

West Virginia: An Analysis of a Wild and Wonderful Failure

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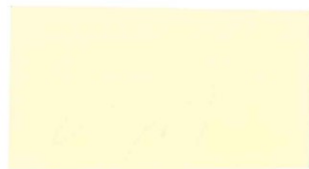
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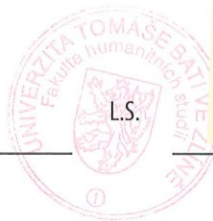
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ABSTRAKT

Od občanské války patří Západní Virginie mezi nejvíce zaostalé státy Spojených států amerických a cílem této práce je analýza příčin, které ovlivily tuto situaci. Každá kapitola se věnuje určité příčině, díky níž se Západní Virginie nemůže rovnat ostatním státům. V neposlední řadě práce shrnuje problémy Západní Virginie, které jsou způsobeny industrializací, emigrací, politikou, jako je například korupce, a investicemi.

Klíčová slova:

Západní Virginie, Spojené státy americké, Appalačské pohoří, Ohio, Industrializace, Migrace, Nezaměstnanost, Korupce, John F. Kennedy, Investice, Turismus, Izolace, Politika, Chudoba, Životní prostředí.

ABSTRACT

Since the Civil War West Virginia has been one of the most underdeveloped states in the union. This thesis analyses the reasons for this, with each chapter focusing on a different reason for the state's shortcomings. Ultimately, the thesis concludes that West Virginia's struggles stem from a combination of industrialization, mass out-migration, political malfeasance, such as corruption, and poor investments.

Keywords:

West Virginia, United States, Appalachia, Ohio, Industrialization, Migration, Unemployment, Corruption, John F. Kennedy, Investments, Tourism, Isolation, Politics, Poverty, Environment.

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I hereby declare that the print version of my bachelor's thesis and the electronic version of my thesis deposited in the IS/STAG system are identical.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	8
1 WEST VIRGINIA BEFORE 1950	9
2 BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS.....	11
2.1 INDUSTRIALIZATION	11
2.1.1 The National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement	12
2.2 POST-INDUSTRIALISATION.....	12
2.2.1 Unemployment.....	12
2.2.2 Health	13
2.2.3 Lifestyle.....	13
2.2.4 Poverty	14
3 MIGRATION.....	16
3.1 NATION’S LARGEST INTERNAL MIGRATION.....	16
3.2 MIGRATION TO NORTHERN OHIO	17
3.3 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES.....	18
4 POLITICS	19
4.1 JOHN F. KENNEDY	19
4.1.1 Fulfilling Kennedy’s promise	20
4.2 POLITICAL CORRUPTION.....	21
4.2.1 Voter corruption	22
4.3 POVERTY AS A SYMBOL	22
4.4 GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE.....	23
5 INVESTMENTS	24
5.1.1 President’s Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC).....	24
5.1.2 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC).....	25
5.1.3 Gambling.....	26
5.1.4 National Radio Astronomy Observatory.....	26
5.2 TOURISM	27
5.2.1 West Virginia Tourism Office	28
5.2.2 Water Contamination	29
5.2.3 Transportation	29
5.3 EDUCATION	31
6 IMPACT OF DONALD TRUMP’S PRESIDENCY ON WEST VIRGINIA	32
6.1 COAL INDUSTRY	32
CONCLUSION	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	36

INTRODUCTION

West Virginia belongs to an unfortunate group of U.S. states, including Mississippi and Alabama, which are underdeveloped. There are many reasons for this, most of which are connected with industrialization, which in turn led to unemployment, out-migration, and brain drain. Left behind in the state was a declining, ageing and generally uneducated population that found it difficult to keep up with the rest of America.¹ In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy kept a campaign promise to help West Virginians with their modernization struggles, establishing the President's Appalachian Regional Commission to invest capital in the state. However, due to his assassination in 1963, the commission did not meet its goals. Since then, many investments have been made in West Virginia, but all of them have been "quick fixes," including the National Radio Astronomy Observatory and tourism advertising, which have failed to help the state claw out of the deep socioeconomic hole in which it has found itself. The investment that would have really helped the state was one not made, this being a much-needed investment in transportation infrastructure, such as roads and airports. Without such infrastructure, West Virginia remains largely isolated, which limits its options and decreases its future prospects.

¹ Ronald D. Eller, *Uneven Ground: Appalachia Since 1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 10-90.

1 WEST VIRGINIA BEFORE 1950

West Virginia was declared the thirty-fifth state on June 20, 1863. However, the process of seceding from the Confederate State of Virginia started on May 26, 1861 with the First Wheeling Convention. There were many differences between the inhabitants in eastern and western Virginia, whether in cultural, physiographical or political preferences. These disagreements led them to separate Virginia into two states.²

Even though West Virginia became independent from Virginia previous problems remained unsolved. The land was devastated, there was almost no money in circulation and not enough human resources to rebuild the new state. For these reasons, “the decades following the Civil War in Appalachia were a time of decline and growth, confusion and organization, poverty and riches.”³

At the end of the nineteenth century, Governor A. B. Fleming saw potential in West Virginia’s mineral resources and forests. Even though they had various natural resources they struggled to compete with the rest of the country, which already had established industrial regions. Fleming alerted potential investors, who were generally unaware of the wealth West Virginia had.⁴

State officials such as Fleming saw great potential in the coal industry, which was then slowed only by a lack of necessary infrastructure. The river transportation then in use was not able to handle mass mining. At the beginning of the twentieth century, railroads were spread across the mining areas which enabled the fast growth of the mining industry which in turn spurred the economy. Between World War I and the Great Depression, the amount of the coal that was mined, doubled.⁵ The thriving coal industry changed the society not only economically, but also socially. Cities abandoned agriculture and focused on businesses, not just mining, but coal-related industries.

During the Great Depression, thousands of families that had migrated to West Virginia for work opportunities returned home. Those who could not afford to do so established subsistence farms in the mountains. People suffered from unemployment, hunger and even diseases and were dependent on the government for assistance.⁶

² Otis K. Rice and Stephen W. Brown, *West Virginia: A History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994) 124-152.

³ Andrew L. Slap and Gordon B. McKinney, *Reconstructing Appalachia: The Civil War’s Aftermath* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 211-245.

⁴ Slap and McKinney, *Reconstructing Appalachia*, 211-245.

⁵ Rice and Brown, *West Virginia*, 124-152.

⁶ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 10-11.

Ironically, World War II saved West Virginians from the Great Depression. During the war demand for coal and timber increased rapidly, Europe being the main market. In 1938, many small and midsized mines were reopened due to this high demand. As a result, unemployment dropped.⁷ The war revived the hopes for a generation of people, that had known only poverty and hard times. Such hopes, however, would soon be dashed, for with end of the war came a decrease in demand for coal, and a return to economic decline.⁸

⁷ Rice and Brown, *West Virginia*, 124-152.

⁸ Rice and Brown, *West Virginia*, 124-152.

