



Capitol Eye

August 2013

Volume 13, No. 6

Citizen Public Policy Trainings in August

By Gary Zuckett

WV-CAG is a part of Our Children, Our Future – a broad coalition of WV groups focusing on ending Child Poverty and its roots in WV. We are proud to partner on two Statewide Policy Workshops in August. See Page 2 for info on times and locations. There, you will get high-level policy and advocacy training PLUS the opportunity to dig more deeply into one specific policy area of your choice during afternoon workshops. Each workshop will culminate with a presentation from Sen. John Unger about how to make change in the legislature.

This conference is perfect for ministers, working families, teachers, students, parents, social workers, and others who are interested in learning more about how to affect public policy changes in their communities, and statewide! The two policy workshops are basically the same format, so we encourage people to register for one or the other.

Miley New Speaker

By Norm Steenstra

Democrat Tim Miley was elected Speaker of the House last month and this is good news for WV CAG and its members. The Harrison County Lawyer had been the chair of the important House Judiciary Committee where so many of our bills are considered. Congratulations, Speaker Tim Miley, and best of luck in maintaining a progressive agenda in the face of an ever increasing conservative House of Delegates.



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⇒ Please Renew Your Membership with Citizen Action Group or Donate to the Cause

⇒ Registration for Policy Workshops is Free but Required for Participation

⇒ Help us Compile a List of 40 WV-CAG Accomplishments for Our Anniversary

PUBLIC POLICY WORKSHOP

Presenters/trainers include Sen. John Unger, Jim McKay, Stephen Smith, and Julie Archer

Beckley: August 21st * 10am-4pm

At the Dream Center * 244 Pinewood Road

Afternoon issue areas include Raising the Minimum Wage, Foster Care Reform, Juvenile Justice Reform, Afterschool Education, and many more

Register at <http://conta.cc/18bpmBZ>

Bridgeport: August 23rd * 10am-4pm

At the Bridgeport Conference Center

Afternoon Issue areas include: Food Policy, Physical Activity, Medicaid Enrollment, State Earned Income Tax Credit, Foster Care Reform, and others

Register at <http://conta.cc/1b04u0u>

Workshop Co-Sponsors

WV Community Development Hub, WV Head Start Association, WV Healthy Kids & Families Coalition, WV Center on Budget & Policy, WV Citizen Action, American Friends Service Committee, KISRA, Catholic Charities, Partners in Community Outreach, Reconnecting McDowell, United Way/FRN of Mon and Preston Counties, United Way of Southern WV, HOPE Community Development Corporation, Fayette County FRN, Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund, Children's Home Society

A New Face for Change: Brooke Drake

With the goals of maintaining a template for the news of tomorrow, I have accepted a position with West Virginia Citizen Action Group. In addition to work on the Americans for Tax Fairness Act, editing the newsletter and database will begin my journey. I hope to learn from progressive leaders in order to hone my skills in helping the people of our fine state become what we know we can be.

Studying Civil Engineering allowed me to see the line between business interests and human factors. My training has been in technical writing, a task that involves saying as much as possible in as few words as necessary. Managing small projects has taught me that many topics need to be discussed before the final word is written. It takes a dual-minded conscience to have the ability to make right-brain decisions based off left-brain interests. My skills in math and science coupled with an interest in helping people live the most beautiful life they can imagine drive my work ethic toward a future where we can all be happy, healthy, and hungry only for success.

I've found my place not in telling people how to live their lives, but showing them that they can live it how they choose. Consider this the revamp of the American Dream my generation has only heard tell about from our elders. Once all the information is provided, proper decisions are made more efficiently, but without the knowledge that the motivation for prosperity exists only within ourselves, our society cannot be a true democracy.



