

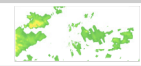
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August 2, 2009

State's stimulus Web site among nation's best, report shows

By Alison Knezevich

Staff writer

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- West Virginia's stimulus-tracking Web site is one of the nation's best, according to a national non-profit research group.

The state's site ranked fourth in a new report by Good Jobs First, a Washington group that analyzed the transparency of every state's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) site.

Good Jobs First calculated the rankings by scoring states in 10 categories. www.recovery.wv.gov"; West Virginia's site received perfect scores in several areas.

For instance, the report says West Virginia's site includes good data on how many jobs stimulus projects have created. It also shows residents how the federal dollars are divided by broad categories -- such as housing, energy and transportation -- and by specific programs.

The group also gave the site a top score for centralization of information.

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"We're very proud of that," said Matt Turner, spokesman for Gov. Joe Manchin. "Our agencies are keeping an eye on this.... We intend to work even harder to provide even more information."

The report also points out weaknesses in West Virginia's tracking of its \$1.8 billion stimulus share.

The state received no points in four categories. Its site doesn't include data on the expected duration of projects and when they're completed; maps of where projects

are taking place; and information on how funding allocations compare to each county's needs.

The report also says the site's information isn't timely enough, and could include more details on project contracts.

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I keep seeing 2 or 3 mile stretches of new asphalt with big stimulus signs at the sites. How many of these short stretches of road would have been paved anyway? The "stimulus" is costing us much more than we are getting out of it.

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August 2, 2009

State's stimulus Web site among nation's best, report shows

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Staff writer

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States' abilities to transparently track their stimulus funds have broad political implications, said policy analyst Paul Miller of the [West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy](#).

The [Democratic Governors Association](#) has touted the rankings, issuing a news release pointing out that Democrat-led states swept the top six spots in the report.

(Two states with Democratic governors -- Kentucky and Illinois -- also tied for last place.)

The \$787 billion package's ultimate impact on the nation's economy could settle long-running questions about public spending, Miller said.

"Ultimately, this is a test, a new test of the equivalent of the New Deal," Miller said. "It's actually answering the larger question of the value of public spending and public investment."

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Miller commended West Virginia government for its ranking, but said officials should take it a step further by creating a similar site for the state budget. The stimulus site could serve as a template, he said.

"Why can't we do this for state dollars?" Miller asked. "This Web site may be the impetus to get us to that level of accountability."

Reach Alison Knezevich at alis...@wvgazette.com or 304-348-1240.

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