2 BEGINNING OF THE CRISIS

West Virginia is a wealthy state when it comes to natural resources. It is a commodity frontier, characterized by minimal capital investments required to produce large quantities of resources, labour or land.⁹ This potential drew many immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe to the state in the first decades of the twentieth century. However, the lifestyle of not just these economic immigrants but also West Virginia natives dramatically changed with industrialisation.¹⁰

After World War II, Europe was completely devastated, and the United States attained power. The country became wealthy in the private sector, but the public sector remained poor. The mining boom that had fuelled West Virginia's economy in the 1940s levelled off at the end of the war and then declined, consumers switched to alternative energy sources for example natural gas and oil.¹¹

Furthermore, although West Virginia is wealthy in terms of natural sources, it was mostly owned by corporations not based in the state. Thus, West Virginia did not benefit from its natural resources. The sales of which were taxed elsewhere.¹²

2.1 Industrialization

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the West Virginia coal industry was worked mostly by men. This began to change, however, thanks to mechanization such as the conveyor belt and automatic loading machine, which began being utilized during World War II to help meet demand.¹³ After the war, mechanization continued, and miners were steadily replaced by machines. Miners lost their jobs, while production rapidly increased. Ten men, operating machines, were able to produce three times more coal than eighty-six men loading coal by hand.¹⁴

Industrialization also impacted farming. Previously, children were expected to go into the family business, but now their labour was no longer needed, prompting many to move out of state. Moreover, mechanization increased production, which in turn decreased demand and drove down prices. Suddenly, farmers were not able to support their families, even

⁹ Benjamin J. Marley, "The Coal Crisis in Appalachia: Agrarian Transformation, Commodity Frontiers and the Geographies of Capital," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 16, no.2 (2015): 228.

¹⁰ Joseph M. Aloï, "Coal Feeds My Family: Subsistence, Energy, And Industry in Central Appalachia." *Relations* 6, no. 2 (2018): 270.

¹¹ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 17.

¹² Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 15.

¹³ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 16.

¹⁴ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 20.

though they were producing more than they ever had before. This led to a further population outflow, as farmers gave up and moved away.¹⁵

2.1.1 The National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement

The National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement, enacted in 1950, increased pay for miners and restored payments to the United Mine Workers of America Health and Retirement Funds, which had been stopped in West Virginia the previous year due to a drop in coal prices and an increase in non-union competition. Due to this required increase in pay, miners needed to increase production to stay solvent. Small mines could not afford the pay increase and shut down, while larger mines further mechanized. Jobs were lost. At the end of World War II, there were 475,000 coal miners in West Virginia. By 1970, that number had dropped to 107,000.¹⁶ And in 2011, it was down to 17,992.¹⁷ In other words, a wage agreement meant to help miners ended up driving them into the ever-growing ranks of the unemployed.

2.2 Post-Industrialisation

After the first wave of industrialisation, West Virginia struggled. Consequences of industrialisation are still affecting the state nowadays. Unemployment remains high, as does outmigration, which has led to an aging population. This population is increasingly isolated, due to the state's inability to improve its infrastructure. Moreover, surface mining, which began in the 1950s, put more miners in the mountainous areas of the state out of business.¹⁸

2.2.1 Unemployment

Industrialisation had a devastating impact on West Virginia's employment. At one point, coal mining employed one third of the state's population. In 2011, it employed just one percent.¹⁹ During the 1950s, the country's employment rate increased by 17 percent, whereas West Virginia's employment rate dropped by 1.5 percent. Unemployment was a big issue, especially in the coalfields, it was four times higher than in the rest of the country. Even when the employment rate increased in the 1970s, it did so at a slower rate than the rest of the nation.

¹⁵ Carl E. Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land: A Popular History of Appalachian Migration to Northeast Ohio, 1940-1965* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998), 18.

¹⁶ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 18-20.

¹⁷ Evelyn O. Talbott, et al., *Population and Exposure Characteristics of Coal Mining and Non-Coal Mining Counties in West Virginia* (Englewood, CO: Society for Mining, Metallurgy, and Exploration, 2013), 203-206.

¹⁸ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 36.

¹⁹ Talbott, et. al., *Population and Exposure Characteristics*, 203-206.

During a recession in the 1980s, when the national employment rate stagnated. West Virginia's employment rate, which depended largely on coal and steel dropped rapidly. Closely connected with unemployment is the state's aging population. The state suffers from an out-migration of young people and a growing segment of retirees. Also, at 42 percent, West Virginia has one of the largest rural populations in the country. The national average is around 20 percent.²⁰

Due to such high unemployment, the number of families surviving on public assistance increased rapidly. The government response to joblessness was the creation of state-administered programs. Retired union miners received small amounts of money from the UMWA Health and Retirement Funds. On the other hand, non-union miners, many unemployed, often applied for disability payments. In the 1950's, the number of welfare programs increased rapidly. The government increasingly played a role in the daily lives of West Virginians.²¹

2.2.2 Health

Health is a key factor affecting the state. In the 1960s, the standard of living, which includes the well-being and health of the population, was way below the national average. It still is. Though the mortality rate has been declining since the 1960s – due to rapid medical improvements –, it is expected to rise, thanks largely to the citizenry's poverty and struggles with obesity. On a percentage basis, West Virginia has led the nation in Medicare and Medicaid enrolments for the last twenty-five years.²² One of the leading physical ailments in the state is black lung, a chronic disease common among miners. The Black Lung Association, established in the 1960s to deal with this problem, compensates miners diagnosed with this disease.²³

2.2.3 Lifestyle

The lifestyle of West Virginians is closely connected to their income. In the 1970s, 13 percent lacked plumbing in their houses, which was double the national average. By the

²⁰ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now: Examining Changes to the Appalachian Region Since 1665*. (Morgantown: West Virginia University, 2015), 7.

²¹ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 30-33.

²² Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 10-11.

²³ Bennett M. Judkins, *The People's Respirator: Coalition Building and the Black Lung Association*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 225.

1990s, the number had dropped to 2 percent, yet – even now, West Virginia still leads the nation in lack of indoor plumbing.²⁴

Another lifestyle factor is education. West Virginia's education level is still struggling. Even though the situation has improved, it is still behind. In the 1960s, only ten percent of West Virginians had completed high school. The state had focused on the mining industry, for which education was not needed. This is causing problems nowadays as the older generation struggles to find a job due to their lack of education.²⁵ Now, 87 percent of West Virginians graduate high school,²⁶ but fewer than half of these go on to university,²⁷ and even fewer graduate, meaning the state is still lagging behind the national average. West Virginia is 20 percent behind its neighbours, Virginia and Pennsylvania, in college graduation rates.²⁸

The lack of an adequate transportation network has greatly affected West Virginia. A lack of connections to the outside world, via roads which are in a poor condition, or airports, has basically shut the door to many business-related opportunities.²⁹

Another key factor is a lack of communication with the outside world. The state is now lagging behind in internet connections, which is one of the main factors that effects the inflow of new technologies and new ideas that could improve the situation. For some households it is impossible to afford internet connections, in part because there are few providers, resulting in a lack of competition and higher prices.³⁰ Also, there is a lack of telecommunications infrastructure because the state is predominantly rural and sparsely populated, precluding investment.

