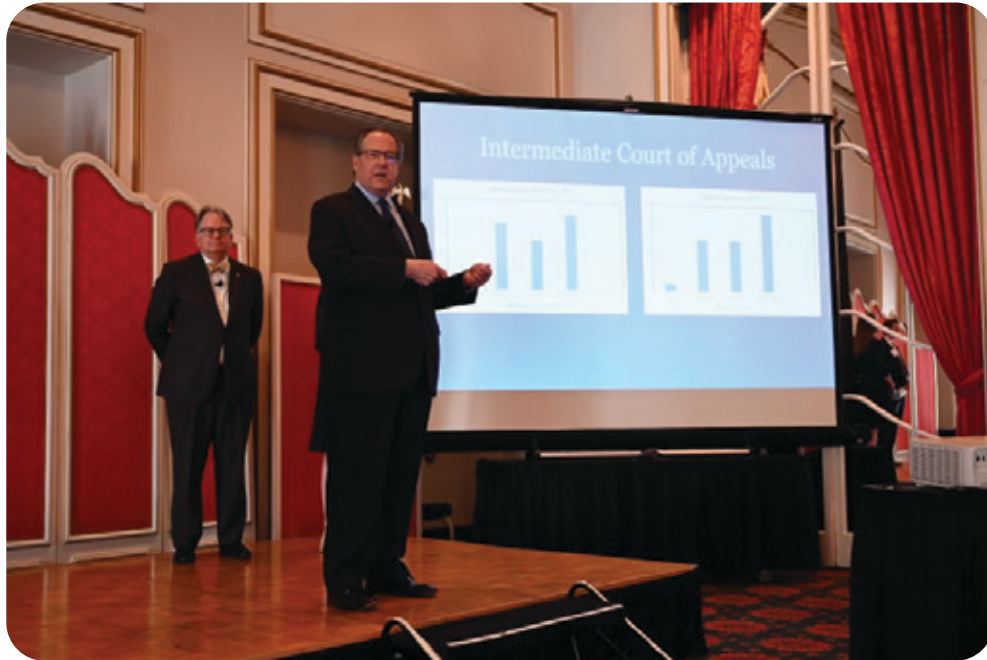
The session also addressed the evolving nature of commercial litigation, emphasizing the importance of contract interpretation and the enforcement of statutory rights. Discussions on cases involving insurance claims and municipal regulations provided insights into the balance of power between local governance and state law, particularly in matters of preemption and regulatory authority.

Throughout the session, the importance of understanding these legal changes and their implications for businesses and community leaders in West Virginia was underscored. The call to action for attendees was clear: Stay informed about the evolving legal landscape, ensure compliance with new rulings and regulations, and actively engage in shaping a fair and predictable judicial environment in West Virginia.

# COURTWATCH - AN OVERVIEW OF WV SUPREME COURT DECISIONS



Moderated By: Ms. Kaitlyn N. Pytlak-Morra  
Legal Counsel, West Virginia Chamber of Commerce





**Dr. James Moore**  
President, West Virginia Wesleyan  
College



**Dr. Jim Nemitz**  
President, West Virginia School of  
Osteopathic Medicine



**Dr. Mark Manchin**  
President, Glenville State University



**Dr. Bonny Copenhaver**  
President, New River Community and  
Technical College

# HIGHER EDUCATION: PROVIDING SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTURE WORKFORCE



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Higher Ed Panel at the conference focused on the evolving role of higher education in West Virginia, highlighting the importance of aligning academic programs with the workforce needs of the state. The discussion underscored the transformative initiatives being undertaken by various educational institutions to prepare students for successful careers while addressing the economic and social needs of West Virginia.

Dr. Sarah Armstrong Tucker emphasized that West Virginia is reshaping its higher education landscape to be more responsive to business and industry needs. Programs like West Virginia Invest, the state's free community college program, and initiatives such as Learn and Earn are designed to ensure that education aligns with the job market. These programs not only provide financial assistance but also offer students pathways to careers within the state, reflecting a commitment to both education and economic development.

Dr. James Moore from West Virginia Wesleyan College highlighted the need for higher education to actively engage with industry partners. He described how the college overhauled its core curriculum to better equip students with soft skills such as effective communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. These changes were made after consulting with industry leaders to understand the gaps in the current education system. This proactive approach is helping produce graduates who are more job-ready and adaptable to the changing demands of the workforce.

Dr. Mark Manchin of Glenville State University discussed the institution's focus on healthcare and education, particularly in rural areas. Glenville has developed partnerships with healthcare providers to address the shortage of medical professionals in West Virginia. The university's Grow Your Own initiative, aimed at training future educators, reflects its commitment to

addressing the state's educational workforce needs. By focusing on programs that directly respond to state needs, Glenville State University is playing a pivotal role in community development and economic stability.

Dr. Jim Nemitz from the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine spoke about the importance of collaboration in healthcare education. The medical school's extensive clinical network across the state ensures that students receive hands-on experience while contributing to the healthcare system. By working closely with hospitals and clinics, the school helps fill the gap in medical professionals in rural areas, a critical need for West Virginia.



# HIGHER EDUCATION: PROVIDING SOLUTIONS FOR THE FUTRUE WORKFORCE



Dr. Bonnie Copenhaver of New River Community and Technical College shared insights into the Learn and Earn program, which provides students with real-world experience while subsidizing their wages. This program is vital for industries that require skilled labor and helps ensure that graduates are job-ready upon completion of their studies. She also emphasized the importance of meeting students where they are, understanding their challenges, and providing the support they need to succeed. By tailoring programs to the specific needs of local industries, New River is helping to build a workforce that is prepared for the unique demands of the state.

The panelists collectively stressed the need for adaptability and speed in curriculum development to keep pace with technological advancements and market demands. The rapid evolution of AI and other technologies was highlighted as both a challenge and an opportunity, necessitating that educational institutions stay ahead of the curve in preparing students for future careers.

A call to action was presented to West Virginia's business and community leaders to engage more deeply with educational institutions. By fostering partnerships and supporting initiatives that align education with industry needs, the state can ensure a vibrant and capable workforce for the future. The session concluded with an emphasis on the need for more programs that attract and retain talent in West Virginia, particularly in underserved rural areas, to support long-term economic growth and community well-being.



Moderated By: Dr. Sarah Armstrong Tucker, Chancellor,  
WV Community & Technical College System, Higher  
Education Policy Commission



**Mr. Zander Bischof**  
Head of Regulatory & Government Affairs, MNS Energy



**Mr. Derrick Price Williamson**  
Executive Director, West Virginia Energy Users Group



**Mr. Rich Powell**  
CEO, Clean Energy Buyers Association



**The Hon. Mitch Carmichael**  
Secretary, WV Department of Economic Development

# CATALYZING WEST VIRGINIA'S ECONOMY THROUGH CLEAN ENERGY INVESTMENT



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The breakout session provided a comprehensive discussion on the role of renewable energy in shaping the future of West Virginia's economy. The panel, comprised of industry leaders and state officials, emphasized the state's potential to become a major player in the clean energy sector due to its unique resources and strategic location within the PJM interconnection region.

West Virginia, historically known for its coal and fossil fuel industries, is now positioned to capitalize on the growing demand for clean energy. The state's existing energy infrastructure, including a robust electrical grid and significant transmission capacity, provides a solid foundation for new clean energy projects. Panelists highlighted ongoing investments in solar and battery energy storage projects, which are set to bring billions of dollars into the state and create numerous jobs. Notably, these projects are often located on reclaimed coal mine lands, blending environmental restoration with economic development.

The panel also discussed the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating renewable energy into the state's energy mix. While West Virginia has a competitive advantage due to its strong transmission network and proximity to major energy markets, there are hurdles related to regulatory processes and the need for significant upgrades to the transmission infrastructure to accommodate new energy sources. The panelists underscored the importance of a public-private partnership model, which has been effective in streamlining permitting processes and fostering a business-friendly environment for clean energy developers.

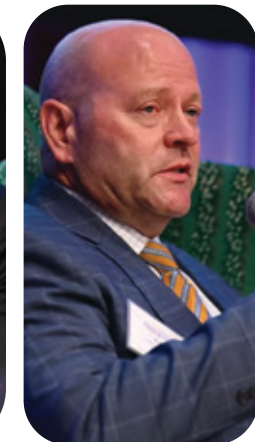
A recurring theme was the evolving landscape of energy demands, particularly with the rise of data centers and other energy-intensive industries. The shift towards renewable energy is driven not only by environmental

considerations but also by market demands, as more companies seek to reduce their carbon footprints. This trend presents a substantial economic opportunity for West Virginia, which could attract new industries looking for clean and reliable energy sources.

