

To the Editor:

Once again, *The Spirit* has published a Rockwool propaganda piece, with no regard for the facts and little effort made to cite real sources. We would like to set the record straight.

According to Rockwool's most recent tax-forgiveness deal with the WV Economic Development Authority (WVEDA), Rockwool committed to create only 120 jobs, 20% less than the 150 that the July 1 article reported. Further, *The Spirit* cited Rockwool spokesperson Paul Espinosa's claim that these employees will make on average \$42,700 a year. This is much less than the \$46,611 used to convince local leaders to support Rockwool in a 2017 Deloitte economic impact study we obtained via FOIA. Worse yet, according to the same study, paid for by Rockwool, the vast majority of workers, 117 of them, will make an average of \$31,000 a year – nowhere close to the \$46,611 that was used to woo our representatives.

The article also repeated a claim by Mr. Espinosa, who apparently said that Rockwool would pay between \$500,000 and \$750,000 in taxes to Ranson a year. But what taxes? According to Ranson's 2017-2018 budget, the General Fund has three major sources of revenue: Ad Valorem or property tax, B&O Tax, and the 1% sales tax. Under the WVEDA tax forgiveness arrangement, Rockwool will have no property tax obligation. Rockwool will have no appreciable retail sales, and therefore will not generate revenue for Ranson through the retail sales tax. B&O tax is also assessed on sales and since Rockwool Ranson would be a manufacturing operation it's unlikely it will make sales from that location and so Ranson is unlikely to collect B&O tax from Rockwool either. The remainder of the taxes that round out the revenue for the Ranson General Fund are Hotel-Motel Tax, Fines and Fees, Charges to Other Funds, Garbage Service, Utility Tax, and Wine and Liquor. It is not plausible that Rockwool will be contributing significantly to any of these revenue streams. So it would have been interesting to know to what, exactly, what was Mr. Espinosa referring? Unfortunately, *The Spirit* did not ask this question.

Mr. Espinosa further touts a \$21.8 million yearly increase in economic activity in the county and claims that \$5 million of that will be in Ranson. Frankly any rational consideration of this representation indicates it is impossible. First what goods will Rockwool purchase in Ranson? There are no quarries in Ranson, no coal mines, no fracking pads, no formaldehyde concentrate dealers, no liquid oxygen suppliers – so what is Rockwool buying in Ranson to produce this \$5 million impact? It is not plausible that this will all come from employee spending in Ranson. If Rockwool indeed paid \$6.4 million per year in payroll, and every Rockwool employee spent every dollar they made after taxes in Ranson, it still would not be enough to make \$5 million in business volume.

This is just another long line of unsubstantiated and easily disproven claims to be made by Rockwool. We hope that in the future *The Spirit* and its reporters will report the truth and not just publish corporate propaganda!