2.2.4 Poverty

Poverty effects West Virginia till nowadays. In the 1960s, 31 percent of the state's population was below the poverty line. This was 30 percent higher than the national average. Although, in the next decade the percentage halved, it is still higher than the national average. The lack of formal economy and rural character had the biggest effects on poverty. Although

²⁴ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 9-10.

²⁵ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 9.

²⁶ West Virginia Education Association, "Graduation Rate Rises in West Virginia High Schools," <https://www.wvea.org/content/graduation-rate-rises-west-virginia-high-schools>.

²⁷ Town Charts, "West Virginia Education Data," <https://www.towncharts.com/West-Virginia/West-Virginia-state-Education-data.html>.

²⁸ Andy Kiersz, "The 15 U.S. States with the Lowest College Graduation Rates," Business Insider, 7 June 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/us-states-with-the-lowest-college-graduation-rates-2019-6>.

²⁹ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 11-12.

³⁰ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 12.

the average family income reached 84 percent of the average family income on the national level, families in West Virginia were larger than average. Over the last century the poverty percentage fluctuated but never dipped below 16 percent. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the poverty level was the lowest it had been since the 1970s, at 16.6 percent.³¹ According to a study of coal-production counties, in the 1930s approximately 350,000 people should have left the agriculture sector and another 60,000 of them should have left the coal industry. As the population with the lowest education and income had been working in those sectors, if those people had left, the living standard would have reached the national average.³²

³¹ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 5-38.

³² Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, 23.

3 MIGRATION

Industrialisation had a massive impact on migration from the mountain areas. However, the beginning of the migration goes far back, to the state's nativity when families relocated mostly to Texas and Missouri looking for a cheaper land. Before the mining boom mountain farmers were commonly moving across the state for seasonal jobs or occasional job opportunities in the coal industry, especially looking for better paid job positions. During the Progressive Era (1890-1920s), mine workers commonly migrated across the mountains, moving from one mine to another to find higher wages and better life conditions, such as education, housing or health care system.³³ As a result in 1968, approximately one third of native-born West Virginians were living outside the state. Four major factors influenced mostly the young population to leave West Virginia – a shortage of job opportunities, overcrowded farms, the North's industrial boom, and having different life expectations than their parents.³⁴

3.1 Nation's largest internal migration

Between 1940 and 1970, the largest American migration took place, during which over three million inhabitants of Appalachia, mostly young people, left their homes seeking better education or higher salaries. Initially, they generally intended to return home after achieving their goals, but most never did. The luxury they encountered outside of Appalachia affected their decisions not to return. Especially women were drawn to the safety, opportunities and ease that existed outside of the region. The migration caused a rapid rise in the age of the population.³⁵

In their new homes outside of Appalachia, West Virginians were dealing with their new neighbour's prejudices and stereotypes, of them being a step behind everyone else, being unclean, ignorant and immoral. They were considered "a sore to the city and a plague to themselves." In response to discrimination, they created their own small communities, to assist and comfort each other. They also became increasingly family-oriented.³⁶

A difference could also be seen in schools. West Virginia's educational system lagged behind other states. As a result, the state's migrant children struggled in school. Moreover, their strong dialect tended to leave them misunderstood or silenced. Even the teachers, who

³³ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 20-21.

³⁴ Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, 28-29.

³⁵ Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, 5-29.

³⁶ Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, 5.

generally lacked knowledge of West Virginia culture depended on existing prejudices and stereotypes. In response, the federal and state governments took various initiatives to help West Virginian migrants assimilate. For instance, the Council of the Southern Mountains established a network of workshops held in cities across the Midwest, the purpose of which was to help professionals understand West Virginia's history, society and culture.³⁷

3.2 Migration to Northern Ohio

West Virginians' common migration destination was Northern Ohio, especially Cuyahoga County. In 1973, between 100,000 – 130,000 people migrated here from neighbouring states. Approximately seventy-three percent of the migrants living in Cleveland were from Appalachia. Despite common stereotypes, that people from Appalachia were hillbillies, barefoot, bearded men with pregnant wives, the opposite was true, and employers rightfully saw potential in them. The migrants were actually self-disciplined, hardworking, purposeful, and strong believers in democracy and liberty. Ashtabula County, Ohio experienced a rapid change from agriculture to manufacturing, resulting in a shortage of labour. The county's employers, familiar with the unemployment situation in West Virginia, targeted advertisements towards West Virginians. The first to do so was Ford and Fisher Body, an automobile and steel factory, which recruited West Virginians through newspapers. They offered them a job, where no experience was necessary, and moving and accommodation costs were covered. Accommodation was important, because Ohio landlord often rejected West Virginian tenants due their different dialect or vocabulary as they were considered as distrustful. Other companies followed suit. A mill made a similar effort, offering jobs to candidates between the age of 18 to 40, weighing more than 145 pounds, who had at least an eight-grade education. Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company targeted West Virginia's workers, advertising Cleveland as "the Best Location in the Nation."³⁸ When Electromet, an Ohio automobile supplier, needed more labour, company representatives simply drove to West Virginia and loaded their cars with working men, promising them free accommodation. Between 1955 and 1960, more than 68,000 Appalachians migrated to Ohio for work, mostly for the automobile industry in large cities like Columbus, Dayton, or Cleveland. Employers in these cities focused on Appalachia and targeted available jobs toward Appalachians. With this migrant workforce, production

³⁷ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 20-28.

³⁸ Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, 7-18.

increased and Ohio's economy expanded. However, Ohio's gain was West Virginia's loss. By the end of the 1960s, one in three industrial workers in Ohio was from Appalachia, and West Virginia's economy declined due to a lack of human resources.³⁹

Some West Virginians were motivated to modernize their state, especially in the agriculture sector. However, West Virginia was falling behind deeply in comparison with neighbouring states. Their new technology was revolutionary for West Virginia, but not revolutionary for any other neighbouring state. The level of West Virginia's underdevelopment demotivated almost everyone, who tried to improve the state's situation.⁴⁰

3.3 Demographic changes

The majority of migrants were young people who were seeking better life opportunities. This led to an ageing population in west Virginia, which increased unemployment and decreased population. Moreover, the state's citizenry became increasingly rural in character, as it was the young who tended to congregate in cities for socioeconomic reasons. Farmers also left West Virginia in great numbers. In the 1950s, farming decreased by 70 percent. As a result, West Virginia was no longer self-sufficient in terms of sustenance, and food had to be imported from other states, driving up the prices for a citizenry that was already among the poorest in the nation.⁴¹ High food prices only served to drive more people out of the state. Even though the population increased slightly in the 1990s, it is now dropping again. Currently, West Virginia is the only state in the country where the mortality rate is higher than the birth rate. As a result, West Virginia's population is decreasing by 2 percent per year.⁴²

³⁹ Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, 7-18.