Panelists called for proactive measures to ensure West Virginia can continue to meet the growing energy demands while maintaining its competitive edge. This includes investing in new transmission lines, supporting innovation in energy storage, and fostering local community support for clean energy projects. The session concluded with a clear call to action for state leaders and businesses to collaborate in building a sustainable energy future that aligns with West Virginia's economic goals.



Moderated By: The Hon. Roger Hanshaw  
West Virginia House of Delegates



## Four Panel Group Discussion



**Dr. James B. Becker**  
Vice Dean for Government Affairs,  
Health Care Policy & External Affairs,  
Marshall University Joan C. Edwards  
School of Medicine



**Dr. Brandon Dennison**  
Vice President of Economic &  
Workforce Development, Marshall  
University



**Dr. David Gozal**  
Vice President for Health Affairs &  
Dean, Marshall University & Marshall  
University Joan C. Edwards School of  
Medicine



**Dr. Kevin W. Yingling**  
President & Chief Executive Officer,  
Marshall Health Network

# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES EQUAL PRESENT & FUTURE PROSPERITY



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Community Health Initiatives:** The panel shared the progress of Marshall Health Network, emphasizing the development of innovative healthcare solutions and partnerships to enhance community health.
- **Education and Workforce Development:** The panel highlighted the importance of integrating education and research with community health efforts, aiming to train a multidisciplinary workforce prepared to tackle West Virginia's unique health challenges.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** The importance of partnerships between healthcare providers, educational institutions, and businesses in creating a healthy, productive workforce.
- **Investing in community health leads to economic prosperity.** By supporting health initiatives and collaborating with healthcare providers, businesses can ensure a healthier workforce, which in turn drives economic growth and development in West Virginia.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Economic Growth:** Improved community health initiatives will likely boost economic prosperity in West Virginia through a more productive workforce.
- **Expansion of Digital Healthcare:** The collaboration with Prime Focus Health suggests that digital healthcare solutions will become more widespread, especially in rural areas.
- **Healthcare Workforce Growth:** Workforce development programs at Marshall University are expected to increase the number of healthcare professionals, addressing shortages in the state.

- **Stronger Partnerships:** Expect more public-private partnerships focused on improving community health and workforce readiness.
- **Focus on Key Health Issues:** Initiatives to combat obesity, substance use disorders, and rural healthcare access will likely intensify, leading to better health outcomes.
- **Marshall's Growing Influence:** Marshall University and Marshall Health Network will continue to play a crucial role in West Virginia's economic and community development.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Promote Health Initiatives:** Support and advocate for initiatives that address critical health issues like obesity, substance use disorders, and rural healthcare access.



Moderated By: Beth L. Hammers, MBA, Chief  
Integration & External Affairs Officer/Vice Dean,  
Marshall Health Network & School of Medicine



# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES EQUAL PRESENT & FUTURE PROSPERITY



- **Foster Partnerships:** Encourage businesses to collaborate with healthcare providers and educational institutions to create a healthier, more productive workforce.
- **Support Workforce Development:** Invest in educational programs that train healthcare professionals, particularly those aimed at meeting the needs of rural communities.
- **Engage in Public-Private Collaborations:** Advocate for and participate in public-private partnerships that aim to improve community health and drive economic growth in West Virginia.

## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- **Highlighting Local Successes:** The campaign and video focus on recent economic developments in West Virginia, such as advancements in technology and manufacturing, and emphasize the state's role as a leader in innovation and economic growth.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The session on "Healthy Communities" focused on the crucial link between community health and economic prosperity in West Virginia. Key leaders from Marshall Health Network and Marshall University presented a comprehensive overview of ongoing efforts to improve health outcomes and drive economic growth through innovative healthcare initiatives.

Marshall Health Network, established to meet the unique needs of West Virginians, has grown into one of the state's largest healthcare providers. With over 10,500 employees and more than 1,000 providers, the network offers a wide range of services across 119 locations. The network emphasizes access to care and continuum of care, ensuring that residents receive comprehensive medical support from birth through aging.

A major theme of the session was the integration of healthcare and economic development. The network has launched centers of wellness focused on four critical areas: obesity and diabetes, healthy aging, rural healthcare access, and substance use disorder. These centers aim to address some of the most pressing health challenges in West Virginia and Appalachia, enhancing workforce participation and economic development.

The discussion highlighted the network's innovative programs, such as the nation's first rural surgery program and a rural psychiatry training program, aimed at developing healthcare professionals who understand the needs of small communities. Additionally, Marshall Health Network announced a new collaboration with Prime Focus Health and LG NOVA to bring advanced digital healthcare solutions to West Virginia. This partnership will enhance access to personalized care in rural areas and address key health issues such as obesity and substance abuse.

The panel emphasized that improving community health is directly tied to economic prosperity. Investments in healthcare not only improve health outcomes but also create a more productive workforce and attract new businesses. As part of this vision, Marshall University and Marshall Health Network are committed to training the next generation of healthcare providers and supporting economic development initiatives throughout the state.

A call to action was made for businesses and community leaders to partner with healthcare providers in fostering a healthier, more prosperous West Virginia. By working together, these partnerships can create sustainable models of care that benefit everyone in the community, ensuring that West Virginia remains a vibrant and thriving place to live and work.





Mr. James W. "Jim" Beamer

Vice President—State Affairs,  
Dominion Energy



Mr. Kevin Ellis

Regional SVP, Antero Resources



Mr. Aaron D. Walker

President & COO, Appalachian Power

# ENERGY INVESTMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Infrastructure Investments:** Each company discussed recent investments in energy infrastructure, highlighting projects that enhance reliability and support economic growth.

- **Clean Energy Initiatives:** The speakers emphasized the shift

towards cleaner energy sources and reducing environmental impact, showcasing projects like the Mount Storm power plant and investments in renewable energy.

- **Collaboration and Growth:** There was a strong focus on the importance of collaboration between the private sector and government to foster innovation and economic development.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Continued Infrastructure Investments:** Expect ongoing upgrades to West Virginia's energy infrastructure, enhancing reliability and supporting economic growth.

- **Shift to Clean Energy:** Dominion Energy's focus on renewables suggests an increase in clean energy projects in the state.

- **Job Creation:** Energy sector investments will likely lead to job growth and boost local economies.

- **Stronger Collaborations:** Public-private partnerships will be key in driving innovation and sustainability in the energy sector.

- **Increased Sustainability:** There will be a stronger push toward reducing emissions and enhancing environmental sustainability.

- **Community Benefits:** Antero Resources' investments will likely lead to improved community engagement and local development.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Support Collaboration:** Encourage continued collaboration between public and private sectors to foster growth and innovation in West Virginia's energy sector.

- **Invest in New Technologies:** Advocate for investment in new technologies and infrastructure to meet the state's growing energy demands and enhance reliability.

- **Promote Sustainable Policies:** Urge West Virginians to support policies that encourage economic development while prioritizing environmental sustainability.

- **Engage in Community Initiatives:** Businesses and community leaders should engage in energy projects that benefit local communities and contribute to environmental goals.



Moderated By: Mr. Rob Sellards, Member In Charge Huntington Office, Spilman, Thomas & Battle, PLLC

# ENERGY INVESTMENT IN WEST VIRGINIA



## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- **Appalachian Power's \$1.1 Billion Investment:** The mention of Appalachian Power's significant investment in West Virginia's energy infrastructure directly ties to ongoing efforts to upgrade the state's power systems, which is relevant to current discussions about improving energy reliability and supporting economic growth.
- **Dominion Energy's Clean Energy Efforts:** The focus on Dominion Energy's investments in clean energy, including the Mount Storm power plant and NED Power Wind Facility, ties into West Virginia's ongoing transition towards renewable energy sources, a topic frequently in the news.
- **Antero Resources' Gas Infrastructure Investments:** Antero Resources' emphasis on community impact and environmental sustainability through its gas infrastructure investments is connected to current debates in West Virginia about the balance between energy development and environmental protection.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The panels discussion centered on West Virginia's energy landscape, emphasizing infrastructure development, sustainable practices, and community engagement as key to the state's economic growth.

