



Inside This Week's Issue:

Help Spread the Peace

We Lose Two of Our Best

WV-SORO Hits the Ground Running

Winds of Change

As the fall leaves swirl around the yard here on Dixie Street, other winds of change are blowing inside our office. This season brings significant staffing changes to Citizen Action. Norm, our fearless Executive Director since 1996, has finally gotten a real job as Executive Director of the Kanawha County Solid Waste Authority. His organizing talents are already at work there as he's signed up the Airport, Ballpark, and Farmer's Market to initiate recycling. Norm's still only a phone call away for consultations on transition and state policy and political issues – his acumen on such is unmatched (see Norm's article on page 4).

Ted Boettner, our researcher extraordinaire, just landed a position with the new WV Budget and Policy group that he (and we) helped launch over the past year. His expertise on fair taxation and economic justice will be a critical asset for all West Virginians seeking to balance the scales between the haves and have-nots (see Ted's article on page 3).

We'll sorely miss them both as they move into new careers. However, it's not all gloom and doom here at CAG. We have some new faces and returning talent to brag about.

Julie Archer, long-time Citizen Actionist who left us last year for a stint with WV FREE, returns this month to pick up where she left off on the PERC campaign contribution database and to work on the new WV Surface Owner's Rights Organization (WV-SORO). Julie's energy and focus will be a welcome reunion for the CAG team.

Don't be confused if you forgetfully call in for Norm and get to talk to one. Norm Steenstra III, son of our departed Norm, is with us part-time and doing a great job helping us keep up with WV-SORO's avalanche of new members, who call us everyday and stop in several times a week.

Long-time Patriots for Peace supporter, Robin Wilson, is now with us helping to organize opposition to Bush's endless war and keeping in touch with groups around the state who want to coordinate efforts for Peace. See his article (page 5)

(continued on page 7 - see "Winds")



Did You Know?

Capital Eye comes out weekly during the Legislative Session and bi-monthly throughout the rest of the year. If you have questions or comments about its content, please contact us. If you'd rather receive the Eye on-line, e-mail linda@wvcag.org

CapitalEye
published
by West Virginia
Citizen Action Group
(WV-CAG)
1500 Dixie Street
Charleston WV
25311

WV-CAG STAFF
Gary Zuckett
Julie Archer
Linda Frame
Marge Michau
Robin Wilson

W V - C A G
was founded in 1974
as a non-profit
membership
organization
dedicated to
increasing citizen
participation
in economic and
political decision-
making.

Our members work
for progressive
changes in federal,
state, and local policies
by educating people
about key public
interest issues ranging
from environmental
protection and
consumer rights to
good government &
health care reform.



To become a
member or to
send comments
and suggestions,
visit

www.wvcag.org,
call us at
304-346-5891,
or e-mail us at
linda@wvcag.org

WV United Leads SCHIP Fight

by Gary Zuckett, garyz@wvcag.org

Over the past several weeks our broad-based issue coalition, West Virginians United for Social and Economic Justice, has made front page headlines and lead TV news stories opposing Bush's veto of the bi-partisan renewal and expansion of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Working with AFL-CIO, National Association of Social Workers, WV Council of Churches, WV for Affordable Health Care and WV Healthy Kids & Families Coalition, we put together two successful press conferences.

The first event was at Family Care's new clinic on the west side of Charleston and the post-veto event was in the governor's conference room at the State Capitol. See link to Gazette article: www.wvcag.org/issues/healthcare/index.htm.

ALL our WV Reps voted twice to increase funding for SCHIP. The Senate passed the measure with a veto-proof margin. In the US House we're still short about 14 Republican votes to override the president's veto and give needed health coverage to 5,000 more kids in WV and 5 million nationwide. Call Rep. Capito at 202-225-2711 and thank her for supporting healthcare for WV kids and ask her to vote for kids once more to override Bush's veto.

WV United Continues Town Hall Meetings

Another successful coalition activity of WV United is the series of community town hall meetings being scheduled around the state. Good crowds and excellent discussions on the Cost of War, Healthcare for All, Justice in the Workplace and Economic Fairness have been held so far in Parkersburg and Martinsburg. The next Town Hall is scheduled for downtown Fayetteville for October 24th and Wheeling on October 28th. Contact us for more details. We are looking for other locations to hold these discussions so contact us if you want to host one in your community.

And It Wasn't That Long Ago

by Ted Boettner



Economic growth may one day turn out to be a curse rather than a good, and under no conditions can it either lead into freedom or constitute a proof for its existence.