⁴⁰ Feather, *Mountain People in a Flat Land*, 20-22.

⁴¹ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 30-41.

⁴² Sean O'Leary, "Sean O'Leary: Use Economic Data with Care," West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy, October 9th, 2019, accessed 28 March 2020, <https://wvpolicy.org/sean-oleary-use-economic-data-with-care/>.

4 POLITICS

Actions of politicians had a major impact on West Virginia's situation. West Virginians were desperate for help with the state mired in an economic depression. Hope for West Virginia came with the presidential primary in 1960. For the first time, a candidate was interested into helping West Virginia. Nonetheless, nothing revolutionary happened. During the 1960s, many programs were developed by various commissions, but most were unsuccessful. Federal benefits usually ended up in the urban areas, where the situation was not as desperate as in the mountains.⁴³ One reason for failures was corruption, which has been seemingly omnipresent in the state since the 1930s.

4.1 John F. Kennedy

Politics in West Virginia is largely based on personal connection. Local candidates prefer to win their votes by "face-to-face" communication. The understanding of this aspect helped a young senator from Massachusetts, John F. Kennedy, gain local trust.⁴⁴

In 1960, Kennedy created a campaign targeted on West Virginia. He desperately wanted to win in this state, thinking doing so could vault him into the White House. Religion was the key sticking point, with Kennedy being Catholic. Kennedy figured that if he could win in predominantly protestant state like West Virginia, then he could negate religion as a variable influencing American voting preferences.⁴⁵

Kennedy's main competitor, Hubert Humphrey, a senator from Minnesota, in January 1960 called the situation in West Virginia "a national scandal." On the other hand, Kennedy took a more positive approach, in May 1960 portraying West Virginians as "able-bodied" and eager to work, and just needing an opportunity. With this message of hope, Kennedy appeared caring, not just to West Virginians, but to all Americans. He doubled down on this message by traversing the state, developing countless personal connections. While previous candidates focused mostly on the urban centres of Charleston, Huntington and Morgantown, Kennedy focused on the underdeveloped part of the state – Appalachia. Kennedy listened to voter's stories, and in doing so, won their trust.⁴⁶ He went on to win the West Virginia

⁴³ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 53-54.

⁴⁴ Topper Sherwood, "Kennedy In West Virginia," West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History, 2019, accessed March 28th, 2020, <http://www.wvculture.org/goldenseal/Fall00/kennedy.html>.

⁴⁵ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 53-54.

⁴⁶ "Winning West Virginia-JFK's Primary Campaign," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, updated November 28th, 2010, accessed 28th March, 2020, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/visit-museum/exhibits/past-exhibits/winning-west-virginia-jfks-primary-campaign>.

primary with 60 percent of the vote. Religion proved not to be an issue. He then defeated the Republican candidate, Vice President Richard Nixon, in the general election, by the narrowest of margins. After the election, Kennedy credited West Virginia for his win, and promised to show his thanks by helping West Virginians improve their socioeconomic condition.

4.1.1 Fulfilling Kennedy's promise

One of the Kennedy's first actions as president was to establish the Task Force on Area Redevelopment, the purpose of which was to end West Virginia's economic depression. The task force was comprised of West Virginians who had first-hand knowledge of the situation in the state, and of leading specialists from outside the state – business leaders, academics, and Kennedy's own people. Dwight D. Eisenhower created a similar group, which had called for area redevelopment, focusing on human resource development, natural resource development and public works. However, Eisenhower's program was a failure, and Kennedy tried to learn from Eisenhower's mistakes. By the end of 1960, a new program had been created, including recommendations, such as creation of long-term work opportunities.⁴⁷ Over the period of four years, Kennedy's program gave \$394 million of loan support to West Virginians. The Area Redevelopment Act provided low-interest loans for start-ups, subsidies to local governments, and founded worker training programs. Most of these investments, however, ended up being directed at small businesses with no need for many employees so they it did not decrease unemployment.⁴⁸

Over the next two years, the only state that really benefited from the program was West Virginia. Investments were concentrated on urban areas, where the situation was not as desperate as in Appalachia. Grants in West Virginia worth \$79 million went mostly to the tourism sector. Other nearby states received little to nothing. In response, Appalachian governors created their own commission. In 1962 they have established Appalachian regional commission in 1962, the purpose of which was to direct federal benefits to regions that could use them the most.⁴⁹

During the first two years of Kennedy's presidency, the joblessness and unemployment rate in West Virginia did not change, however, dependency on government assistance increased to two-times higher than the national average. In a response, Kennedy lowered

⁴⁷ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 57-59.

⁴⁸ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 57-59.

⁴⁹ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 60-61.

taxes to stimulate business growth.⁵⁰ J.F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963. It could be only speculated if this tragedy terminated potential and promised growth and development of West Virginia.⁵¹

4.2 Political Corruption

West Virginia's history is full of political corruption, which has seriously harmed its socioeconomic development.⁵² Another factor harming politics in West Virginia is low vote turnout, which is also influenced by corruption. The state is trying to implement new ways to vote, such as voting via internet, or by extending the voting period by at least one more day. None of these changes would make sense, however, unless corruption is first reduced.⁵³ As of now, voters must choose between a politician "who accomplishes nothing for his constituents" or a "corrupt politician who accomplishes something for his constituents after first taking care of himself and his family."⁵⁴ If West Virginia wants to decrease the corruption, it needs to implement campaign funding reform and voter system reform, as well as provide better security at polling places. Right now, the private funding of political campaigns gives corporations legislative advantages. Many West Virginians are aware of the corruption, however, they are afraid to speak out and deal with the potential consequences, such as losing their jobs.⁵⁵ "Freedom of speech does not mean that much to someone who has just starved to death."⁵⁶ West Virginians believe that "they could be putting [themselves] in jeopardy if they speak out."⁵⁷ Corruption is necessary to even enter politics in the state. Potential candidates require large amount of money to be able to succeed, and this money often comes with strings attached.⁵⁸ Even though West Virginia has a low crime rate, political corruption is high. In the 1960s, the governor of the state was acquitted on federal charges of kickbacks and state contract schemes, only to be found guilty of bribing the jury

⁵⁰ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 68.

⁵¹ ⁵¹ "Life of John F. Kennedy", *John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum*, accessed March 28th, 2020, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/life-of-john-f-kennedy>.

⁵² Allen H. Loughry II, *"Don't Buy Another Vote. I Won't Pay For a Landslide": The Sordid and Continuing History of Political Corruption in West Virginia*. (Washington: American University, 2003), 424.

⁵³ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 3–14.

⁵⁴ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 10.

⁵⁵ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 340–348.

⁵⁶ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 430.

⁵⁷ Kasey Warner, "Vote Fraud," *Charleston Daily Mail*, 13 May, 2002.

