



VIEWSVISIONS

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Strong Workforce Key to Capitalizing on Projects in the Appalachian Basin

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin
State of West Virginia

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin was sworn in as the 35th governor of West Virginia on November 13, 2011, and was sworn in for a second term on January 14, 2013.

A self-employed businessman and former school teacher, Governor Tomblin was elected to the West Virginia House of Delegates in 1974 at the age of 22 and served in the House until he was elected to the West Virginia Senate in 1980. Governor Tomblin was the longest-serving Senate President and was named the state's first Lieutenant Governor in 2000.

A Logan County native, Governor Tomblin received his undergraduate degree from West Virginia University and an MBA from Marshall University.

As a lifelong West Virginian who has spent more than four decades serving the residents of our great state, I can honestly say we currently face one of the most exciting times in generations. West Virginia, along with our neighbors in Pennsylvania and Ohio, is at the heart of a worldwide energy revolution, and I am eager for all of us to work together and make the most of this amazing opportunity.

I'm proud to say that West Virginia has been a leader in the development of the Marcellus and Utica Shales. We were the first state to pass rules regulating horizontal drilling, providing certainty to businesses that want to develop this abundant resource. This year, I signed an executive order to create the Commission on Oil and Natural Gas Industry Safety. As we make the most of this natural resource, we also must ensure our workers return home safely to their families every night and that we continue to do all we can to reduce risks on worksites.

While I represent West Virginia first and foremost, I also recognize that these natural gas and oil formations know no state boundaries.

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf and Ohio Governor John Kasich know this as well, which is why I am pleased that their administrations and numerous private sector representatives joined us in Morgantown for the first-ever Tri-State Shale Summit on October 13, 2015.

This collaborative effort brought together industry, economic development and government leaders from West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Ohio to discuss how we can best align efforts to encourage responsible development in all three states. While we all have individual state interests, it is important to understand that potential investors are not as concerned with state borders as they are with the overall regional workforce and resource availability.

Much as we hear the "Gulf Coast" being a petrochemical hotbed, rather than about Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama individually, we must work to promote the "Appalachian Basin" as an outstanding place for companies to locate and expand. Gas and oil reserves in our region will sustain projects and create jobs for



Governor Earl Ray Tomblin speaks during the West Virginia Workforce Summit on May 5, 2015 • Photo Credit: Office of the Governor



Governor Earl Ray Tomblin and Lieutenant Governor Mary Taylor of Ohio sign the regional agreement document which highlights and promises a future collaboration between West Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania during the 2015 Tri-State Shale Summit • Photo Credit: Office of the Governor

decades to come, and as the worldwide energy market stabilizes, I believe we will have numerous opportunities to capitalize on that, both as a state and as a region.

As we look toward this bright future, a highly trained workforce will be one of the most critical components to attract businesses that want to use these resources or to plan projects to create downstream development based on the byproducts. Again, I'm proud to say West Virginia is leading the way in workforce development.

We are gaining a national reputation for our skilled training programs and a workforce that is committed to getting the job done – and doing it well. I personally chair monthly Workforce Planning Council meetings, and we have worked hard to ensure collaboration among business and industry leaders, state agencies, and our secondary and higher education systems.

During this year's National Governors Association winter meeting in Washington, D.C., I had the opportunity to chair the Economic Development and Commerce Committee work

session. We discussed ways governors can work together to expand advanced manufacturing in our states and identify ways to help foster its continued growth, as part of a comprehensive economic development strategy.

During the session, Millie Marshall, president of Toyota Motor Manufacturing West Virginia, talked about the importance of a well-trained workforce and how West Virginia is providing just that. When another governor asked how to get a Toyota plant in her state, part of Millie's response was that, "You need to do what West Virginia is doing when it comes to workforce training."

Here in the Mountain State, we are working to give businesses access to the high-tech resources and highly skilled workers necessary to fill jobs in high-demand fields. With support from our community and technical college system, our state's advanced technology centers are providing the latest technologies and programs to increase economic growth, focus on job creation and foster economic development.

Our Governor's Guaranteed Workforce Program is always looking for innovative ways to help new and expanding businesses train, retrain and upgrade the skills of their employees. Advancing our workforce through these educational partnerships and training programs is an investment with a lasting, invaluable return – a future that is bright and prosperous for West Virginia and her people.

In May, I hosted the state's first ever Workforce Summit – a comprehensive review of our ongoing workforce development efforts – which highlighted the strong portfolio of programs we've developed. We received overwhelming support from both the public and private sector, and these initiatives are giving West Virginians of all ages access to training opportunities, including apprenticeships or courses at our community and technical colleges and four-year higher education institutions, to prepare to be contributing members of our workforce.

Thanks to our ability to collaborate during the Tri-State Shale Summit, I am eager to see all three of our states come together to compete for projects that will ensure a bright future for the Appalachian Basin now, and for years to come. ▼