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# Natural Gas and Oil: Working Hard to Bolster West Virginia's Workforce



**Charlie Burd**  
Gas and Oil Association  
of West Virginia

Since July 2002, Charlie Burd has served as Executive Director of the Gas and Oil Association of WV, Inc. (GO-WV). Prior to his trade association affiliation, Charlie enjoyed a 29-year career at Hope Gas, Inc. A 2001 graduate of Leadership West Virginia, Charlie serves on several industry advisory committees for WVU and is active with the Independent Petroleum Association of America, the West Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and the West Virginia Manufacturers Association. In 2017, Charlie was honored as the "West Virginia Oil and Gas Man of the Year." In 2021, Governor Justice appointed him to serve on the West Virginia Public Energy Authority.

"This industry betters everyone around it," said Governor Jim Justice during the Gas and Oil Association of West Virginia's (GO-WV) 2024 Annual Winter Meeting. Here in West Virginia, the natural gas and oil sector powers the state's economy and generates significant job creation and workforce development opportunities.

According to the annual GO-WV Gas Facts report ([gowv.com/resources/gas-facts/](http://gowv.com/resources/gas-facts/)), natural gas and oil directly supports close to 20,000 jobs in the state, with approximately 73,000 jobs supported indirectly. Since 2020, as the state began to recover from the COVID pandemic, these numbers have been on the rise in parallel with the resurgence in energy activity. In addition, these jobs come with an average salary of over \$93,000 plus benefits.

A cornerstone of America's energy landscape, the Energy Information Administration lists West Virginia as the fourth largest producer of marketed natural gas in the U.S., accounting for nearly 10% of total U.S. natural gas production. In 2023 alone, the industry



In fact, since the beginning of the Marcellus and Utica Shale exploration and development in 2008, the natural gas industry has paid over \$3.8 billion in severance and county property tax contributions. And thousands of royalty owners have directly benefited due to the increased oil and natural gas production.

In addition to tax revenues invested in communities, GO-WV and individual members devote additional resources to expand education, job training, and workforce development opportunities for all ages.

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**"West Virginia's skilled, available, and well-trained workforce is a key factor behind infrastructure investment, job opportunities, and economic prosperity to the state!"**

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paid \$714 million in severance taxes and \$184 million in property taxes that fund and expand essential services, such as education, first responders, programs for seniors and children, and infrastructure improvements – all of which betters the communities where natural gas and oil development occurs.

Every year, GO-WV hosts its science teacher workshop to help foster energy education by connecting science education to the energy industry – providing middle and high school math and science teachers with resource materials, lesson plans, internet links, and activities. This important effort is designed



to initiate the connection between education and creating a pathway to create tomorrow's workforce.

Recently, West Virginia's top natural gas producer, Antero Resources, donated \$4 million to West Virginia University to expand educational opportunities for future petroleum and natural gas engineers and help fund and develop the country's first-ever online Master of Science degree in midstream petroleum engineering. This level of industry support is a clear indicator of the anticipated future job opportunities available to college graduates and those seeking to enter the midstream natural gas sector.

"It's about the future of West Virginia's young people and the future of our state's economy. Energy produced right here is vitally needed to improve lives all over the world, and this program will help ensure our state's place in the global economy," said Kevin Ellis, Antero's Regional Senior Vice President.

Southwestern Energy (SWN), the third largest natural gas producer in the state, regularly teams up with the Community Foundation for the Ohio Valley to support public school STEM education. SWN-sponsored grants are awarded to K-12 teachers in Brooke, Ohio, Marshall, and Wetzel County schools for projects that incorporate STEM concepts into the classrooms.

On top of the youth education and career development initiatives that individual companies provide, the industry generates significant benefits extending far beyond the sector itself. Companies up and down the business supply chain leverage abundant, reliable, and low-cost natural gas and oil to accelerate industrial, commercial, and manufacturing growth in West Virginia and the Appalachian region. From providing crucial feedstocks for manufacturing processes to expanding natural gas power generation facilities, these benefits expand investments across communities and, in turn, create additional jobs.

Consider the expansion of West Virginia's natural gas development spurred investments in vital energy infrastructure projects, including the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP). The MVP's construction alone supports over 4,500 jobs, and, once operational, the project will transport more than 2 billion cubic feet of natural gas per day to customers in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast regions of the United States, while generating \$50 million in tax revenue and \$175 million in royalty payments. Simply put: the energy industry is unlocking new markets and giving West Virginia a competitive edge. The West Virginia Department of Economic Development has stated on numerous occasions that West Virginia's skilled, available, and well-trained workforce is a key factor behind infrastructure investment, job opportunities, and economic prosperity to the state.

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**Charlie Burd**

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Beyond the employment and economic opportunities supported through increased natural gas activities, constant and ongoing research and development advances technological innovations, allowing the state to capitalize on emerging industries and opportunities such as hydrogen production.

The Appalachian Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub (ARCH2) represents the opportunity to leverage West Virginia's expansive natural gas reserves to accelerate the development and deployment of clean hydrogen production. In fact, the U.S. Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee reported that ARCH2 will develop a comprehensive hydrogen-based energy network and manufacturing industry in West Virginia, creating nearly 20,000 jobs and unlocking up to \$6 billion in private sector investments.

And, as West Virginia and the energy industry turn the corner to help better achieve net-zero emissions, we're attracting projects like the state-of-the-art CPV Shay Clean Energy Center in Doddridge County. This facility will generate over 2,000 MW of electricity using natural gas combined-cycle power generation technology with carbon capture component capable of cutting emissions up to 90-95% – all this, while producing enough electricity to serve 1.8 million homes and businesses.