



Regime Change Has Finally Come, Now the Real Work Begins

by Gary Zuckett, garyz@wvcag.org

I spent most of inaugural week in Washington DC at our annual USAction conference. USAction is our national coalition of state Citizen Action groups. Linda and I got there in time to see patches of the parade and celebrate with those assembled at our national's office on K Street. The excitement in the air was electrifying! So is the ambitious agenda of our new president.

Now that the celebration is over, it's time to generate the grassroots support our new president will need to achieve his goals – the first being the Next New Deal or officially, the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act.

By the time you read this, WV United's Town Hall meeting in support of this reinvestment package will have been held, but the fight to pass the Act that will help lower unemployment while rebuilding our schools, bridges and other infrastructure and move us into a greener energy economy will be far from over. See www.nextnewdeal.org and www.jobsandeconomicrecovery.com. This is the most historic proposal since the New Deal and should be passed as soon as possible to keep our nation from bleeding even more jobs.

Right after Obama's recovery proposal passes we need to finally tackle providing affordable health care for all. If anyone needs a reminder of why, check out Michael Moore's movie "SICKO." I don't know that we can jump straight into a Single Payer plan but whatever passes should definitely have a public plan option for those who want to avoid making the big insurance companies even richer. See www.HealthcareforAmericaNow.org

Health Care for America Now (HCAN) is our national campaign that focuses on a set of principles that should be included in any reform:

- Guaranteed coverage and care for everyone.
- Affordable premiums and out-of-pocket costs based on ability to pay.
- Choice of plans, including keeping current insurance, choosing a private plan or joining a public plan.
- Standard, comprehensive benefits.
- Equity in health care access, treatment, research and resources.
- Coverage that is predictable and affordable for families, retirees, and small businesses.

- Set rules on insurance practices and charges, requiring them to put our health care before their profits.
- Cost controls while improving quality

Of course, the ignored "elephant in the living room" is the Iraq war that, even though "off budget", has consumed over \$500 billion and counting. The election and economy bumped the war out of the top 15 news stories last year! Our challenge is to actually bring the troops home, not to Afghanistan. We'll be working with WV Patriots for Peace to pass a resolution at the legislature asking Obama to at least bring home the National Guard. See the *Sunday Gazette Mail* article at www.wvgazette.com/search/200901170570

I'm so grateful the WV legislative session was pushed back a month so we could devote time in January gearing up for these federal issues. If you're not already on our Citizen Action Alert list, you can subscribe right on our website, www.wvcag.org. Get in on the action to help both our State and Federal issues work. When lawmakers hear from voters, they listen!

Committee Recommends Same Day Registration/Voting

Among the many topics looked at during the legislative interims was the possibility of authorizing Election Day voter registration. Currently, in West Virginia voter registration closes the day before early voting begins. Unfortunately, Election Day registration was opposed by the state's county clerks, but a compromise was reached to allow voters to register and vote on the same day during the early voting period. This extends the voter registration period by 20 days and allows voters to register and vote in one visit to their county clerk's office.

The bill recommended by the legislative interim committee would also allow county clerks to establish satellite locations for early voting and voter registration in places other than the county clerk's office. This is a positive step toward opening up our political process and making it easy for individuals to exercise their right to vote. We will closely follow this and other election reforms during the regular session which begins on February 11.

Stay In Touch!

The Legislative Session is right around the corner and we don't want you to miss a thing! If you are not receiving our e-mail alerts, please visit www.wvcag.org to sign up. If you are getting this paper copy and only want the electronic version, send a quick note to linda@wvcag.org.

Generics Are Powerful Medicine Campaign

by Lisa Diehl, lisadiehl@zoominternet.net

The Generics Are Powerful Medicine (GPM) campaign kicked-off with a press conference January 13, 2009 at the Capitol. Joining executive director Gary Zuckett, were Shana Phares, WV Pharmaceutical Advocate, and Don Perdue, Chair of the House Health and Human Resources Committee.

Ms. Phares stated that "the Pharmaceutical Advocate's office is pleased to support this campaign. We know generic drugs are vetted and approved by the FDA and provide an effective alternative to brand name drugs." Delegate Perdue stated that "the single best way to reduce the costs associated with prescription drugs is to increase the use of generics." Both applaud the campaign to educate consumers in West Virginia. The National Association of Chain Drug stores reported that, in 2007, the average retail cost of a generic medication was \$34.34, while the brand-name average was \$119.32.

