



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

A publication of Bowles Rice LLP

Fall 2015



## Creating A Unified Front to Ensure Regional Success

Keith Burdette, Secretary  
West Virginia Department of Commerce

In 2010, Keith Burdette was appointed by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin as cabinet secretary for the West Virginia Department of Commerce and executive director of the West Virginia Development Office.

Mr. Burdette began his career in public service in the West Virginia House of Delegates, where he served two terms. In 1982, he was elected to the West Virginia State Senate. In 1989, Mr. Burdette was elected the 42nd President of the State Senate at the age of 34, the youngest Senate President in the state's history.

Upon leaving the legislature in 1994, Mr. Burdette formed a government relations and consulting business.

Three days after the 2000 West Virginia gubernatorial election, Governor-Elect Bob Wise asked him to join the new administration, where Mr. Burdette served for three years as director of policy and legislative relations. After leaving the administration in 2003, Mr. Burdette formed the Burdette Group consulting firm.

In November 2004, Mr. Burdette was hired to manage and operate the Area Roundtable and the Wood County Development Authority. He served as president of the Area Roundtable, which is the umbrella organization for all development activities in Wood County, including the work of the Wood County Development Authority and the Parkersburg-Wood County Development Corporation.

I have a great job. I often get to spend my day telling people why West Virginia is a great place to live and do business. I'm privileged to travel around our region, across the country and around the world selling the virtues of our state to decision makers in business and industry. I'm passionate about the job and the product that I am selling. I believe that we do have a great story to tell and that our low cost of doing business, great quality of life, low cost of living and a hardworking, productive and loyal workforce create real advantages for businesses that choose to locate in West Virginia.

While borders are important when locating a company and we compete hard to convince them to locate in our state, once the building is occupied the lines begin to blur – especially as it relates to both workforce and the natural resources which fuel operations.

**West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio sit at the epicenter of a worldwide energy revolution. If we properly develop our resources, they can provide new jobs and investment for our citizens for multiple generations.**

West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio sit at the epicenter of a worldwide energy revolution. If we properly develop our resources, they can provide new jobs and investment for our citizens for multiple generations. While energy commodity prices are at bargain basement prices today, the real value that the region holds is the depth of our reserves and the longevity of its potential

production. Prices will change but the natural resources that are so important to the nation and the world will not. Marcellus and Utica Shales hold vast opportunities for our region. If we proceed strategically, we can continue to be an energy powerhouse for the world, while at the same time diversifying our economy through the expansion of our chemical, polymers and other energy sensitive manufacturing opportunities.

West Virginia has been a leader in developing consistent and pragmatic policies and rules for production that promotes the exploration and exploitation of these vast natural gas fields. However, the exploration and extraction aspect of the industry is transitory in nature. A well is drilled and connected to a gathering system, and then the workforce and the investments needed to create that well move on to the next site. We desperately need to make sure that this energy opportunity leaves long-term roots in our communities. Our focus must be to advance these resources as the feedstock for the creation of essential consumer goods that are manufactured in our state and the region and shipped around the globe.

We will always compete for the next Proctor and Gamble with our sister states, and I can promise you we will be aggressive in that effort. But at the end of the day, the opportunities that the vast reserves of natural gas (NG) and natural gas liquids (NGL) we possess are larger than any one state. They cross multiple state lines. Now is the time to agree on those things that make each of our states more competitive, individually and collectively, with the rest of the country. Now is the time to organize a unified message that heralds our region as a go-to place for manufacturers who can benefit from our abundance. Now is the time to develop





*Commerce Secretary Keith Burdette, U.S. Senator Shelley Moore Capito, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin, U.S. Senator Joe Manchin with representatives of Proctor and Gamble during the groundbreaking ceremony in Berkeley County, West Virginia • Photo Credit: Office of the Governor*

strategies that will create a nationally recognized, world-class workforce in the fields associated with the utilization of natural gas and NGLs in production and manufacturing. Now is the time for our universities to become a cluster of research centers into smart strategies for expanding the use and commercial viability of NG and NGLs.

In mid-October I was pleased to be part of the Tri-State Shale Summit in Morgantown. Governor Tomblin, Governor Wolf of Pennsylvania and Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor of Ohio all signed an agreement taking the first step by pledging enhanced cooperation to ensure the continued development of our region as a leader in this field. It was an important first step. While the planning and discussion will continue, it will ultimately take an army to advance this cause. I encourage you to enlist. The work we do now will pay dividends for our children and grandchildren. ▽