- Hannah Arendt

Starting next month I will be the Executive Director of a new progressive non-profit think tank in Charleston called the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy. Our focus will be on state fiscal and budget issues and how they affect low and moderate income West Virginians. This is an exciting and unique opportunity to build progressive change on state economic issues and it would have not happened without CAG.

I first arrived at CAG in April 2005. It feels like two weeks ago, not two years ago. Perhaps this is because it's been such a great experience, filled with wonderful memories, good times, and never a dull moment. Whether it was the policy battles that took place under the gold dome, the frequent protests at Capito's office, or the clinking of beer bottles and laughs during First Friday on Dixie Street, I will deeply miss my time at CAG.

I was hired to work on federal issues, specifically stopping Shrub's brilliant plan to dismantle Social Security, and later worked on various economic policy issues on the state and federal level. This might sound cliché, but I can honestly say that I've learned more over the last two years than I ever did in college or graduate school. Nothing can prepare you better than real world experience. My experience at CAG has been deeply informative. It has taught me that power concedes nothing without demand, and if you want justice you'd better be willing to fight long and hard for it because it doesn't happen any other way.

And I can't express enough how much I've enjoyed working with the staff at CAG. Norm, Gary, Linda, Marge and Julie are some of the best people I've ever met in my life and I feel privileged to be their friends. They have not only taught me a great deal about the ins-and-outs of West Virginia politics, but have made me a better person with their constant encouragement and affection. I also owe a great deal of gratitude to Norm, who hired me and spent countless hours mentoring me on many topics. Without his confidence in my abilities, nothing I did at CAG would have been possible. And thanks to the board of CAG and MSERF for keeping me on staff for over two years, it's been a pleasure working for you.

While I don't have a new office yet, you can reach me at tedboettner@gmail.com or visit our website www.wvcbp.org.

CAG's Loss, Kanawha County's Gain

(The following is Norm's so-long article to Capital Eye readers)....

After 18 years at WV-CAG I've accepted a new position as the Director of the Kanawha County Solid Waste Authority. My friends tell me I finally have a "real job."

My new real job finds me working in a trailer without running water at what could be called a dump. There's a kind of symmetry to my new career because the first bill I worked on at the legislature back in 1989 was the West Virginia Recycling Act which spawned Solid Waste Authority recycling activities across the state. So far it's been very interesting to take the policy we helped write so many years ago and make it a reality. It's kind of like going from theory to keeping the fork lifts running.

Leaving CAG was even harder than I imagined. The Board, Staff and many CAG members have become some of my closest friends. Linda, Gary, Marge and Julie are family to me and I already miss the banter, scheming and satisfaction of working with these talented people.

While there are many non-profit groups across the state working on vital issues I remain convinced that WV-CAG is unique in its holistic multi-issued approach to the issues. Day in and day out CAG advocates progressive values on the environment, social and economic justice and government reform to the various branches of government. I'll always be proud of conservative talk show host Hoppy Kerchival's description of CAG "as the legitimate voice of the left in West Virginia."

Although one era is closing, a very promising one has already begun. Under the leadership of my dear friend Gary Zuckett and the continued dedication of the Board, you can expect CAG to grow and continue to carry the progressive message for many good years to come.

My years at CAG have profoundly changed the person I was 18 years ago. I am extremely honored and fortunate to have been associated with the Group. Your support and confidence have sustained all of us over the years. So, for the last time ever, I will ask you to send CAG money whenever you can as no other group stretches a buck farther than these guys.

Stay tuned and stay in touch!

Norm Steenstra JR.

(Norm will continue to use his current e-mail address hopefully for a long time ~ norm@wvcag.org).



WV Patriots
for Peace
gathers every
Friday across
from the Town
Center Mall in
Charleston
from noon to
1PM.
Everyone is
welcome to
help hold up
the Wall of
Remembrance
which shows
the names of
those lost in
the wars in Iraq
and
Afghanistan.

Help End the Escalation

by Robin Wilson, singingplow@igc.org

WV-CAG has jumped into the movement to end the Iraq War thanks to its traditional funder US Action. Gary Zuckett and I have been heading up our local anti war work. Actions include press conferences encouraging Congress to oppose the continued war funding. Another exciting campaign is the “Missing” / AWOL for Rep. Shelley Moore Capito (**Absent While On Leave**) when her constituents were frustrated in their efforts to talk to her about her support for the Iraq War. WV-CAG is working in partnership with other peace groups in West Virginia.

