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Riley Moore
West Virginia State
Treasurer's Office

Riley Moore is West Virginia's 25th State Treasurer. Born in Morgantown, Riley started his career as a welder before receiving an undergraduate degree in Government and International Politics from George Mason University and master's degree in strategic security studies from the National Defense University at Fort McNair. Riley has served as a national security advisor to the Foreign Affairs Committee in the U.S. House of Representatives and as a contractor with the Department of Homeland Security.

Reviving the Blue-Collar Workforce

Building a strong, vibrant blue-collar workforce is essential to the future success of West Virginia and our country as a whole.

After my grandfather's generation won World War II, they returned home to turn the United States into the industrial powerhouse of the world. America led the way with manufacturing, groundbreaking construction projects like the interstate highway system, and powered the world with our energy production.

Unfortunately, the globalization of the late 20th Century decimated that once-strong industrial base, as good-paying jobs were shipped overseas and supply chains were moved to foreign shores. Factories were shuttered and the Rust Belt replaced the American Dream for thousands of working-class Americans.



tools in place – the most important being a well-trained, highly skilled workforce available and at the ready for when businesses are prepared to break ground.

“As elected leaders, we must do everything we can to encourage investment in West Virginia and America as a whole.”

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the dangers of outsourcing our manufacturing base and supply chains to other countries – particularly hostile ones like China. From empty shelves at grocery stores to long delivery times for essential goods, America became acutely aware of its need to build up a domestic manufacturing and service economy.

As elected leaders, we must do everything we can to encourage investment in West Virginia and America as a whole. In order to welcome new business expansions and opportunities, it is critical that we ensure we have all the

In West Virginia, we have made tremendous investments in education over the years, with programs like the PROMISE Scholarship, the SMART529 College Savings Plan, and the West Virginia Invests grant program that provides free tuition to community and technical colleges.

But there remains an obstacle we haven't removed yet. Once people get out of school, they still face barriers to entering the workforce, particularly with paying for the occupational licenses, tools, and equipment they need to get to work.

JUMP START

SAVINGS PROGRAM

That's why, when I took over as State Treasurer in 2021, we hit the ground running to create a new program to remove that final obstacle in the way of getting to work. We call it the Jumpstart Savings Program.

The Jumpstart Savings Program is designed to help people cover the costs of entering the workforce. It's similar to a 529 plan, but whereas the 529 plan lets you save for the costs of tuition and books needed to go to school, the Jumpstart Savings Program covers the costs needed to get a job after you graduate.

It allows a person to save tax-free to be able to pay for their post-education expenses needed to enter a skilled trade and lets them withdraw the money tax-free when they need it.

This program is something borne out of my own life experience.

My first job out of high school was as a welder – I literally welded my way through college. At one point, I was working at an open-pit mine operation doing maintenance on equipment, and I thought I could probably make a good living by starting my own independent mobile welding business.

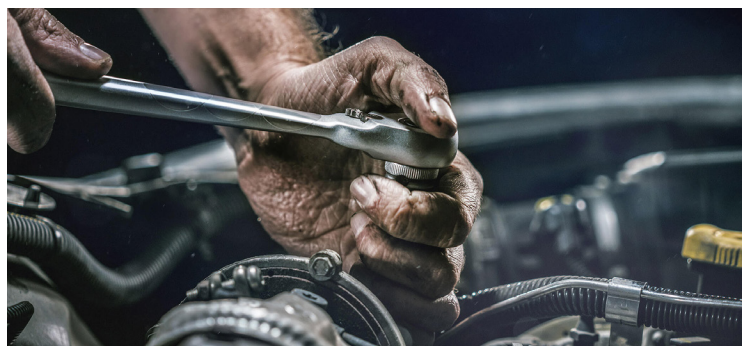
But when I started looking at going to work on my own, I ran into a roadblock of realizing just how cost-prohibitive it was to start your own independent contracting business. That's when the idea of the Jumpstart Savings Program took root in my head.

If we can allow people to save for vocations and trades the way we help them save for college and post-graduate education, we could empower our blue-collar workforce across the country and rejuvenate many of the sectors that have been in decline in many parts of mid-America.

This is critically important in places like West Virginia and midwestern states that have seen declines in manufacturing. One of the biggest demands we hear from companies looking to locate new businesses is the need to have a skilled, trained workforce in place prior to opening a business.

The Jumpstart Savings Program can help ensure these workers are prepared when new companies come to town.

While we don't want to lose our focus on sending people to college, we do need to admit that not all jobs we're creating require a college education. There are many good-paying jobs that don't require a four-year degree. The Jumpstart Savings Program can help attract people to those jobs and help them as they establish their careers.



This is also critical for the future of America. The U.S. and Chinese economies are decoupling – but the Chinese economy is separating from the U.S. faster than we are separating from them. They're now poised to overtake us in the global economy.

China has a stated goal of being the world's superpower by 2049. How are we as a country going to rise to the challenge to remain the world's economic powerhouse while ensuring we are ready to re-shore jobs from China?

America needs a revival in its manufacturing sector and blue-collar workforce, and the Jumpstart Savings Program can be instrumental in making us leaders in the global economy for generations to come. **W**