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Annual Average Wage Grows to \$32,724 in 2006

CHARLESTON, WV--The average West Virginia worker earned \$32,724 in 2006, according to statistics released by WORKFORCE West Virginia, a division of the West Virginia Department of Commerce. The average annual wage in the state rose by \$1,380, about 4.4 percent, from 2005. Average annual employment grew to 705,281 from 695,300, an increase of 9,981 representing noteworthy economic activity in the state. The top five Industries growing in employment over the year included: construction (+2,767), mining (+2,010), leisure & hospitality (+1,599), retail trade (+1,135) and professional & business services (+1,129). The top three industries with declining employment were manufacturing (-1,216), information (-185) and other services (-164). A contraction in the iron & steel mills sector overshadowed modest growth in several manufacturing sectors, including machinery, electrical equipment and aerospace products & parts.

A survey of wages shows federal government health services paid the highest average annual wage among the state's major industry sectors with an average of \$71,035 followed by utilities (\$68,096). Mining (\$59,979), management services (\$54,389) and wholesale trade (\$45,171) complete the top five highest-paying sectors.

Boone County continued to earn the highest average annual wage at \$44,333 followed by Marshall (\$39,439), Mingo (\$38,185), Pleasants (\$38,184); Putnam (\$38,056), Kanawha (\$36,419), Mason (\$36,121); Tyler (\$35,553), Wayne (\$35,162) and Berkeley (\$34,688). Wirt County had the lowest average annual wage of \$22,085 followed by Tucker (\$22,391), Summers (\$22,742), Wetzel (\$23,639) and Taylor (\$24,280). Fastest growing counties in terms of the number of employed were Monongalia (+1,640), Berkeley (+1,248), Raleigh (+745), Kanawha (+642) and McDowell (+621). As a percentage, McDowell had the highest growth rate at over 13 percent from 2005. West Virginia's covered employers paid over \$23 billion in wages in 2006, an increase of nearly \$1.3 billion or 5.9 percent from 2005.

Based on data that include all workers covered by state and federal unemployment insurance programs, these statistics appear each year in the West Virginia Employment and Wages. Also included are data on average annual employment, average annual and weekly wages, and the number of employers by detailed industry for the state and each of its 55 counties. West Virginia Employment and Wages can be found online at www.wvbep.org/bep/lmi/WAGEDATA.htm.

The year 2006 marks the fifth year these statistics have been published based on the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), developed to provide a consistent framework for the collection, analysis and dissemination of industrial statistics. NAICS is the first industry classification system developed in accordance with the principle that producing units using similar production processes should be grouped together. NAICS also reflects, in a much more explicit way, the enormous changes in technology and in the growth and diversification of services that have marked recent decades.