We invite you to help end the Iraq war. Visit www.wvcag.org and www.wvpnn.org to learn more. Here are some ideas for action you can take:

- Display a bumper sticker or sign “Support the Troops: End the War” (pictured below)
- Call us at 346-5891 or 1-866-982-3247 (toll-free) for a sign distributor near you
- Attend Seneca 2’s Scott Ritter talk on October 25, 7PM at the WV State University campus on peace movement strategy (more details at www.wvcag.org calendar page)
- Sponsor a “Missing” ad in your local paper or download and post around town (available at www.wvcag.org)
- Subscribe to the independent WV Peace News Net (WVPNN) www.wvpnn.org
- Show Anti War movies with neighbors or your club
- Write a anti war letter to the editor or call the readers’ voice
- Publicly demonstrate your opposition to the War in Iraq



WV-SORO Campaign Membership Surges From Start

by Gary Zuckett and Dave McMahon

In our last newsletter we announced the kick-off of new organization focused on protecting landowners from abuses by oil and gas drillers, the WV Surface Owners' Rights Organization (WV-SORO). Formed this summer by several state land owners and public interest lawyer Dave McMahon, the WV-SORO campaign has so far been a hugely successful organizing endeavour.

As many West Virginians know, when it comes to protecting your property rights against the abuses of oil and gas drillers, the playing field is tilted about as far as it can go in favor of the drillers. As it now stands, landowners get a notice in the mail only 15 days before a permit to drill is approved on their property. The landowner can then send in comments to the WV Office of Oil & Gas. What the notice doesn't say is that under current WV code there is very little the State can do to make changes in the locations of roads, well sites and gas lines. To tackle these problems, WV-SORO's goal is to get state lawmakers to pass a "Surface Owners' Bill of Rights" to give landowners more say in the location of wells and access roads and other matters dealing with oil and gas exploration on private property.

WV-SORO already has members from 38 of West Virginia's counties and 11 other states. We'll be calling on our members from all over to come to Charleston during the legislative session to tell their stories, make sure their lawmakers are informed of the seriousness of this problem, and get them to fix it.

The WV Division of Oil & Gas is understaffed to do the job that's required of it. West Virginia has only 14 Oil and Gas Inspectors to handle 45,000 active wells, and that number is increasing by 3,000 new well permits per year. Even the laws dealing with surface and water protection now on the books can't be effectively enforced with such a lack of inspection.

WV-SORO is building a resource center and clearing house for issues that affect surface and small mineral owners. Our most popular resource (available for download or through the mail) is the 166-page "Surface Owner's Guide to Oil & Gas" written by Dave McMahon to advise WV landowners of their rights according to current WV law when drillers come on their property. Other sections of the new website (www.wvsoro.org) link to topographical maps and can show actual satellite pictures of individual farms and properties. We are also developing a list of lawyers who represent landowners on oil and gas issues. The newest addition to SORO's web page is a slide show that explains potential problems that oil and gas drilling can cause to springs and water wells. We'll be posting comments from landowners about their personal experiences with specific companies in the near future.

Please visit www.wvsoro.org or call us at 346-5891 to learn more.

(“Winds” - continued from front page)

on the availability of yard and window signs.

Way out in the Eastern Panhandle, John Christensen, a veteran of the garbage wars of the early 90's, is doing some organizing for us in the Martinsburg area around federal issues and helping out at legislative interims. His congeniality is infectious and he gets along even with some of the most conservative Delegates.

Of course Linda Frame and Marge Michau are the foundation of our office staff. Linda, in addition to being the Bottle Bill mother, keeps our checks from bouncing and bills paid. Marge is our “Jill of all Trades” who's ready to dig into which ever project is on the front burner. This place would fall apart without them.

I stepped into a big pair of shoes when I took over the Director position from Norm. But with his transitional support and our great board, staff, and you, our members, Citizen Action is ready to make waves in 2008 both at the legislature and in the political arena. A big THANKS to all of you is long overdue!

We Reached Our Goal!

Thanks to you we surpassed our goal for our Clean Elections Matching Grant. Working with the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), we beat our September 1 deadline and raised well over our \$15,000 goal. Now the Piper Fund will match those dollars and we will be able to continue our work with Citizens for Clean Elections and all of its great coalition members to bring public financing of elections to West Virginia. To find out more about how Clean Elections works in other states and how you can help promote it here, call us at 346-5891 or visit www.wvoter-owned.org. **THANK YOU!**



Please renew your membership or send a donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Here's my donation of \$15 \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

Clip and mail with your check to West Virginia Citizen Action Group, 1500 Dixie St., Charleston, WV 25311 - **THANKS!**

Donate safely and securely on-line at www.wvcag.org!!!!