Over 1,000 pieces of campaign literature have been distributed to pharmacies in and around the Charleston area. Similar educational efforts will be made in Beckley and Huntington in the coming months.

Presentations at Senior Centers are being scheduled. If you know an organization, a senior group, or other agency that serves low income families that would like to schedule a presentation, please contact me at: lisadiehl@zoominternet.net

Meetings, Video Contest Build Support for Voter-Owned Elections

by Julie Archer, julie@wvcag.org

On January 26 the Wood County League of Women Voters hosted a Parkersburg meeting to let those tired of elections paid for by fat cats know that there is a better way to finance election campaigns in West Virginia. A similar meeting was held earlier this month in Charleston and both were aimed at building support for the WV Public Campaign Financing Act.

Secretary of State Natalie Tennant attended the Charleston forum co-sponsored by the Temple Israel Social Action Committee, along with Delegates Nancy Guthrie, Bobbie Hatfield, Danny Wells, Carrie Webster and Doug Skaff, and Senator Dan Foster. Each talked briefly about their views of public financing, support for the concept, and encouraged the more than 60 people present to keep up the fight. A slightly smaller group met with Delegates John Ellem and Dan Poling in Parkersburg. Both delegates expressed interest in sponsoring the legislation during the 2009 legislative session.

Citizens for Clean Elections would like to hold similar meetings around the state prior to and during the legislative session. To help organize a meeting in your area, please contact me at julie@wvcag.org or (304) 346-5891.

The coalition is also sponsoring a video contest aimed at educating the public about voter-owned elections. Monetary prizes will be awarded to the top three videos in the amounts of \$200, \$150 and \$100.

The contest targets high school and college students who are knowledgeable of state level politics, however, it is open to everyone. Videos should be two minutes or less and focus on what voter-owned elections are and why they are needed in West Virginia.

Contestants must upload their videos to YouTube, subscribe to the WV Citizens for Clean Elections YouTube page (www.youtube.com/user/WVCleanElections), and submit a DVD of their videos and registration form to WV Citizens for Clean Elections by February 28, 2009. Winners will be announced by March 6 and a screening will take place at a later date. A compilation of the videos will be sent to the legislature.

More information on voter-owned elections and the video contest is available at www.wvoter-owned.org

(Special thanks to Louisa Swift and Walt Auvil for their help with logistics and planning for the Charleston and Parkersburg meetings, and to our volunteer extraordinaire Jeremy Brannon for making the video contest possible.)

Judiciary Committees to Hear Voter-Owned Elections Presentation

Carol Warren, Coordinator for WV Citizens for Clean Elections, will give a presentation on voter-owned, publicly financed elections to the Joint Judiciary Committee on Tuesday, February 10 at 2PM in the House Government Organization Committee Meeting Room (215-E) at the Capitol. A Judiciary subcommittee is considering public financing as one way to reform the way West Virginia selects its judges. Although the committee is not expected to make any recommendations regarding judicial selection, the level of interest in public financing prompted the committee chairs to request a presentation. It will focus on the concept generally, voter-owned election laws in other states and their success, and past and current proposals before the WV Legislature. This is a great opportunity to promote one of our priority issues to legislators and educate new members prior to the start of the 2009 legislative session. **Please attend to learn more and show your support for voter-owned elections in West Virginia!**

Committee Hears From Land Owners, Industry

by Norm Steenstra III, norm@wvsoro.org

During the January interim meetings, we had the opportunity to make the case for the Surface Owners' Bill of Rights. The legislative committee heard from landowners about their problems dealing with drillers. Industry was given equal time. Special thanks to WV SORO members Jim Farrell, Nancy Powers, Chris Opitz, Judy Good, John Snyder and Bart Garrett for sharing their stories with the committee and to WV SORO members who trekked to Charleston to show their support.

Our speakers provided first-hand accounts of the needless destruction of timber, lost home sites, mindless road building and ruined pastures caused by drillers and the problems caused by the drillers are affecting real people. (WV SORO member John Mace recorded the meeting and we hope to have audio clips on the website soon. Thanks, John!) We received positive feedback from committee members after the meeting. Putting a face on the issue and having a room packed with concerned citizens was a huge boost for our efforts. Thanks, also, to those of you who contacted your legislators prior to the committee meeting. Your calls and e-mails are making a difference – keep them coming!