⁵⁸ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 378–380.

in the case.⁵⁹ In the last two decades, elected officials faced many crimes, such as lying, mail fraud, stealing, drug usage, and even sexual harassment or child abuse.⁶⁰

4.2.1 Voter corruption

John F. Kennedy won the state presidential primary in 1960, in part because he was buying votes, Kennedy was an outsider in comparison with Senator Humphrey. Kennedy's win was unexpected, but most importantly, he won in some counties by 85 percent.⁶¹ According to a police officer from Chapmanville, he saw men in front of the polling place with a large amount of money, handing it out to voters. Some West Virginians even refused vote unless, they were paid. The FBI confirmed voting violations during the 1960 primary. Kennedy himself joked about the corruption after the Primary. "I have received a telegram from my father pleading: Don't buy another vote. I won't pay for a landslide."⁶² Kennedy's corruption helped U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd get elected as well. By the 1960s, West Virginia had arrived the point where a small number of influential people have control over large number of votes.⁶³ This trend has continued to the present day. In fact, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, a vote in West Virginia could be purchased for "as low as \$10."⁶⁴

4.3 Poverty as a symbol

In the 1960s, West Virginia became a national symbol of a depressed area with social and economic struggles. During much of the Cold War, the rest of the United States experienced socioeconomic expansion, while West Virginia fell increasingly further behind. It was hoped that this slide was temporary, but that turned out not to be the case. High levels of poverty, low levels of education, a lack of job training, and a failure to embrace new technologies all led to the decline.⁶⁵ In the first half of the 1960s, the poverty was endemic, and employers

⁵⁹ "Ex Governor of West Virginia Pleads Guilty to Bribing Foreman of His Jury," *New York Times*, 30 March 1971. <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/03/30/archives/exgovernor-of-west-virginia-pleads-guilty-to-bribing-foreman-of-his.html>.

⁶⁰ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 432-433.

⁶¹ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 344-348.

⁶² Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 350.

⁶³ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 340-348.

⁶⁴ David A. Farenthold, "Selling Votes is Common Type of Election Fraud," *Washington Post*, 1 October 2012, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/decision2012/selling-votes-is-common-type-of-election-fraud/2012/10/01/f8f5045a-071d-11e2-81ba-ffe35a7b6542_story.html.

⁶⁵ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 62-63.

took advantage of workers.⁶⁶ This led to decreased motivation, and increased drug use,⁶⁷ which in turn led many to blame West Virginians for their problems.⁶⁸

4.4 Government assistance

A massive part of West Virginia's population has been dependent on some kind of a government assistance. In the 1940s, coal mining and agriculture jobs started to disappear. The government launched many federal relief programs which financially supported almost half of the Appalachian population. Programs were used only during the depression, until the private sector would start growing again. The UMWA Health and Retirement Funds provided support only to union miners. On the other hand, non-union were prohibited to receive any financial support the UMWA funds. As desperate as they were, non-union miners were reporting injuries from mine work or lying about their health in order to get funding. Otherwise, they would not be able to ever get out of the poverty. The number applicants kept increasing, which caused difficulties for the UMWA Health and Retirement Funds. Due to the decline of the coal industry, coal mines were no longer able to pay royalties to the funds. Politicians focused on poor unemployed miners during their campaigns. They used their financial situation as their advantage as they were aware of the fact that they could win their votes by increasing government assistance.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 66-67.

⁶⁷ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 92.

⁶⁸ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 92.

⁶⁹ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 30-68.

5 INVESTMENTS

Throughout this work it has been mentioned innumerable times that West Virginia is one of the poorest states in the United States. The state was desperate for help because they have fell into depression which they were not able to get out of themselves. One of the needed helps provided, were investments. Organizations such as the President's Appalachian Regional Commission or Appalachian Regional Commission provided West Virginia more than \$25 billion. Even though, West Virginia had enough capital from investment project, they were not able to use them efficiently. They have invested into the space program or tourism, instead of much more needed sectors, such as education, health care or transportation.⁷⁰

5.1.1 President's Appalachian Regional Commission (PARC)

During campaign for primary in 1960, John F. Kennedy promised West Virginia help, to renew this state's economy and living standard such as plumbing, heating or health care. John F. Kennedy and Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., created a program to help Appalachia with development. Firstly, Kennedy focused on the current programs in Appalachia and intended them to speed up so he could include more programs in the region. Secondly, the president assembled a committee, composed from Appalachian professionals in specific fields. This committee had to create economic recommendations which should be included in the President's program to help with the development of transportation, education, development of natural resources, or tourism. Kennedy created the program that was intended on a long-term development.⁷¹

Representatives to the committee were appointed by each governor. Representatives had to gain knowledge about the region to be able to produce effective recommendations. Benjamin Chinitz, economist, made a study of the underdeveloped region. Chinitz assembled professionals from all kind of spheres to create a task force. According to Chinitz, West Virginia was not lucky in the past, which reveal in their current situation. The economy will never reach higher level if the most important elements like infrastructure, public service, or education, will remain underdeveloped.⁷²

Ten days before Kennedy's assassination, the president announced a new program for Appalachia. This winter program would create many job opportunities in timber industry,

⁷⁰ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 30-80.

⁷¹ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 72-78.

⁷² Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 73-74.

especially for unemployed young people. Other part of the program would provide heating to the local's houses, or school lunch program.⁷³ On November 22, 1963, the Kennedy was assassinated, the PARC stopped progressing. Vice President Lyndon Johnson, who replaced Kennedy, firstly showed interest in the investment program. Walter Heller, chair of Kennedy's Council of Economic Advisors, created smaller projects to try if they are effective on a focus group. However, the new president Johnson annul them. Politicians from Appalachia exhorted on Johnson to start the new program. Johnson instead used these programs for his presidential campaign in 1964, because Kennedy never officially announced them.⁷⁴

Most of the investments made, ended up in the urban areas, where the situation was not as desperate as in the mountain areas. Investments were provided to young entrepreneurs, to support their current businesses or support to start-ups. However, those investments did not meet the goal of the commission. One of the goal was to decrease the unemployment rate, due to the size of those businesses they did not have many employees and did not increase the employment rate.⁷⁵

5.1.2 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC)

Appalachian Regional Commission was established in 1965. In the report from Presidents Appalachian Regional Commission was highly recommended to found a new regional organization which would focus on investments. Based on these recommendations the ARC was established. ARC also focus on maximizing available sources but most importantly, it tries to give the profit back to Appalachia. This regional organization has existed for more than fifty years, however, the region is still falling behind then the rest of the United States.⁷⁶

By 2013 ARC had made investments in the total amount of \$25 billion. One of the main activities, which have been supported by investments, is a project to build a highway. Even though, ARC invested a lot of money to the highway, it is still not existing. Almost forth-fifths of the budget in the 1960s was dedicated to the construction of the highway. Highways are one of the reasons, why West Virginia is falling behind. Without the highway the whole state is isolated and it is almost impossible to make economy grow again. ARC has made investments to 25,000 non-highway projects. Those investments helped to lower the unemployment rate but the rate is still much higher than in the rest of the United States. The

⁷³ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 74-75.

⁷⁴ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 75-78.

⁷⁵ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 74-78.