Aaron Walker from Appalachian Power highlighted over \$1.1 billion in infrastructure investments aimed at improving energy reliability and sustainability. He stressed the potential of data centers to boost economic development and called for collaboration to reduce energy costs.

Jim Beamer of Dominion Energy discussed investments in natural gas, wind energy, and infrastructure upgrades. He emphasized a balanced approach that integrates new technologies while maintaining traditional energy sources.

Kevin Ellis from Antero Resources focused on sustainable energy production, job creation, and community partnerships.

He stressed the importance of developing local resources like natural gas to meet future energy needs.

The session concluded with a call for West Virginia leaders to foster a business-friendly environment, support infrastructure improvements, and attract new investments through collaboration between the energy sector, government, and communities.

## Three Panel Group Discussion



**Ms. Beverly Ginsburg Cooper**  
Managing Director, Huron



**Dr. Hannah Hazard-Jenkins**  
Executive Chair and Director, and Jean and Laurence DeLynn Chair of Oncology, WVU Cancer Institute



**Mr. Albert Wright**  
President and CEO, WVU Health System and Board Chair, Peak Health

# THE WVU CANCER INSTITUTE: THE PURSUIT OF NCI DESIGNATION AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR WEST VIRGINIA



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- The panel focused on WVU Medicine's commitment to advancing cancer care in West Virginia.
- They discussed significant investments in expanding cancer treatment facilities, efforts to achieve National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation, and the development of community-centered cancer programs.
- They highlighted the need for enhanced cancer research, clinical trials, and education to address the state's high cancer incidence and mortality rates.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Improved Healthcare Access:** Expect better healthcare access through Marshall Health Network and Prime Focus Health initiatives, especially in rural areas.
- **Enhanced Workforce Training:** More programs will be developed to train healthcare professionals for West Virginia's specific needs.
- **Economic Growth:** Investment in community health will likely boost economic prosperity and workforce productivity.
- **Increased Partnerships:** Public-private collaborations will strengthen, improving health outcomes and economic development.
- **Healthcare Innovation:** New programs and solutions will address healthcare challenges in West Virginia.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Support Health Initiatives:** Advocate for and invest in programs address

ing critical health issues like obesity and access to rural healthcare.

- **Foster Partnerships:** Encourage collaborations between businesses, healthcare providers, and educational institutions to enhance community health and workforce productivity.
- **Invest in Workforce Development:** Support educational and training programs for future healthcare professionals.
- **Promote Innovative Solutions:** Back new healthcare programs and technologies that address unique regional needs.



# THE WVU CANCER INSTITUTE: THE PURSUIT OF NCI DESIGNATION AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR WEST VIRGINIA



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Leaders from WVU Medicine and Huron outlined ambitious plans to transform cancer care in West Virginia. The discussion centered on WVU Medicine's efforts to achieve National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation for the WVU Cancer Institute, highlighting the potential impact on cancer care, research, and the state's economy.

Albert Wright emphasized WVU Medicine's commitment to enhancing the health trajectory of West Virginians through substantial investments in cancer care infrastructure. The health system is expanding its network across the state, with significant projects such as a new cancer tower in Princeton and a regional cancer site in Wheeling. Wright highlighted the construction of a state-of-the-art cancer hospital on the Ruby Memorial campus, made possible by a generous donation from the Hazel Ruby McQuain Trust and additional funding from the state legislature. These initiatives aim to make advanced cancer care more accessible across West Virginia, reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for treatment.

Dr. Hannah Hazard Jenkins discussed the WVU Cancer Institute's strategic focus on achieving NCI designation. She underscored the importance of addressing the high cancer incidence and mortality rates in West Virginia by improving access to early diagnosis and clinical trials. Jenkins stressed the need for a comprehensive approach that combines clinical care, research, and education to meet the unique challenges faced by the state's rural and underserved populations. The institute's existing network of community and clinical partners, along with its nationally recognized mobile screening programs like Bonnie's Bus and LUCAS, are pivotal in reaching residents in remote areas.

Beverly Ginsburg Cooper provided insights into the rigorous process of

achieving NCI designation and the transformative benefits it brings. She highlighted that NCI-designated cancer centers are recognized for their excellence in cancer research, clinical care, and education. Achieving this status would position the WVU Cancer Institute as a regional magnet for top-tier talent, cutting-edge research, and economic growth. Cooper emphasized that the designation process requires significant investment and collaboration across the state, calling on West Virginian business and community leaders to support these efforts through advocacy, philanthropy, and active participation.

The session concluded with a call to action for West Virginia's leaders to support the WVU Cancer Institute's journey towards NCI designation. Achieving this goal will not only enhance the quality of cancer care but also drive economic development, create jobs, and improve the overall health outcomes of the state's residents. The panelists encouraged continued community engagement, investment in research, and collaboration with local and national stakeholders to achieve a healthier and more prosperous future for West Virginia.



# UNITED STATES SENATE PRESENTATION

The Hon. Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Economic and Political Landscape:** Senator Capito outlined the complex national issues impacting West Virginia, including inflation, energy policy, and international affairs.
- **Legislative Focus:** She highlighted critical upcoming legislation, including the farm bill and defense authorization, and praised local advocacy efforts that led to the national plan to end Parkinson's.
- **Future Directions:** Emphasized the importance of continued federal support for state initiatives, such as the broadband expansion and energy development.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Increased Engagement in Federal Legislation:** Expect more active involvement from West Virginians and businesses in advocating for

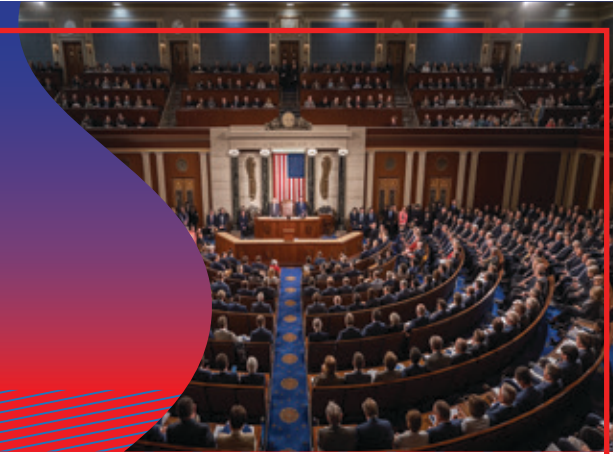
federal policies and funding that impact the state.

- **Impact of Energy Policies:** Anticipate changes or adjustments in federal energy policies that could lead to more balanced energy strategies and innovation in West Virginia.
- **Focus on Infrastructure and Broadband Expansion:** Continued emphasis on using federal resources for infrastructure development and broadband expansion, addressing under served areas in West Virginia.
- **Bipartisan Legislative Success:** Greater potential for bipartisan collaboration to advance key legislation such as the farm bill, defense authorization, and energy policies.
- **Increased Attention to Economic and Health Challenges:** More initiatives and discussions around mitigating the effects of inflation, the southern border crisis, and public health issues like fentanyl trafficking.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Stay Informed and Engaged:** West Virginians are urged to stay updated on political developments and how they affect the state.
- **Participate in Advocacy:** Businesses should engage in advocacy and communicate their needs to legislators to influence policy outcomes.
- **Leverage Federal Resources:** Take advantage of federal funds and policies to support state development and infrastructure projects.
- **Support Bipartisan Efforts:** Encourage bipartisan collaboration to advance important legislation that benefits West Virginia's economy and infrastructure.

# UNITED STATES SENATE PRESENTATION



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Senator Capito began by acknowledging the collaborative efforts between her office and local West Virginia leaders, emphasizing her dedication to supporting the state's economic development and healthcare advancements. She highlighted her role as the Ranking Member of the Health, Labor, and Education Subcommittee on Appropriations, noting her efforts to secure funding for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and to bring the NIH Director to Morgantown. This visit underscored the potential for federal investments in West Virginia's healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural health delivery systems, which aligns with the state's broader goals of improving healthcare access and outcomes.

The Senator also discussed the challenges and opportunities facing West Virginia's energy sector. She underscored the state's commitment to an "all of the above" energy strategy, while also addressing the regulatory hurdles posed by federal agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Capito emphasized the importance of balancing environmental protection with economic growth and innovation, particularly in light of the increasing demand for energy to support new technologies such as AI and data centers. Her support for the Advance Act, which promotes the development of small modular reactors on abandoned mine properties, reflects a forward-thinking approach to diversifying West Virginia's energy portfolio and revitalizing its economy.