Health Care Update

by Lisa Diehl

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) expands health insurance coverage to virtually all Americans in two basic ways. First, many states, including West Virginia, are expanding Medicaid up to 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) on January 1, 2014. The Medicaid expansion means that everyone who earns less than \$15,800, who is a US citizen, who lives in West Virginia and is under age 65, is eligible for Medicaid beginning January 1, 2014. An estimated 133,500 low-income West Virginians will qualify under the Medicaid expansion. Second, subsidized private insurance plans will be available in the Health Insurance Marketplace. The subsidies for these insurance plans are available on a sliding scale to individuals and families earning between 100 percent (about \$11,500 for an individual and \$19,500 for a family of three) and 400 percent of the FPL (about \$46,000 for an individual and \$78,000 for a family of three). These policies also become effective as early as January 1, 2014. Enrollment in both the expanded Medicaid and the subsidized private insurance plans can begin on October 1, 2013.

The Offices of the Insurance Commissioner projects that over the next three years the percentage of uninsured West Virginians will be reduced by 70 percent. The current number of uninsured, 246,000, will be reduced to 76,000. Imagine 170,000 fewer uninsured West Virginians within three years!



This is an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to provide health care and financial security to thousands of our neighbors, friends and colleagues. In order to take full advantage of this opportunity, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care (WVAHC) is offering a series of regional training across the state and mini grants to nonprofit and faith-based organizations, and government units. The training and mini grants are designed to develop "community assisters." The role of community assisters is to educate the public on the new insurance options and how to enroll; assist people with uncomplicated family situations to enroll in Medicaid; and to connect the uninsured to more highly trained individuals who can enroll even the most complicated situations.

If you are a FRN, CAP agency, a faith-based organization, a local health department, volunteer fire department, etc. and want to apply for a grant up to \$5,000 to help fund a community assister, a copy of the grant application can be found at <http://www.enrollwv.org/docs/Mini-Grant-Application-Form.pdf>

You can register at <http://www.enrollwv.org/training.php> for one of the regional training sessions by clicking on the location that best fits your schedule.

This is an opportunity to improve the quality of life for thousands of West Virginians. Please join us in taking full advantage of this golden opportunity. Thanks.

39 Years and Counting!

By Gary Zuckett

At our Spring Awards Dinner we all were taken with the realization that next year, 2014, will be the 40th year that WV Citizen Action Group has its doors open for the business of consumer and environmental protection and economic and social justice. Wow!



I've been here at WV-CAG since the mid-nineties and have seen a lot of the action since then but our history goes back to the year I moved here to West Virginia, 1974!

We'll be planning an extra special Spring Extravaganza next year and in anticipation of a big year next year we are conducting a membership drive to increase our membership by at least 40% before then. If you're not currently a member of WV-CAG please consider filling out the membership coupon in this newsletter. (or go on-line at www.wvcag.org to join)



We Need Your Support!

We can't do it without you!

Please renew your membership or send a donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

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

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!

If you are a member, please help us expand our base by giving this newsletter to a friend or emailing three or four a link with a note asking them to become a citizen activist by joining up. There is strength in numbers and the more members we have active, the more effective our fight for progressive policies.

Thanks again to all of our supporting members – we couldn't have lasted this long without you!

Regenerate West Virginia

By Norm Steenstra

We've all noticed in recent years that state policy and many newly elected officials are moving to a more extreme right wing agenda and away from the progressive values that once set us apart from the rest of Appalachia. Last November's election underscored that movement.

I want to share with you some positive things that are happening in Kanawha County to begin to reverse the right wing shift. A group of progressive leaders (most in their 30's and 40's) have formed a Political Action Committee called Regenerate West Virginia to recruit, train and help fund progressive candidates for all levels of office from county Democratic committees, mayors, state legislature and beyond. Dozens of people have contributed to Regenerate WV and many thousands of dollars were raised for Kanawha County candidates.



Contributors to Regenerate represent leaders of women's rights, child advocacy, education, environment, labor, fair taxation and other progressive issues. Regenerate cuts across group turf issues and focuses on a broad progressive agenda and a long range approach to protecting and promoting those values.