⁷⁶ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 3-15.

highest impact of investments was made in manufacturing, technology services, and construction industries. In 50 years of ARC existence, they have created about 300,000 job positions.⁷⁷

The highest employment impact from investments was made between the years 1972 and 1976. Little over 100,000 people found a new job, however, later it was no way near that amount. For example, between the years 2002 and 2006 it was only eight thousand people. Almost one third of people, who found jobs thanks to investments, are working in services.⁷⁸ Those investments are not working anymore as most of those sectors are being covered in account of West Virginias conditions. Even though, West Virginians may have success on the state's market, due to the isolation they are not able to repeat the same success on a national or global market. If West Virginia had not had a highway and remained isolated from the rest of the world, they would have never reached the same economic level as it is in the rest of the United States.⁷⁹

5.1.3 Gambling

Bob Wise, West Virginias governor, and Frank Wolf, congressmen, created a law, which would make gambling in West Virginia legal. Wise referred to making gambling legal as “a quick fix”, which would help the state's struggling budget. West Virginia relied on an income from legalization of gambling. Especially, the income from the growth of tourism.⁸⁰ The state was so desperate that they located gambling machines even into shopping centres. Legalization of gambling faced critiques from many citizens. Especially with the possibility of increasing addiction on gambling machines. Such as “West Virginia's track record on corrupt politicians is poor. The state couldn't even handle its own lottery without sending a lottery director and a lottery attorney to prison.”⁸¹

5.1.4 National Radio Astronomy Observatory

National Radio Astronomy Observatory could be used as an example of an incorrect investment. NRAO was established in 1956 in Green Bank, West Virginia. The observatory is located in a valley, to be in a less populous area, to protect West Virginians from radio

⁷⁷ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 3-15.

⁷⁸ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 15.

⁷⁹ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 3-15.

⁸⁰ Loughry II, *Don't Buy Another Vote*, 375-378.

⁸¹ Terry Horne, “Why Riverboat Gambling Is Wrong,” *Charleston Daily Mail*, February 9,1995.

interference.⁸² The space program was created to help West Virginia with fighting against unemployment and poverty. The goal of National Radio Astronomy Observatory was to become the number one space centre in the United States and later to compete with NASA. However, the mistake the government made with the space program is, that they did not evaluate all the pros and cons. They have made the investment without getting any research on a potential work force. In the space industry, the employees are highly educated people with enough experience. Moreover, West Virginia does not have educated people neither people with some kind of experience in space programs. While developing National Radio Astronomy Observatory, they should have had created a program at West Virginia University corresponding with it. The program would provide them educated employees, attracted young people to move to West Virginia and potentially stop the problem connected to decreasing population. This may help them to meet their goals with it. In 1956, West Virginia was dealing with ongoing economic depression. Most of the state's population were miners who lost their jobs due to industrialization or people closely connected to the coal industry. For West Virginia would be impossible to find between their population future employees. Another fact, which affected the lack of educated people is migration. Young people migrated out of West Virginia, especially seeking a better education and most of them never returned back. Nonetheless, this migration did not affect just this investment. The Green Bank Observatory could be considered as a failure due to not forfeiting their goals. Nowadays, the observatory is mostly used as a tourist attraction.⁸³ It would had been more beneficial for West Virginia to firstly invest into their education system, which has been in a poor condition and afterwards build National Radio Astronomy Observatory.

5.2 Tourism

West Virginia focused on a new source of the state's budget – tourism. Which could be consider as a bold move. West Virginia and their population are dealing with many stereotypes and prejudices, as previously mentioned. One of their key goal is to attract young people to study in West Virginia and stay in the state for the rest of their lives. They are aware of the outmigration, especially, of the young population. Nonetheless, their target group of young people (between 18 and 24 years) has the lowest percentage (11 percent) in

⁸² Karen O'Neil, "History of Green Bank and the NRAO," *National Radio Astronomy Observatory*, updated May 18th, 2014, accessed March 28th, 2020, <https://science.nrao.edu/facilities/gbt/green-bank-local-area-information/history-of-green-bank-and-the-nrao>.

⁸³ O'Neil, "History of Green Bank and the NRAO."

the total amount of West Virginia's visitors.⁸⁴ Surprisingly, the most attention is given to their nature even though, most of their land is devastated from coal mining and a huge part of their water resources are polluted due to their previous mining industry and chemical spill in 2014. The total amount of West Virginia's coal mines reached to 294,243 acres.⁸⁵

Between the years 2012 and 2016 the tourism industry in West Virginia was struggling. According to Governor Jim Justice, the West Virginia's tourism industry in 2018 increased by 58 percent, whereas majority of the visitors were from the neighbouring states.⁸⁶ Even during the period of decline, the tourism industry provided 46,000 job positions, which makes it the most employed industry in West Virginia.⁸⁷ West Virginia started to focus on heritage tourism located in small towns across Appalachia. This type of tourism would help the most economically depressed area. As this type of tourism is gaining popularity like eco-tourism, it would prosper Appalachia in the service sector as well.⁸⁸

5.2.1 West Virginia Tourism Office

West Virginia Tourism Office belongs under the West Virginia Department of Commerce. Their goal is to promote the state as a touristic place and compete with more common holiday destinations. Furthermore, to share the positive image of an industrial state. According to West Virginia Tourism Office, they want to use the tourism industry to lower the unemployment rate, support West Virginia's based businesses and interest more potential investors. The Tourism Office also wants to increase the state's population by migration, while promoting their colleges and universities. West Virginia Tourism is operating with the budget of total amount of approximately 6.5 million dollars.⁸⁹

Advertising has a massive impact on tourism industry in general, especially on destination which are starting to focus on tourism. According to Wild, Wonderful West Virginia's annual report 2016, they have concentrated on an international campaign. Their

⁸⁴ Wild, Wonderful West Virginia, "2016 Annual Report," *West Virginia Tourism*, 2017, accessed March 28th, 2020 1-7, <https://wvtourism.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Wild-Wonderful-West-Virginia-Annual-Report-2016.pdf>.

⁸⁵ Sarah J. Surber and D. Scott Simonton, "Disparate Impacts of Coal Mining and Reclamation Concerns for West Virginia and Central," *Resources Policy* 54 (2017): 3.

⁸⁶ Jordan Damron, "West Virginia tourism industry outpaces national growth by 58 percent," *Office of the Governor*, October 16th, 2019, accessed March 28th, 2020, <https://governor.wv.gov/News/press-releases/2019/Pages/West-Virginia-tourism-industry-outpaces-national-growth-by-58-percent.aspx>.

⁸⁷ Wild, Wonderful West Virginia, "2016 Annual Report," 1.

⁸⁸ Robert J. Kruse, "Point pleasant, West Virginia: Making a Tourism Landscape in an Appalachian Town," *Southern Geographer* 55, no.3 (2015): 313-314.