On the national front, Senator Capito touched on several pressing issues, including the ongoing crisis at the southern border, inflation, and the international situations involving Ukraine and Israel. She stressed the importance of a robust immigration policy to curb illegal entries and combat the influx of fentanyl, which has had a devastating impact on West Virginia communities. Her remarks also highlighted her strong support for Ukraine in its defense against Russian aggression and for Israel in its efforts to combat terrorism.

Senator Capito concluded her remarks with a call to action for West Virginia's business and community leaders to stay engaged and proactive in shaping the state's future. She emphasized the importance of unity and collaboration, both within the state and with federal partners, to ensure West Virginia's continued growth and prosperity. Her reflections on her tenure as a U.S. Senator and her partnership with Senator Joe Manchin underscored her commitment to bipartisan cooperation and service to the people of West Virginia.





Kirsten Hillman  
Ambassador of Canada  
to the United States



The Hon. Shelley Moore Capito  
United States Senator

# WEST VIRGINIA'S STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH CANADA



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- West Virginia's economic relationship with Canada is strong, with \$2.1 billion in goods exported last year, supporting jobs in industries like automotive, machinery, energy, and green technologies.
- The partnership is set to expand further, focusing on energy collaboration, particularly in nuclear energy and critical minerals extraction from coal byproducts.
- Both regions are committed to fostering growth under the USMCA, with ongoing efforts to enhance tourism and maintain economic stability.

## PREDICTIONS:

- Growth in Economic Ties: The economic relationship between West Virginia and Canada

is likely to deepen, with increasing exports and investments. This will strengthen job creation and economic stability in West Virginia, particularly in the automotive, machinery, and green technology sectors.

- Expansion in Energy Collaboration: There will be significant developments in energy collaboration, especially in areas such as nuclear energy and small modular reactors (SMRs). West Virginia may see growth in its energy sector through partnerships with Canadian firms and advancements in critical minerals extraction from coal byproducts.
- Increased Tourism: Tourism between Canada and West Virginia is expected to grow, driven by shared interests in outdoor recreational activities. This could lead to increased travel and cultural exchange, benefiting both regions economically.
- Enhanced Critical Minerals Sector: West Virginia might become a key player in the extraction of critical minerals, aligning with its efforts to innovate within traditional industries. This could lead to new economic opportunities and advancements in local manufacturing.
- Stable Trade Policies: The continuation of stable and predictable trade policies under the USMCA will be crucial for maintaining and expanding the

economic benefits for both West Virginia and Canada. This stability is likely to support ongoing growth and investment.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- Strengthening economic ties and exploring new areas for collaboration in energy, critical minerals, and tourism.
- Promoting stable and predictable trade policies to encourage investment and growth.



# WEST VIRGINIA'S STRONG RELATIONSHIP WITH CANADA



## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- Exploration of extracting critical minerals from coal, aligning with West Virginia's efforts to innovate within its traditional industries.
- Highlighted the growth of the green technology sector in West Virginia, such as the Green Power Motor Company's electric bus manufacturing.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In a discussion focused on strengthening the robust economic and political ties between West Virginia and Canada, Senator Shelley Moore Capito and Canadian Ambassador Kirsten Hillman highlighted the importance of cross-border collaboration and trade. The dialogue underscored the substantial economic impact of the

Canada-West Virginia relationship, with \$2.1 billion in exports from West Virginia to Canada last year alone. This trade represents more than the next six largest export markets combined for the state, underlining Canada's position as a crucial partner in West Virginia's economic landscape.

Ambassador Hillman emphasized the importance of deepening these ties through ongoing partnerships, particularly in sectors such as energy, automotive, and green technology. With 40 Canadian companies currently investing in West Virginia, including notable names like Enbridge and Green Power Motor Company, the Ambassador highlighted the significant contributions of these investments to the state's economy. Green Power Motor Company, for example, operates a manufacturing facility in South Charleston, producing electric buses and employing hundreds of West Virginians, exemplifying how Canadian investment is aligning with future industries and job creation in West Virginia.

The discussion also touched on the vital role of energy in the Canada-U.S. partnership. Both countries share a commitment to an "all of the above" energy strategy, which includes oil and gas, nuclear, hydroelectric, and renewable energy sources. Ambassador Hillman proposed the idea of hosting a nuclear roundtable in West Virginia to explore potential collaborations in the nuclear energy sector, particularly with the development

of small modular reactors.

The session further delved into the geopolitical importance of securing critical minerals for advanced manufacturing and defense applications. Canada, as a major producer of critical minerals, is keen to partner with the U.S. to reduce reliance on non-allied countries, promoting economic and national security. Senator Capito highlighted West Virginia's efforts in this domain, including research into extracting critical minerals from coal waste, which could provide both economic and environmental benefits for the state.

In concluding remarks, both leaders stressed the importance of continued collaboration and engagement between West Virginia and Canada. Senator Capito called on West Virginian business leaders to explore further opportunities for growth and innovation with Canadian partners, while Ambassador Hillman invited increased dialogue and cooperation in sectors ranging from tourism to advanced energy technologies. The session underscored a shared vision of mutual prosperity and strategic partnership between West Virginia and Canada.





**Mr. Bill Fehrman**  
President & CEO, AEP



**Ms. Alicia Knapp**  
President & CEO, BHE Renewables



**Mr. Mateo Jaramillo**  
Co-Founder & CEO, Form Energy

# WEST VIRGINIA'S NEW ENERGY FUTURE



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Form Energy:** The panel discussed the new iron-air battery facility in Weirton, emphasizing the rapid development and significant impact on the local economy.
- **Berkshire Hathaway Renewables:** The panel detailed the revitalization of the Ravenswood site with a solar and battery-powered microgrid, focusing on community engagement and investment.
- **AEP addressed the challenges of integrating new energy technologies into the existing grid and the need for robust public policy support.**

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Growth in Clean Energy Projects:** West Virginia is expected to become a significant hub for clean energy innovation. The development of new facilities like Form Energy's iron-air battery plant and Berkshire Hathaway's solar microgrid will likely attract further investments and projects, reinforcing the state's role in the energy transition.
- **Economic Impact from Energy Investments:** The energy transition projects in West Virginia, such as the Weirton facility and the Ravenswood microgrid, will likely result in substantial economic growth. This includes

job creation and local economic revitalization, particularly in regions directly impacted by these projects.

- **Increased Community Engagement:** There will be a stronger emphasis on community investment and engagement as energy companies undertake new projects. This focus on local involvement will likely lead to more significant community support and benefits from energy developments.
- **Enhanced Public Policy Support:** Continued support from federal and state legislation will be crucial for the success of energy transition projects. Future policies will likely focus on facilitating the integration of renewable energy technologies and addressing regulatory challenges.
- **Integration of Renewable and Fossil Fuel Energy:** West Virginia will see a growing trend in combining renewable and fossil fuel energy sources. This integration will likely be a key strategy for the state to balance energy needs while advancing clean energy goals.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Encouraged collaboration between public and private sectors to overcome barriers in energy development.**

- **Highlighted the need for continued policy support to expedite the energy transition.**

## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- **Noted the significant economic impact of new energy projects in West Virginia, such as the Form Energy facility and Berkshire Hathaway's initiatives in Jackson County.**



Moderated By: Mr. Jason Grumet,  
CEO, American Clean Power



# WEST VIRGINIA'S NEW ENERGY FUTURE

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Energy leaders discussed the pivotal role of West Virginia in the national shift toward clean energy. The session, moderated by Jason Grumet of the American Clean Power Association, highlighted several key initiatives and developments in the state that are positioning West Virginia as a leader in energy innovation and sustainable development.

Mateo Jaramillo, CEO of Form Energy, outlined the rapid progress of the company's new iron-air battery facility in Weirton, West Virginia. This facility, built on the site of the former Weirton Steel Mill, represents a significant investment in clean energy technology and is set to provide batteries across the United States. The development of this facility underscores the importance of West Virginia in the broader energy landscape, both for its historical industrial capabilities and its future potential in renewable energy production.

