

Bowles **Rice**

VIEWS *&* VISIONS

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From Our Managing Partner

In previous issues of *Views & Visions*, we focused on the economic development and new economy coming to West Virginia and the region. This development will provide career opportunities for our workforce in manufacturing, construction, energy, technology, health care, and countless other business sectors. Our challenge is to provide a sufficient number of well-trained, qualified workers to meet the demands of the new economy. This edition is devoted to creating that workforce.

As you read through this edition, you will learn of the many state, federal, educational institution, and industry programs currently in place or coming soon, all of which are designed to train and prepare our workforce for the jobs and careers coming to our region. For the first time, perhaps in our history, we are faced with the challenge of finding enough qualified workers to fill these positions. It is clear from reading this edition that, based upon the joint efforts by government, industry, and our educational institutions, we are up for this challenge.

I believe the main obstacle to achieving the goal of supplying a well-trained, qualified workforce is the workforce participation issue raised in several of the articles. I particularly found Mr. Bissett's article very interesting, where he addressed many of the factors that contribute to the workforce participation problem. This topic was also covered well in the article from Ms. Courts – clearly the Education Alliance has developed a plan of attack to remedy this problem. What was really striking to me was the fact that industry has jumped in to participate, with programs like the Toyota 4T Program, the CAREERS Program, and the innovative MedEd Program.

I also feel very strongly that creating a sense of purpose among your workforce is essential to creating long-term productive team members. As Ms. Panzarella points out, when an employee feels a sense of belonging and that their contributions matter, they are transformed and contribute to the success of the organization. Here at Bowles Rice, we created a program called BowlesCares in 2022. BowlesCares was designed to promote community involvement throughout our firm and to recognize the efforts and accomplishments of everyone on our team. We started by recognizing all of our employees who have been with us for 25 years or more, providing a bonus and plaque in recognition of this milestone. If you walk around our offices today, you will see the plaques and the “Happy Gilmore” checks proudly displayed by our recipients.

The second arm of BowlesCares was designed to promote community involvement and allows for additional time off when our members participate in community events. Over the past two years, our employees have devoted thousands of hours to community projects, and each one has thanked management for encouraging them to participate in such worthwhile events. Our morale is up, and our team members feel a true sense of belonging and are committed to the firm's overall success. This program has made a huge difference at our firm.

Workforce development is critical to the future success of our region. As Mr. Bissett said, “a good job fixes a lot of problems.” We have the good jobs so now we need to make sure we have well-trained workers who can take those good jobs. Based upon what I read in this edition, I am confident we have the programs in place to accomplish this goal. **V**



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Marc Monteleone is the Managing Partner of Bowles Rice. Elected in January of 2022, his responsibilities include leadership, management, and administration of the firm. His legal practice includes federal and state taxation, mergers and acquisitions, oil and gas law, construction law, commercial law, and real estate development. Monteleone, who authored West Virginia's design-build legislation, was appointed Chair of the West Virginia Design-Build Review Board – a position he held for nearly 20 years – by former Governor Cecil Underwood. He is also a Past President of the Independent Oil & Gas Association of West Virginia and currently serves as the Tax Committee Chair for the Gas & Oil Association of West Virginia.