

West Virginia

Manchin tours new courthouse

By TRISH RUDDER
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BERKELEY SPRINGS, W. Va. — Before the fourth annual West Virginia Eastern Regional Jefferson-Jackson Dinner got under way at The Country Inn on Saturday night, Gov. [Joe Manchin](#) toured the new Morgan County Courthouse, which is still under construction.

"It looks good," Manchin said as he stood with Morgan County Commissioners Thomas R. Swaim and Stacy A. Dugan in front of the designated courthouse entrance on the corner of Washington and Fairfax streets.

Marty Rinehart, project superintendent for Milestone Construction Services, the building company, led the tour inside the courthouse.

Manchin noticed how well the building was constructed with fireproof materials.

The building is "fully fire-protected," Rinehart said.

The old courthouse was destroyed by fire in August 2006.

Swaim said the new building will be ready to move into on April 4, 2010.

"This will be our newest courthouse in the state," Manchin said.

Manchin wanted to ask Dugan and Swaim some questions about Morgan County so the group walked to the commission's meeting trailer.

When Manchin asked how the county was doing financially, Dugan said the county had a surplus and was doing well.

"I'm proud of the fact that we stayed within our means," Swaim said. "Our lady commissioners are fiscally conservative, and I'm proud of that."

Swaim asked Manchin for his help in obtaining the Certificate of Need (CON) for War Memorial Hospital so plans to build a new hospital can move forward.

The CON has been challenged by West Virginia University Hospitals-East and a hearing is set for Oct. 6.

"The new hospital will boost this economy. Please get involved," Swaim said.

But Manchin said he cannot get involved. He said the Health Care Cost Review Authority, a three-member board, will make decisions regarding the hospital.

He said if [the experts](#) decide a new hospital is needed, he will support their decision.

"Some people think the government is playing politics with this issue, but that is not true," he said.

Manchin said it that were true, why did he not stop Valley Health of Winchester, Va., from building its new hospital in Hampshire County, W. Va.? He said he would not do that, and if he did, he would have been sued many times over.

"All I want is a level playing field," Swaim said.

"You'll have a level playing field," Manchin said.

He said if a problem arises with time-consuming appeals on the CON issue for War Memorial Hospital, he will get involved.

Manchin spoke to the more than 200 people from Berkeley, Jefferson and Morgan counties that attended the Jefferson-Jackson Dinner.

"The bottom fell out for other states, but we didn't," Manchin said. "The state of West Virginia is in better shape because of you."

Rocky Fox of Berkeley Springs attended the Democratic dinner for the first time. He is a member of local American Legion Squadron 60 and is the second vice commander for West Virginia.

He showed a picture of Manchin and his grandson.

"He's a heck of a nice guy," he said of Manchin.



Trish Rudder | Staff Writer
West Virginia Gov. Joe Manchin, left, stands Saturday with Marty Rinehart, project superintendent for Milestone Construction Services, which is building the new Morgan County Courthouse in Berkeley Springs, W. Va.