Alicia Knapp, President of Berkshire Hathaway Renewables, discussed the company's acquisition of the Ravenswood site and the introduction of a solar and battery-powered microgrid. This project demonstrates a commitment to integrating renewable energy with local needs and fostering community engagement. Knapp emphasized the importance of investing in local communities, noting a \$1 million investment in Jackson County to support the project and

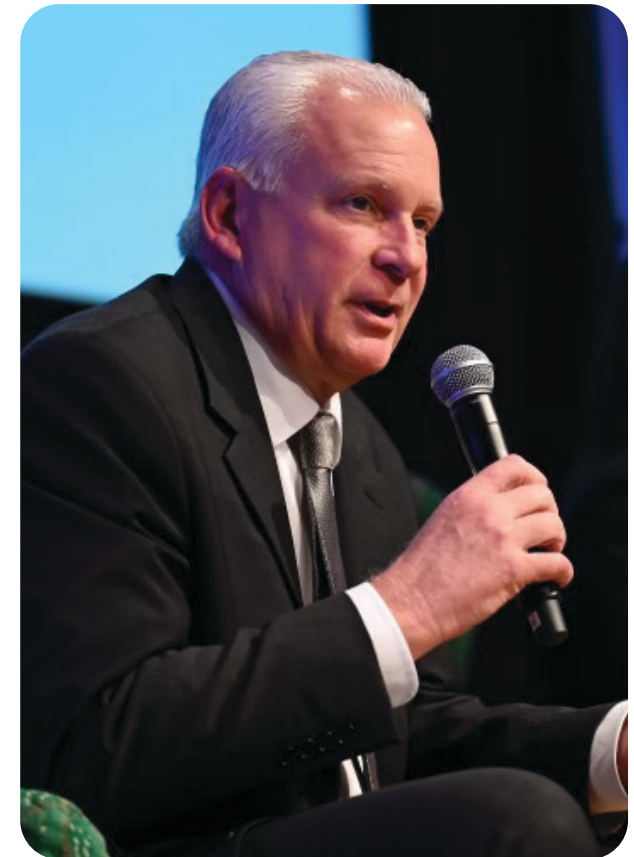
further enhance local infrastructure and economic resilience.

Bill Fehrman of American Electric Power (AEP) focused on the challenges and opportunities of integrating new energy technologies into the existing power grid. He highlighted the importance of reliability and the need for robust infrastructure to support the energy transition, particularly in the challenging geography and climate of West Virginia. Fehrman also called for continued public policy support to facilitate these advancements, underscoring the role of both state and federal legislation in overcoming regulatory hurdles and promoting innovation.

The panel discussion brought to light several key themes, including the integration of renewable energy with existing fossil fuel infrastructure, the critical role of community investment and engagement in energy projects, and the importance of aligning public policy with private sector innovation. The leaders called for greater collaboration between public and private sectors to address the barriers to energy development and to expedite the transition to cleaner energy sources.

West Virginia is uniquely positioned to lead in the energy transition, leveraging its rich industrial history and existing infrastructure to become a hub for clean energy innovation. The state's proactive approach to embracing both

renewable and traditional energy sources is setting a precedent for economic growth and sustainability, making it a key player in the future of American energy.





# INVESTING & INNOVATING IN WEST VIRGINIA

Mr. David Ramsey  
President & CEO, Vandalia Health



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- David Ramsey discussed the rapid growth and expansion of Vandalia Health over the past two years since its merger of the Charleston Area Medical Health System and Mon Health System.
- He highlighted the network's extensive reach, its focus on patient-centered care, investments in infrastructure, and commitment to training and workforce development.
- The session emphasized Vandalia Health's ongoing projects, strategic initiatives, and contributions to the communities it serves in West Virginia and neighboring states.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Healthcare Expansion:** Vandalia Health will likely expand its network, enhancing access to care in West Virginia and nearby states through new hospitals and facility upgrades.
- **Specialized Care:** Expect growth in specialized centers like the neuroscience institute in Charleston, positioning Vandalia as a regional leader in advanced healthcare.
- **Workforce Development:** Programs like the Center for Learning and Research will boost the local healthcare workforce, creating jobs and fostering talent.
- **Community Health:** Mobile clinics and telemedicine will extend healthcare to underserved areas, improving overall health outcomes in West Virginia.
- **Economic Impact:** Vandalia's investments will drive job creation and economic growth, strengthening West Virginia's healthcare sector.
- **Increased Attention to Economic and Health Challenges:** More initiatives

and discussions around mitigating the effects of inflation, the southern border crisis, and public health issues like fentanyl trafficking.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

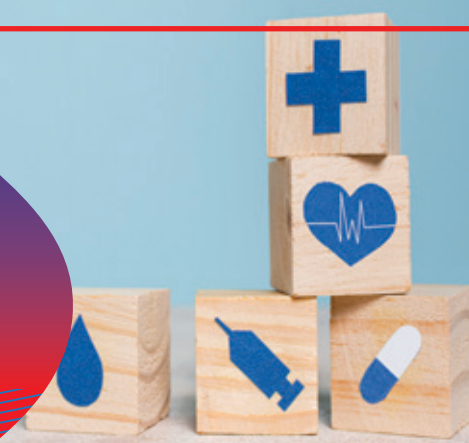
- Ramsey encouraged continued collaboration and innovation to address healthcare challenges and improve patient care throughout the region.

## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- Vandalia Health's efforts align with West Virginia's broader focus on expanding healthcare access, improving community health outcomes, and developing the local workforce.



# INVESTING & INNOVATING IN WEST VIRGINIA



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Dave Ramsey, President and CEO of Vandalia Health, presented an overview of the significant advancements and expansion of the Vandalia Health system over the past two years. Since its formation, Vandalia Health has grown into a comprehensive healthcare network comprising 14 owned hospitals and three additional managed or affiliated hospitals, extending across West Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. This rapid expansion underscores Vandalia Health's commitment to enhancing healthcare accessibility and innovation throughout the region.

Ramsey highlighted the strategic investments Vandalia Health is making to improve healthcare infrastructure and services in West Virginia. Recent projects include the construction of a new hospital in Harrison County, a new medical office building for Greenbrier Valley Medical Center, and the development of a neuroscience institute and rehabilitation hospital in Charleston. These initiatives reflect a focus on providing care closer to home, addressing the specific needs of local communities, and enhancing overall healthcare delivery in the state.

A key theme of the session was community impact. Vandalia Health has invested millions in local hospitals and health systems, such as the Davis Health System and Beckley Oncology, to expand cancer treatment capabilities and other specialized services. This expansion aims to ensure that residents receive comprehensive care without the need to travel long distances. Ramsey emphasized the importance of serving the community's health needs directly, particularly in rural areas where access to healthcare is often limited.

Workforce development was another critical focus of the discussion. Vandalia Health has implemented various programs to address workforce challenges, including the establishment of a Center for Learning and Research in Charleston dedicated to training healthcare professionals. The organization is also investing in residency and fellowship programs, scholarships, and grants to encourage the education and retention of local

talent. Programs like Pathways to Success and collaborations with the Challenge Academy are designed to provide training and employment opportunities for individuals facing barriers, further supporting the local economy and workforce.

Ramsey also highlighted several innovative healthcare initiatives, including the introduction of mobile health services and telemedicine capabilities. These services are designed to bring healthcare directly to patients, particularly in underserved and remote areas. By leveraging telemedicine and mobile clinics, Vandalia Health is improving access to specialized care and ensuring that more West Virginians receive timely and effective treatment.

The session concluded with a call to action for continued investment in healthcare infrastructure and workforce development to sustain and expand these efforts. Vandalia Health's initiatives exemplify the potential for healthcare systems to drive both community health and economic growth, reinforcing the importance of local engagement and investment in creating a healthier future for West Virginia.