⁸⁹ "Budget," West Virginia Tourism Office, accessed March 28th, 2020, <https://wvtourism.com/tourism-contacts/budget/>.

target countries were China, United Kingdom and Canada. However, their advertisement saw less than one million people, which is a failure in consideration of the digitalization of the world. Especially, when they are promoting international tourism, even though, West Virginia does not have an international airport.⁹⁰ The budget for advertising is approximately 2.4 million dollars.⁹¹

5.2.2 Water Contamination

Another factor that affects West Virginia's tourism industry is water contamination. The water throughout West Virginia belongs to the one of the most polluted in the United States. The biggest impact on water pollution in West Virginia has the mining industry. Due to the contamination most of the households do not have drinkable water. West Virginia had been dealing with this issue for a couple of decades. More than one third of all the water streams are pulled and not drinkable.⁹²

The water contamination escalated in 2014 when the Eastman Chemical Co. sold contaminated chemicals to Freedom Industries. Their tanked leaked into the river Elk which caused a chemical spill. The chemical spilled cut off approximately 300 thousand people from water. This environmental tragedy also affected the agriculture sectors. The land absorbed the contaminated water and affected the crops quality in some cases even being dangerous to consume it. The decrease in the amount of crops produced led to increase of prices. Freedom Industries were not involved in the lawsuit due to their bankruptcy after the chemical spill. This environmental catastrophe could explain the decline of tourism in the following two years or even ongoing out-migration seeking better life and especially health conditions.⁹³

5.2.3 Transportation

Transportation has significant influence on tourism. As previously mentioned, West Virginia is isolated state with the lack of a proper highway. Even though, West Virginia has many roads, most of them are in a terrible condition, due to the amount of track transportation which affecting the poor quality of roads the most. Almost 29 percent of them are in the poor

⁹⁰ Wild, Wonderful West Virginia, "2016 Annual Report,"1-7.

⁹¹ "Budget," *West Virginia Tourism Office*.

⁹² Rebecca Hersher, "Settlement Deal Reached In 2014 West Virginia Chemical Spill," October 26th, 2016, accessed March 28th, March, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/10/26/499307717/settlement-deal-reached-in-2014-west-virginia-chemical-spill>.

⁹³ Hersher, "Settlement Deal Reached In 2014 West Virginia Chemical Spill."

conditions. The transportation funding has been stagnating for many years as there are not enough investments available. Only little but over 50 percent of the West Virginia's population agree with the raise of transportation funds. And approximately 60 percent of senators support the rise of transportation funds. However, the support should be much higher as the isolation in one of the main reason why is West Virginia falling behind. The senators are trying to find a way to earn enough money to change the current situation. There are many options, for example, restoring the gas tax, increasing the West Virginia's sales tax or increasing fees of Department of Motor Vehicles.⁹⁴

Another factor affecting West Virginia's tourism are their airports. Even though West Virginia is not spacious state, it has four airports: Yeager Airport, Huntington Tri-State Airport, Morgantown Municipal Airport, North Central West Virginia Airport. In consideration the population of West Virginia it has many possibilities for air transportation. However, none of those airports could compete with the neighbouring state's airports. None of those provide international flights. As previously mentioned, West Virginia Tourism Office chose as their target group of their campaign China, United Kingdom and Canada. The lack of international flights is a major obstacle. This could be one of the factors that affected the failure to attract international visitors. Due to the lack of international flights the airlines are not making as much profit and also their airports are not being profitable as they potentially could. According many tourism websites, they do not recommend to flight directly to West Virginia, due to the price of the flights tickets and the lack of public transport from the airport. Most of those airports are used as a layover for another connecting flight. The total amount of yearly passengers at West Virginia's is already small and most of them are only passenger to layover for connecting flight. Due to the lack of official statistic, the approximate number of passengers of Yeager Airport is around 76,000.⁹⁵ Another fact which should be consider is the geographical side of West Virginia. The mountainous parts of the state cause difficulties for air transportation.

⁹⁴ American Road & Transportation Builders Association, "West Virginia Transportation Issues", March 2017, accessed March 28th, 2020, <http://www.keepwvmoving.org/home/WVBT-Transportation-Issues-March-2017.aspx>.

⁹⁵ Alexander Sheridan, "A Guide to Airports in West Virginia", updated September 27th, 2019, accessed March 28th, 2020, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/west-virginia-airports-1640382>.

5.3 Education

Education has never been a priority in West Virginia. In the first half of the twenty century the education was not needed to earn enough money for living. Most of the schoolers followed their parents' path and did not achieve university degree neither high school diploma. In 1960, approximately one in three mountaineers had a high school diploma and almost half of them did not have eight-grade education. Only 89 percent of the population had finished five-grade education and five percent of their population had earned college degree.⁹⁶ Many counties did not have enough school or were far away from their homes. Due to these conditions, many children were home-schooled and were falling behind children which were attending school. However, most of the schools were in poor conditions. They lack heating or running water. Another obstacle were teachers, which in many case did not have propel education themselves. Often schools did not have teachers or education materials. This horrifying educational system motivated people to migrate to neighbouring states.⁹⁷

After the high school graduation, they would have gone straight to mines and worked there until they retired. After World War II, when the coal industry started declining, the first problems started occurring. The unemployment rate started increasing as a result of the lack of educated people. Miners struggled with unemployment, and if they had found a job, they would had earned less money that they earned in mines, due to their lack of education. Those who were lucky enough and stayed in coal industry were in a constant fear of being fired, due to shift to alternative natural resources.⁹⁸

Nowadays, West Virginia is still falling behind the national average, however, the education had improved. The closure of mines had a major impact on young people's education. Even though, education does not mean success in today's world, the number of West Virginias earning not just high school diploma, but also college degree is increasing. Most of the employers require high school diploma from their candidates, which motives people to stay at school or even continue in their studies to earn a bachelor's degree. In 2012, over 21 percent of West Virginians have earned at least a bachelor's degree.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 9.

⁹⁷ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 31.

⁹⁸ Eller, *Uneven Ground*, 31.

⁹⁹ Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness, *Appalachia Then and Now*, 9-10.

6 IMPACT OF DONALD TRUMP'S PRESIDENCY ON WEST VIRGINIA

During the presidential election in 2016, Donald Trump had won in West Virginia by 69 percent over Hillary Clinton. Trump's promises and opinions towards restoration of West Virginia's mining industry or infrastructure investments, convinced his potential voters.¹⁰⁰ Trump gave West Virginias a vision of a better future, like it was after the World War II. He wanted to use the state as an example to his commitment, to Make America Great Again. However, Trump's promises were not fulfilled. Solutions that has been made are only temporally and not sustainable, such as tax cut or reopening mines. Pendulum effect in politics is another factor affecting West Virginia's economy and wealth. Especially, creating and later easing environmental policies.

