

## Governor Visits SVCC Power Line Worker Training Program

Virginia's new Governor, Ralph Northam, spent part of a cold, snowy and blustery day touring the field where power line worker students train for jobs in the Commonwealth. His visit to the Southside Virginia Community College Occupational Technical Center at Pickett Park was arranged by Virginia Maryland and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives and Andrew Vehorn, Director of Governmental Affairs for VMDAE.

The Governor spent time watching power line students climb, saw truck driving activity on the range and met the head of the diesel tech program. He also sat down with the CEOs of Mecklenburg and Southside Electric Cooperatives, John Lee and Jeffrey Edwards respectively, and SVCC President Dr. Al Roberts and VP of Workforce Dr. Keith Harkins to learn more about the impact these programs have on the economy of Virginia. Dr. Megan Healy, Chief Workforce Development Advisor to the Governor was also in attendance.

Governor Northam was at the Blackstone facility to see firsthand the benefits of the Workforce Credentialing Grant Program and discuss issues facing rural Virginia; including broadband deployment and workforce development. Lee presented Governor Northam with a letter, signed by CEOs from all 12 electric cooperatives headquartered in Virginia pledging unified commitment to collaboratively work on a comprehensive solution to rural Virginia's lack of broadband availability.

Now in its third year of operation, this 11-week line worker pre-apprentice program provides Level 1 certification from NCCER (the National Center for Construction Education & Research), as well as commercial driver's licenses, CPR/First Aid certification and OSHA safety training. At the recommendation of its advisory committee, the PLW program recently expanded to include chainsaw safety, with training provided by Penn Line.

"We're proud to help launch these young people into a vital career that will enable them to stay in their rural communities," said Harkins.

For more information about the Power Line Worker Training School, visit <https://southside.edu/events/power-line-worker-training-school> or call SVCC's Susan Early at (434) 292-3101. Next Class begins June 4, 2018.