Mr. Toney Stroud  
Chief Legal Officer & General Counsel,  
Marshall University



Mr. Brad D. Smith  
President, Marshall University

# THE TIME IS NOW: PURSUING NEW ACADEMIC HEIGHTS



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- **Leadership Impact:** President Smith's transformative leadership has instilled a renewed sense of optimism and confidence in Huntington and Marshall University through smart decision-making, strong hires, and personal engagement in the community.
- **Educational Challenges and Innovations:** Marshall University is addressing the changing landscape of higher education by focusing on affordability, flexibility, and job readiness, with strategic emphasis on key sectors like cybersecurity and healthcare, and by leveraging AI to enhance learning and operations.
- **Economic Development Initiatives:** Marshall University and its leadership are deeply involved in economic development efforts in West Virginia, including initiatives like "Choose West Virginia" and "Ascend West

Virginia," which aim to attract businesses and remote workers to the state, significantly boosting its economy and reversing population decline.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **AI Integration:** Marshall University will expand AI use in education and administration, driving innovation and efficiency.
- **Demographic Strategy:** The university will attract non-traditional students to counter declining enrollment.
- **Economic Development:** Marshall will support West Virginia's growth through initiatives like "Choose West Virginia" and "Ascend West Virginia."
- **Academic Focus:** Growth in fields like cybersecurity, healthcare, and energy will align with state needs.
- **Rebuilding Trust:** The university will emphasize job placement and minimal debt to restore confidence in the value of a degree.
- **Strategic Collaboration:** Increased partnerships will position West Virginia as a prime location for business and talent.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Adopt AI:** Integrate AI for better education and efficiency.
- **Target Non-Traditional Students:** Offer flexible, affordable education to attract diverse student populations.

# THE TIME IS NOW: PURSUING NEW ACADEMIC HEIGHTS



- **Boost Local Economy:** Partner with businesses and government to drive regional economic growth.
- **Align Education with Jobs:** Focus on programs that meet market demands, especially in key sectors.
- **Restore Trust in Education:** Ensure graduates have low debt and strong job prospects.
- **Collaborate for Growth:** Partner with institutions and industries to innovate and support community development.

## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- Discussion of initiatives like “Choose West Virginia” and “Ascend West Virginia,” which align with state efforts to boost economic development and attract talent.
- Emphasis on sectors critical to West Virginia’s economic future, such as energy, manufacturing, and cybersecurity.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Brad Smith and Toney Stroud highlighted three primary challenges facing higher education today, referred to as the “three D’s”: demographics, digital, and doubt. Demographic changes, particularly a decline in high school graduates due to lower birth rates post-2008 financial crisis, are creating significant enrollment challenges. The digital revolution, characterized by the rise of online learning platforms like YouTube, Khan Academy, and Coursera, is changing how education is delivered and how students prefer to learn. Meanwhile, public confidence in the value of a college degree has sharply declined, necessitating a reimagining of the higher education model.

In response to these challenges, Marshall University has launched the “Marshall for All, Marshall Forever” initiative, which aims to provide an affordable, flexible, and achievement-focused education. This initiative focuses on key areas such as cybersecurity, healthcare, manufacturing, energy, aviation, and entrepreneurship, which are crucial for the future of West Virginia’s economy. The university has set ambitious goals, including ensuring all graduates have jobs and no student loan debt, doubling research funding, and tripling startup creation over the next decade.

A significant emphasis was placed on the importance of speed and innovation in adapting to the rapidly changing educational environment. Marshall University is leveraging design thinking and fostering partnerships to accelerate decision-making and program development. The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) is also a key focus, with efforts to enhance teaching, improve operational efficiencies, and safeguard data privacy. Marshall’s leadership in AI is recognized across the 16 southern states, with the university serving as a model for integrating this transformative technology into education.

The session highlighted Marshall University’s role in economic development through initiatives like “Choose West Virginia” and “Ascend West Virginia.” These programs are designed to attract talent and businesses to the state, showcasing West Virginia as an attractive destination for living and working. The success of the Ascend West Virginia program, in particular, was emphasized, with the initiative bringing in hundreds of new residents and contributing to the state’s economic growth.

A clear call to action was made for West Virginia business and community leaders to support these strategic initiatives and foster collaboration across sectors. The focus on growth and efficiency, coupled with innovative approaches to education and economic development, positions Marshall University as a key player in shaping the future of West Virginia.

# MARSHALL UNIVERSITY & JOBS FOR WV GRADUATES AND WEST VIRGINIA CHAMBER FOUNDATION PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT



Elizabeth House, with the West Virginia Chamber Foundation, announced that Jobs for West Virginia Graduate Students and West Virginia Chamber Foundaton Program will be the next cohort of students to receive automatic admission into Marshall University and partner with the University through their career services program. Students will be able to overcome their barriers, get access to the deeper education that they deserve, and make life long careers here in West Virginia!



## CELEBRATING WEST VIRGINIA'S ACHIEVEMENTS: CHEF PAUL SMITH

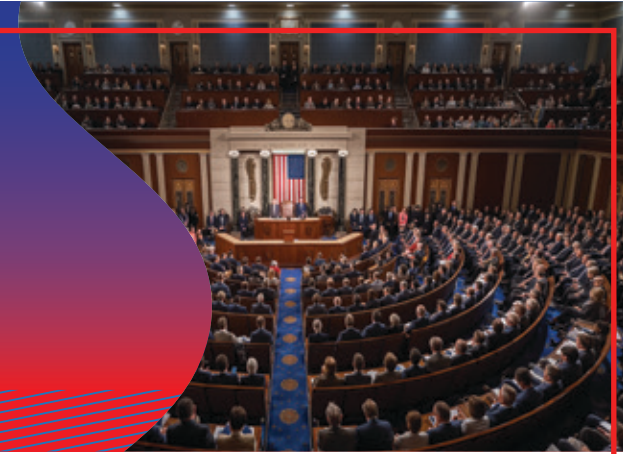
Maribeth Anderson took a moment to recognize Chef Paul Smith, a prominent figure in West Virginia's culinary scene. Chef Paul recently made history as the first West Virginian to win the prestigious James Beard Award, an honor that highlights his exceptional talent and dedication to the culinary arts. His achievement has brought national recognition to West Virginia, and he continues to serve as a proud ambassador for the state. Steve Roberts congratulated Chef Paul, thanking him for his outstanding representation and contributions.





# UNITED STATES SENATE PRESENTATION

The Hon. Joe Manchin, III  
United States Senator



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- Senator Joe Manchin discussed his long-standing commitment to policy over politics, emphasizing his bipartisan efforts to advance the interests of West Virginia and the United States.
- He highlighted his legislative achievements, including energy permitting reform, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill, and efforts to maintain energy security.
- Manchin also reflected on his career in public service and his future plans after leaving the Senate.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Bipartisan Leadership:** Manchin will continue to champion bipartisan cooperation, particularly in fiscal policy and energy legislation, even after his tenure in the Senate ends.
- **Focus on Emerging Energy Technologies:** West Virginia is expected to play a crucial role in the development of hydrogen hubs and nuclear energy, with Manchin pushing for advancements in these areas.
- **West Virginia's Strategic Role:** The state will maintain its position as a leader in energy production, particularly in natural gas and

emerging technologies, underpinned by Manchin's efforts and legacy.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- He urged leaders and citizens to prioritize the country's well-being over party politics, advocating for a unified approach to addressing national issues.



**"Today was the last time I stood before our State's business leaders at the WV Chamber Business Summit as an elected official. You all have given me the experience of a lifetime. It has been an honor to work together with business and labor to bring jobs & opportunity to WV." - Joe Manchin**

**THANK YOU, JOE!**



# UNITED STATES SENATE PRESENTATION



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Senator Joe Manchin delivered a compelling address focused on his commitment to bipartisan cooperation, the importance of public service, and the future of West Virginia. He emphasized the need for unity across political lines, advocating for a focus on what benefits the state and the nation rather than partisan victories.

Senator Manchin reflected on his journey and achievements, notably his efforts in energy permitting reform and securing significant federal investments for West Virginia. Over the past 14 years, his leadership has helped bring over \$200 billion in federal funds to the state, with \$80 billion secured in just the last four years. This funding has been critical in advancing infrastructure, healthcare, and energy projects throughout West Virginia.

A key theme of his speech was the energy sector, highlighting West Virginia's role as an energy powerhouse. He discussed the state's continued reliance on fossil fuels while also investing in renewable energy and new technologies, such as hydrogen and nuclear energy. Senator Manchin underscored the importance of balancing current energy needs with future innovation, ensuring that the transition to cleaner energy sources does not compromise the state's economic stability.

Senator Manchin also spoke passionately about the value of public service. He shared personal anecdotes to illustrate the importance of integrity and dedication in public office. He called for a return to common-sense governance, where elected officials prioritize the country and state over party allegiance. He stressed that effective governance involves working across the aisle to address pressing issues like national debt, energy security, and economic development.