6.1 Coal Industry

During Barack Obama's presidency oil production rose and Trump followed his path. The production of oil was booming, but sadly for West Virginia, the mining industry did not experience the same increase. The U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry's introduced the importance of coal mining to West Virginia's state economy. The understanding of energy industry for the U.S. pushed President Trump to change environmental policies created by Obama, such as Clean Power Plan, Waters of the United States rule or weakening of reduces emissions. Therefore, the mining industry could be restored as the plants are allowed to produce more carbon dioxide per megawatt-hour of electricity.¹⁰¹

At the beginning of the Trump's presidency, the interest of investment community rose.¹⁰² However, this interest was only short term. Since Trump took the office the coal mines started restoring, but that is an impact of international market forces. "A lot of people think Trump is fighting for us, he's going to bring back coal, he's going to bring back manufacturing and I tend to think Trump tends to get credit every time there is a job added in the coal industry, and I think it's more complicated than that."¹⁰³ Especially, when the demand of coal is decreasing due to switch to other alternative energy. Many coal-fired

¹⁰⁰ Amita Kelly and Barbara Sprunt, "Here is What Donald Trump Wants To Do In His First 100 Days," NPR, November 2016, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/09/501451368/here-is-what-donald-trump-wants-to-do-in-his-first-100-days>.

¹⁰¹ Brittany Patterson, "Coal Comeback? Coal At New Low After Two Years Under Trump," 2019, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://www.wvpublic.org/post/coal-comeback-coal-new-low-after-two-years-under-trump#stream/0>.

¹⁰² Chris Hamilton, "President Trump Delivers For West Virginia Coal" *State Journal* (2017): 26.

¹⁰³ Chad Thalmean, "Trump Hasn't Saved Coal In W.Va. They Don't Care," E&E News, August 19, 2019.

power plants have announced closure in upcoming years or have switched to alternative energy. The ease of environmental policies will not help to save the industry, where the demand is decreasing. The possible solution for reopening mines would be to increase West Virginia's consumption of coal. This would decrease the dependency on the national or even international market and prevent from the possible risk of losing their customers due to switches to alternative energy sources.¹⁰⁴ The coal industry did not decline as rapidly as during Obama's presidency, but it remained flat at approximately 80,000 employees in coal industry. Even though, there was no improvement, Donald Trump, on his twitter account, delivered completely different information which is not based on any verified data. "The Great State of West Virginia is producing record setting numbers and doing really well. When I became President, it was practically shut down and closed for business. Not anymore!"¹⁰⁵ The unemployment rate declined but mining industry did not take part of it. The reason behind that was ageing population, where many workers retired and therefore lowered the work force. Poverty has been increasing, the population has been decreasing, due to out-migration, low birth rate and high death rate, and household income was dropping.

The economy was better than in previous years however, it was in different sector than coal industry. New job positions were created, especially in construction sector, as the demand of oil industry needed to build pipelines. But those jobs were only temporally and will not be beneficial in a long run. After two years of construction work expansion, the demand is already starting to shrink and employees are being laid off.¹⁰⁶ The growth only in one sector or one county will not rescue the economy of the whole West Virginia. It is much needed to spread the growth in more sectors to prevent a quick fall of the whole West Virginia's economy. West Virginia then could relive the same decrease of job positions and increase the population dependent on government assistance, like it happened in the 1940s during the industrialization.¹⁰⁷ The Republicans were detracting the state's economy

¹⁰⁴ Brittany Patterson, "Coal Comeback? Coal At New Low After Two Years Under Trump", 2019, accessed April 27, 2020,

<https://www.wvpublic.org/post/coal-comeback-coal-new-low-after-two-years-under-trump#stream/0>.

¹⁰⁵ Donald Trump, Twitter post, July 21, 2019, 12:54 p.m., <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump>.

¹⁰⁶ Alexandre Tanzi, "America's Worst Economy Is Still Waiting For Its Trump Bump", December 5, 2019, accessed April 28, 2020,

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-12-05/america-s-worst-economy-is-still-waiting-for-its-trump-bump>.

¹⁰⁷ Shirish Date, "It's The Poorest State, But In Trump's Head, West Virginia Is The Best Off – Thanks To Him", *Huffington Post*, July 23, 2019, accessed April 27, 2020,

https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-west-virginia_n_5d37781fe4b020cd994b17f5?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLnMnVbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAADwcuSUJX9V198Mcg1fKbf3QcjLZlxNG4sd66Kq19t20MRGK6RU9v-

situation and presented information which were not based on any verified data. Such as, in Charleston, the Republican state Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, showed the crowd his support for President Trump for making not just America great again but most importantly West Virginia great again. Democratic U.S. Senator Joe Manchin stood up for his opinion against Trump's statements on twitter. As a response to Trump's boasting of small achievements of West Virginia's economy which in majority is not due to his presidency and influence on the state.

Many environmentalists criticize Trump's approach to improve West Virginia's economy. The coal mining is not sustainable, especially with the pendulum effect, as if the effect going to work, in couple of years, there is a high possibility that Trump's successor will be from the Democratic party. In that case there is a chance of restoring environmental policies. In a response to restoring environmental policies, the mining industry would have to close many mines which would led to steep rise of unemployment, poverty and dependency on governmental support. Environmentalists recommend to focus on an economy sector which is not in a risk of being endangered in the future, such as financial sector or services.¹⁰⁸

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hsgaTMzUIEWu4bWOralLCIkqn5ndOsWJspB5CXsKEoqdk9yHoeR9-0tMU1rParyEHWHa4h3E_7rxe

¹⁰⁸ Kelsey Brugger, "Trump Hasn't Saved Coal In W.Va. They Don't Care," August 19, 2019, accessed April 28, 2020,

<https://www.eenews.net/stories/1060995953>.

CONCLUSION

West Virginia has had an unlucky past. However, this cannot be used as an argument as to why it is one of the poorest state in the United States. Other states like Ohio or Kentucky have similar pasts, but they are not in the same situation as West Virginia. Many factors have affected West Virginias situation such as isolation, out-migration or poor investments. West Virginia gained a lot of money from governments investments, nonetheless, they were not able to use them efficiently. For example, investing into space ship program, even though their population is not educated enough, rather than investing all the money into building much needed highway. Highway across the state would solve isolation, increase the profit from investments into tourism or even education. Migration is closely connected to West Virginia. Part of the population migrate to the neighbouring states due to lack of job positions, life standard or education opportunities. In comparison, Ohio used to have high unemployment rate, however, the state invested large amount of money into opening new businesses, which solved their joblessness and used the available work force in West Virginia and targeted their marketing towards them when they needed cheap labour force. Political corruption exists in West Virginia for more than seventy years. Corruption hinders the lower-class population from entering the politics and representing the reality of West Virginians. Due to the fact that a large part of the citizenry is dependent on government assistance, those people are often used as a political tool during the election. The current situation of West Virginia has a complicated solution. The state needs help from the government to be able to meet the level of United States' economy. President Donald Trump helped West Virginia by easing environmental restrictions made by President Barack Obama. The unemployment has decreased, but it is not by easing environment restriction. However, due to the political pendulum effect, this solution is not sustainable in a long run. Many changes have to be implement, to improve not only the socioeconomic situation, but also West Virginia's reputation.

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