

Bill signed for West Virginia renewable energy battery plant

February 25 2023, by John Raby



West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, right, hands a pen used to sign House Bill 2882 to Weirton Mayor Harold "Bubba" Miller, while Form Energy CEO Mateo Jaramillo watches. HB 2882 provides \$105 million toward Form Energy's plans to construct a battery manufacturing facility, Friday, Feb. 24, 2023, in Weirton, W.Va. Credit: Craig Howell/The Weirton Daily Times via AP

West Virginia's governor on Friday signed a bill that gives \$105 million in state funding for a renewable energy battery plant in a former steel town.

Gov. Jim Justice signed the bill at the site of Form Energy's planned manufacturing facility in the Northern Panhandle community of Weirton. The 55-acre plant will produce iron-air batteries and is anticipated to create at least 750 jobs in a \$760 million investment.

"It will transform this community in every positive way you can imagine," Justice said.

The state's total commitment for the project is \$290 million, including \$75 million already invested in purchasing the property and to start infrastructure work.

Weirton Steel, which operated a nearly 800-acre property along the Ohio River in the town of about 19,000 residents, employed about 13,000 workers around the start of World War II. The company filed for [bankruptcy protection](#) in 2003.

"We are honored to pick up the legacy of this historic location and carry forward the tradition on manufacturing on this phenomenal site," Form Energy CEO Mateo Jaramillo said. "The model of the town of Weirton is success and unity, and that's how we see this project going forward. We're committed to the long haul."



West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice, center, flanked by Form Energy CEO Mateo Jaramillo, left, and Weirton Mayor Harold Miller and Babydog at right, speaks about House Bill 2882, legislation which will provide \$105 million toward Form Energy's planned battery manufacturing facility, Friday, Feb. 24, 2023, in Weirton, W.Va. Credit: Craig Howell/The Weirton Daily Times via AP

It's the first full-scale plant for Massachusetts-based Form Energy, whose pilot manufacturing facility is about an hour away from Weirton in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Jaramillo has said Form Energy focuses on energy storage technology and manufacturing. It has developed a battery whose active components are iron, water and air and is capable of storing electricity for 100 hours. Jaramillo led automaker Tesla's powertrain business development

program until 2016.

Over the [next decade](#), the company's goal for the battery is to unlock demand for multiday energy storage for the U.S. power grid.

Form Energy is expected to begin construction this year, with the manufacturing of battery systems set to start in 2024. The company has several prominent investors, including Microsoft founder Bill Gates and Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, and it has stated opposition to [fossil fuels](#).

It's another representation of the ongoing shift in coal-rich West Virginia as state leaders seek businesses that use cleaner forms of energy while preserving the state's roots. In the past year, the state has seen several major announcements for alternative energy projects, including green battery plants and a Warren Buffett-backed industrial park powered by [renewable energy](#).

West Virginia has lost thousands of coal mining jobs over the past decade as companies and utilities explore using other [energy sources](#) such as [natural gas](#), solar and wind.

"Today we need more diversification," Justice said. "It's our job to embrace. It's our job to move forward."

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Citation: Bill signed for West Virginia renewable energy battery plant (2023, February 25) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2023-02-bill-west-virginia-renewable-energy.html>

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