The call to action was clear: Senator Manchin urged business and community leaders to invest wisely in the opportunities afforded by recent federal investments. He emphasized the need for targeted spending that gener-

ates the greatest return on investment for West Virginia, fostering sustainable growth and development. He also encouraged leaders to support policies and initiatives that promote unity and collaboration, ensuring that West Virginia continues to thrive amidst national and global challenges.

In closing, Senator Manchin announced his decision not to run for public office again but affirmed his commitment to public policy and advocacy. He intends to focus on promoting bipartisan solutions and supporting candidates who put country and state above party politics. He encouraged West Virginians to continue working together to uphold the state's values and drive progress for future generations.

Senator Joe Manchin, speaking at the Business Summit, provided an inspiring reflection on his decades-long career in public service. Known for his bipartisan approach and commitment to policy above politics, Manchin has been a steadfast advocate for West Virginia and the nation.

Looking ahead, Manchin expressed his intention to continue influencing public policy after leaving the Senate, particularly in areas like fiscal responsibility and bipartisan collaboration. He urged the audience, comprised of West Virginian business and community leaders, to remain united in their efforts to serve the state and the country, emphasizing the need for leadership that puts public service above self-interest.

We honor Senator Joe Manchin and his family for all they have done for the State of West Virginia!



## Three Panel Group Discussion



**Mr. Kevin Linville**  
Consultant, Steel of West Virginia



**Ms. Rebecca Polan**  
CEO, REO Processing



**Mr. Adam Krason**  
Architect, Principal, ZMM Architects & Engineers

# COMPANIES THAT SHAPED WEST VIRGINIA



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- The session, “Companies That Shaped West Virginia,” featured insights from leaders of key businesses in the state, highlighting their contributions to West Virginia’s economy and community.
- The discussion centered around innovation, workforce development, and future aspirations for growth.
- The panelists shared success stories, addressed challenges in talent acquisition, and discussed the importance of policy changes to further economic development in West Virginia.
- Each company’s journey reflects a dedication to innovation and a commitment to the state’s economic development.

## PREDICTIONS:

- Increased automation at Steel of West Virginia for productivity and safety gains. REO Processing expansion into new business areas like contract manufacturing. Focus on workforce development through partnerships and training programs. Active policy advocacy for affordable housing, healthcare, and childcare. Enhanced community engagement through social responsibility initiatives.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Invest in Automation:** Businesses should explore automation technologies to improve efficiency and safety, following Steel of West Virginia's lead.
- **Diversify Offerings:** Consider expanding into new markets or services, inspired by REO Processing’s successful evolution.

- **Strengthen Workforce Development:** Collaborate with local educational institutions to develop training programs that address skill gaps.
- **Advocate for Supportive Policies:** Engage in policy advocacy for affordable housing, healthcare, and childcare to attract and retain talent.
- **Prioritize Community Engagement:** Implement social responsibility initiatives to contribute to local economic development and strengthen community ties.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Panelists from key industries in the state discussed the innovative approaches and strategic initiatives driving their companies and, by extension, contributing to the growth and economic development of West Virginia.

Steel of West Virginia, represented by Kevin Linville, highlighted the company’s evolution from manual labor-intensive steel production to a



Moderated By: Kevin Craig, Executive Vice President, Natural Resource Partners

# COMPANIES THAT SHAPED WEST VIRGINIA



modernized operation using advanced technologies like hydraulic manipulators and robotic welding. This transformation not only increased efficiency and expanded the product line but also created safer working conditions and higher-quality outputs. The company has been pivotal in supporting the local economy, with each job at the plant in Huntington generating an additional 9.2 jobs in the region, underscoring its importance to West Virginia's industrial base.

Rebecca Polan of REO Processing emphasized her company's entrepreneurial spirit and adaptability. Starting as a furniture company, REO Processing has evolved into a contract manufacturing and logistics provider. The company's strategic decisions, like developing a local packaging solution that eliminated unnecessary cross-country transportation, demonstrate their commitment to efficiency and innovation. This adaptability has allowed them to draw clients from various industries across the nation, bringing new ideas and business opportunities into West Virginia.

Adam Krason of ZMM Architects & Engineers discussed how the firm's integrated approach to building design has allowed it to manage complex projects efficiently. ZMM has been at the forefront of incorporating new technologies, such as 3D modeling and AI, into their design processes, enhancing client engagement and project outcomes. The firm's work on projects like the Shawnee Sports Complex and various educational facilities demonstrates its commitment to improving community infrastructure and supporting economic development through thoughtful design.

The panel also focused on workforce development and the challenges of attracting and retaining talent in West Virginia. All three companies invest significantly in training and supporting their employees. For example, Steel of West Virginia continues to run an internship program in partnership with Marshall University, while REO Processing provides second-chance employment opportunities for individuals formerly incarcerated. These efforts not only help meet the companies' needs but also contribute to the local

economy by providing valuable employment opportunities.

Looking forward, the speakers identified key areas for growth and improvement. They highlighted the importance of policies that support affordable housing, accessible childcare, and healthcare to attract and retain a skilled workforce. Additionally, they called for efforts to reverse population decline, which is essential for sustaining economic growth in West Virginia.

The session concluded with a call to action for policymakers to foster an environment conducive to business innovation and growth. This includes maintaining supportive regulatory frameworks that allow companies to continue their operations efficiently while contributing to the state's economic stability and development.





**Ms. Alyssa Chudnofsky**  
Senior Director, Career Kickstart  
Course Adoption and Partnerships,  
CollegeBoard



**Dr. Josh Brunty**  
Professor, Marshall University & Head  
Coach, United States Cyber Team



**Major General (retired) James A. Hoyer**  
Vice President for Economic  
Innovation, WVU



**Mr. Bill Walker**  
Chief of Staff, United States Cyber  
Command Joint Force  
Headquarters-DODIN



**Dr. Ericke Cage**  
President & Chief Executive Officer,  
Marshall Health Network

# CYBERSECURITY & EDUCATION'S NEW ROLE



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- The "Cybersecurity & Education's New Role" session focused on the integration of cybersecurity education in K-12 and higher education, the development of cybersecurity programs across West Virginia, and the importance of partnerships between educational institutions, government, and private sectors to bolster the state's cybersecurity workforce and infrastructure.
- During the session experts underscored the critical role of partnerships in addressing cybersecurity challenges in West Virginia. The panel emphasized the need for collaboration between educational institutions, government, and the private sector. This partnership approach has led to the establishment of a National Center of Excellence in Cybersecurity in the state, positioning West Virginia as a leader in cybersecurity education and research.
- The panel also highlighted the importance of integrating cybersecurity education across all levels, from K-12 to higher education. The panel shared strategies for engaging students and preparing them for future careers in cybersecurity.
- WVSU is pioneering efforts to expand its cybersecurity program, focusing on workforce alignment and critical infrastructure protection.

## PREDICTIONS:

- Expansion of cybersecurity programs at West Virginia universities.
- Integration of cybersecurity education into K-12 curricula.
- Growth in West Virginia's cybersecurity workforce.
- Strengthened public-private partnerships in cybersecurity.
- Increased focus on protecting critical infrastructure.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- Invest in Cybersecurity Education: Support initiatives to integrate cyber security into K-12 and higher education.
- Enhance Public-Private Partnerships: Collaborate across sectors to strengthen cybersecurity infrastructure and workforce development.
- Promote Workforce Training: Encourage investment in training programs that prepare students for careers in cybersecurity.
- Focus on Critical Infrastructure Security: Prioritize efforts to protect West Virginia's essential services through advanced cybersecurity measures.



Moderated By: Mr. Toney Stroud, Chief Legal Officer & General Counsel, Marshall University



# CYBERSECURITY & EDUCATION'S NEW ROLE



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The session "Cybersecurity & Education's New Role" emphasized the growing necessity of cybersecurity education in an increasingly digital world. West Virginia is positioning itself as a leader in this field through partnerships among schools, government, and private industry.

Alyssa Chudnofsky with College Board highlighted that cybersecurity education needs to start earlier, ideally integrated into K-12 curricula, due to the rising demand for professionals in the field.

Major General James Hoyer with WVU discussed the role of human error in cyberattacks and emphasized public awareness and education as critical defenses, particularly for vulnerable groups such as older populations.

Dr. Josh Brunty from Marshall University outlined pathways for students, such as cyber teams, to develop skills in cybersecurity, and called for local-level cybersecurity initiatives.