Industry had just one speaker, lobbyist Phil Reale. He spoke for 30 minutes, often repeating himself and repeating the untruths industry has been using to oppose our bill. He highlighted his presentation with an attack against Dave McMahan, stating “that Dave was creating a new business to make money off the industry”. Dave has been lobbying for more than 25 years for causes like ours and I am proud to work with him on this issue. More than one legislator commented that Mr. Reale lobbies for whoever pays him the most, so obviously, this was another industry tactic to try and stall our proposed bill. So it is important for everyone to keep contacting their legislators and educate them about the need for additional protections and rights for West Virginia landowners.

Unfortunately, there were not enough committee members present to take action on either of the two bills (our proposed bill and a "committee " bill modeled after legislation passed recently in New Mexico) explained by committee staff earlier in the meeting. This means we need to keep the pressure on committee members to support OUR Surface Owners' Bill of Rights when they meet on February 8, when the entire joint committee will take up the bills.

If your legislator(s) serves in the Joint Judiciary Committee and you haven't contacted them, please do so. A few personal contacts from constituents can make the difference in

whether or not our bill is recommended by the committee.

Thanks to all new and renewing WV-SORO members. Amazingly it has already been a year since we introduced the Surface Owners' Bill of Rights. We have greatly appreciated all your support and determination for this issue that hits us all so close to home. Your continued support will help us continue to grow our organization to push for the changes needed to give us more rights. We must ensure landowners receive fair compensation. As always, feel free to contact us with any of your questions or concerns and you can learn more about our campaign at www.wvsoro.org. Thank you!

Support the WV Bottle Bill!

When: Thursday, **February 19** at 1:30 PM in the House Chambers, State Capitol Building

What: Presentation to Joint House Judiciary and Finance Committees. **Public encouraged to attend!**

Who: John Ferrari, President of NexCycle's California Operations, will present the environmental and economic implications to West Virginia presented by the Bottle Bill including job creation. NexCycle-California provides beverage container redemption services to retailers and is a subsidiary of SMI (Strategic Materials Incorporated), the largest glass recycler in the US. *For more information about NexCycle: www.nexcyclecalifornia.com*

Can't make it to the Capitol? Here are other ways you can help:

1. Ask your legislators to support the WV Bottle Bill. Call toll-free at 1-877-565-3447.
2. Sign our on-line petition.
3. Contribute to our campaign.
4. Sign up to receive action alerts.
5. Send a letter to editor.

You can do all this and more by visiting www.wvbottlebill.org. For more information, contact Linda at linda@wvcag.org.

Save the Date!

WV-CAG's annual spring fundraiser will be **Friday, May 1** at the Woman's Club on Virginia Street in Charleston. Share our tradition of a great buffet dinner, progressive friends from across the state and silent auction. More details to come soon!

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Advocacy Training Coming to a City Near You!

Please join us at one of the following advocacy trainings which include “*Lobbying 101*” and organizational break-out sessions for issue education and message framing. To reserve a spot please call 304-342-9188 or e-mail lida@wvfree.org at least one day prior – food provided!

Tuesday, February 3 - Lewisburg

Sponsored by WVSOM Medical Students for Choice, WV Citizen Action Group, WV Environmental Council, WV FREE, and the ACLU of WV, 5:00pm to 7:00pm, WV School of Osteopathic Medicine, The Main Building.

Thursday, February 5 - Charleston

Sponsored by WV Citizen Action Group, WV Environmental Council, WV FREE, and the ACLU of WV, 6:00pm to 8:00pm, Webb Room, University of Charleston.

Monday, February 9 - Morgantown

Sponsored by Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, WV Citizen Action Group, WV Environmental Council, WV FREE, and the WVU ACLU, 7:30pm to 9:00pm, Monongalia County Courthouse, Courtroom #2, Third Floor 243 High Street.

Capital Eye is published by WV-Citizen Action, a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1974 and 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. Learn more at www.wvcag.org.



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

Donate quickly & securely at www.wvcag.org!