Dr. Ericke Cage from West Virginia State University shared efforts to expand cybersecurity education, aiming to offer a full bachelor's degree to meet workforce demands.

Bill Walker, Chief of Staff for the U.S. Cyber Command, stressed the importance of partnerships between local institutions and businesses to bolster national cybersecurity.

The session concluded with a call for West Virginian business and community leaders to support cybersecurity education through policy, apprenticeships, and training, ensuring the state's readiness for digital threats.

# ALPHA INNOVATIONS' STRATEGIC TRANSFORMATION



## Leading the Future of Business Technology

For over two decades, Alpha Innovations has provided cutting-edge technology solutions globally, with deep roots in West Virginia. As technology rapidly evolves with AI, growing cyber threats, and the rise of cloud computing, we are rebranding to meet these challenges head-on.

### Why This Matters

- **AI Integration:** AI is no longer optional—it's essential for driving innovation and efficiency. We help businesses harness AI's potential to align with strategic goals and foster sustainable growth.
- **Cybersecurity Focus:** Cyber threats are escalating. We're deepening our focus on cybersecurity, helping organizations build robust defenses and resilient infrastructures.
- **Cloud Computing:** The shift to cloud computing presents both opportunities and challenges. We guide businesses through cloud adoption, ensuring scalability and risk management.

### Our Commitment

Our rebranding reflects our evolved mission to empower businesses with the tools and knowledge needed to navigate the future confidently. We remain deeply committed to our West Virginia roots and to helping organizations thrive in an era of technological disruption.



**JOIN US:**  
Stay Connected With  
Our Resources

**AI Readiness Assessment:**  
Scan the QR code to discover how prepared your business is for AI.



**Summit Recap Virtual Newsletter:**  
Access our AI-generated daily recaps of the summit by scanning the QR code.



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Hurricane, WV



**Dr. Jorge H. Atilés**  
Associate vice-president & Dean,  
WVU Division for Land-Grant  
Engagement



**Dr. Autumn Tooms Cyrès**  
Professor & Founding Dean, WVU  
College of  
Applied Human Sciences



**Dr. Stephen Pachuta**  
Dean, WVU School of Dentistry

# INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## IMPORTANT POINTS:

- The session on "Innovation in Higher Education" highlighted WVU's dedication to evolving education and community service. The panel began with an overview of the university's academic transformation and the ongoing search for new leadership, setting the stage for discussions on innovation.
- The panel discussed the integration of advanced technology and the expansion of rural healthcare, demonstrating the university's commitment to health innovation. Another panelist introduced the concept of intersectionality in education, showing how the university is addressing the diverse needs of modern learners and educators through innovative programs.
- The panel also focused on the university's mission to improve lives and livelihoods across the state. Initiatives such as developing sustainable housing solutions and fostering youth entrepreneurship were highlighted as key contributions to driving economic and social prosperity. The session concluded with a call for continued collaboration and investment to further enhance the university's regional impact.

## PREDICTIONS:

- **Advanced Healthcare Technology:** WVU will enhance healthcare education with new technologies, improving rural care access.
- **Mental Health Focus:** Increased emphasis on mental health and wellness in education will set a new standard for other institutions.
- **Sustainable Building Practices:** WVU's projects in sustainable housing will drive adoption of green construction in West Virginia.

- **Enhanced Community Programs:** WVU will expand land-grant initiatives to boost local agriculture, education, and youth entrepreneurship.
- **Leadership Change Impact:** The new WVU president will reshape the university's strategic direction and community role.

## CALLS TO ACTION:

- **Support Healthcare Innovations:** Invest in and advocate for advanced technologies in healthcare education at WVU.
- **Promote Mental Health Initiatives:** Support and implement mental health and wellness programs for students and educators.
- **Encourage Sustainable Practices:** Back initiatives focused on green building and sustainable housing projects.
- **Engage in Community Programs:** Collaborate with WVU on land-grant initiatives to enhance local agriculture, education, and entrepreneurship.
- **Participate in Leadership Selection:** Engage in the process of selecting the new WVU president to ensure alignment with the university's transformative goals.

## ELEMENTS WITH SPECIFIC TIES TO WEST VIRGINIA:

- **Economic Impact:** WVU contributes significantly to West Virginia's economy, with over \$1.4 billion in economic impact.
- **Educational Innovation:** The introduction of new programs and technologies at WVU reflects ongoing efforts to adapt to changing educational needs and support local communities.

# INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The "Innovation in Higher Education" session showcased West Virginia University's (WVU) efforts to drive educational, health, and community transformation in alignment with the state's economic and social goals.

Dr. Patrice Harris highlighted WVU's focus on financial stability while expanding critical academic fields like robotics, neurosciences, and sustainability, emphasizing its role as a major economic contributor to the state.

Dr. Stephen Pachuta from the School of Dentistry discussed using technology such as teledentistry and community health programs to serve rural areas, enhancing education and fulfilling WVU's land-grant mission.

Dr. Autumn Tooms Cyprès from the College of Applied Human Sciences introduced initiatives to improve student well-being, including the "U at WVU" iPhone app for personalized support, and programs for mental health, teacher support, and resilience.

Dr. Jorge H. Atilas discussed leveraging West Virginia's natural resources for sustainable development, focusing on partnerships and youth entrepreneurship to drive innovation and state prosperity.

The session emphasized WVU's commitment to innovation, community engagement, and economic development, urging attendees to support its initiatives to ensure WVU's continued impact on the state's future.



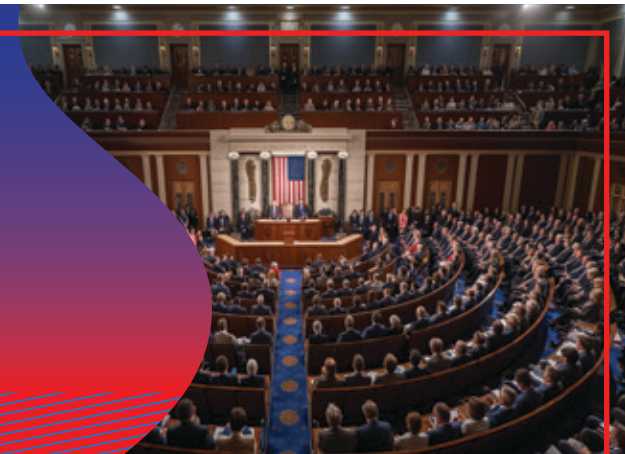
Moderated By: Dr. Patrice Harris  
CEO & Co-Founder, eMed





# WEST VIRGINIA POLL

Mr. Rex Repass  
President, Research America



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Rex Repass provided valuable insights into the political landscape of West Virginia leading up to the November elections. Conducted by Research America, the poll offers a snapshot of voter sentiment across key races and issues, highlighting the trends and factors shaping the state's political future.

Repass emphasized that Donald Trump remains highly popular in West Virginia, maintaining strong support across various voter demographics. Poll results show Trump leading Kamala Harris by a significant margin, particularly among men and independents, with Republicans overwhelmingly backing the former president. This aligns with Trump's continued dominance in the state, where he garnered over 60% of the vote in previous elections.

In the U.S. Senate race, Governor Jim Justice leads the field by a wide

margin, thanks to his consistent approval ratings in the 60% range. Repass pointed out that Justice's popularity crosses party lines, with notable support from independents and even some Democrats. His challenger, Wheeling Mayor Glenn Elliott, remains largely unknown to voters, presenting a steep challenge for his campaign.

The West Virginia governor's race also reflects a strong position for Patrick Morrisey, the state's Attorney General, who leads Democratic challenger Steve Williams. However, with 11% of voters still undecided, the race remains fluid, particularly among independent voters. Repass noted that Morrisey's strong track record in statewide races positions him well as the campaign progresses.

Beyond individual races, Repass discussed broader trends, noting that West Virginians are generally pessimistic about the direction of the U.S., with 70% believing the country is on the wrong track. However, sentiment about West Virginia itself is more positive, with over half of respondents feeling that the state's economy and future outlook are either stable or improving. The economy and jobs remain the top concerns for voters in the state, with 41% citing these as their primary issues.

The presentation concluded with a call to business and community leaders to closely monitor these trends as the November elections approach. Voter sentiment on key issues like the economy, jobs, and leadership in Washington will play a decisive role in shaping the political outcomes in West Virginia.



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