A reoccurring nightmare I've had over many years is that there are many hundreds, if not thousands, of fellow progressive West Virginians that are not networking with each other. People don't really know what's going on in Charleston and area progressives are ignorant of local groups and individuals facing similar issues in their own counties. Gary Zuckett and I have been tossing around the idea of taking the "Regenerate" concept on the road.

A recent analysis of our WV CAG membership indicated that 10-15 counties have a significant CAG member base. Simply, our idea is to contact those members, arrange a round table, and hope our members would incite people of similar values to a couple of hours of talking about what's going on at the local level. The ideal scenario would have healthcare, environment, labor, social justice, women issues, and other leaders in attendance. Our hope would be that in many cases something similar to Regenerate WV- Charleston Style might be hatched.

Stand with WV Women!

By Stacy Gloss

Together! Planned Parenthood Health Systems, ACLU-WV, WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence WV FREE, and other groups are Standing with WV Women in a rally at the Capitol on August 20th at 12:00pm in a response to Attorney General Morrisey's recent assault on a woman's ability to make personal medical decisions. The 'Illuminate' campaign of the Family Policy Council of WV, working together with the Attorney General's office is an attack on women's rights in WV, and is part of a systematic, nationwide assault on women that we can't ignore.



Visit the WV Free Facebook page for more information. <https://www.facebook.com/WVFREE>

Margaret Chapman Pomponio has been featured in several recent WV Gazette articles highlighting the issues as a veiled attempt to prevent women from maintaining access to safe medical care and to further limit abortion in West Virginia. See recent Gazette article by Lori Kersey [Abortion rights activists: 'Illuminate' meant to stop abortion](#). Morrisey is accepting public comments as part of an on-going "review" of abortion laws in WV through August 16th. You can visit www.wvago.gov/callforcomment.cfm for more information.

Updates from Energy Efficient West Virginia

By Stacy Gloss

For starters, it's been an unsettling year for energy and utilities in West Virginia. West Virginia is facing a problem. Though our legislature believes the problem is that we're just not burning enough West Virginia coal, and that bureaucrats believe ["What's not happening is getting the bigger picture issues resolved with coal."](#) we think that there's another problem. West Virginia isn't looking at real solutions to continue to provide low cost and reliable power to electric customers. In two cases before the Public Service Commission this year, we have argued that the proposals from our state's utility companies to purchase coal plants from their out-of-state deregulated affiliates is in the best interests of American Electric Power and FirstEnergy, but not their West Virginia customers. They are needlessly putting West Virginians at risk for higher electric bills as coal fired generation becomes more expensive.

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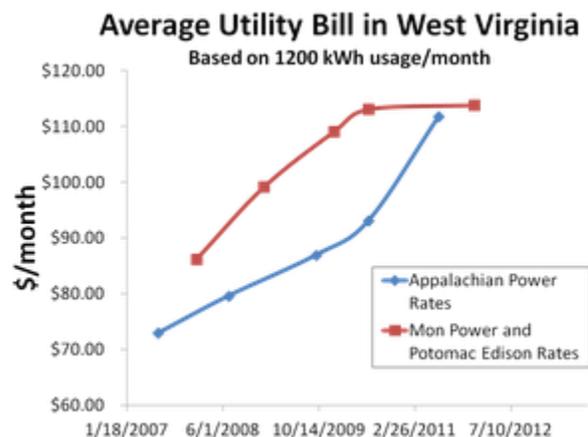
Energy efficiency and other resources like natural gas are resources that will continue to be available for years at a lower cost than investing in coal plant infrastructure now, and are sorely needed to stabilize bills for West Virginians. Energy efficiency especially can easily be folded into utilities' long term energy planning. Energy efficiency delivers results in the short term and has long term value. Saving energy through energy efficiency is the lowest cost resource for power companies to reduce their burden and reliance on fossil fuels in a changing climate. At Energy Efficient West Virginia, we think that West Virginians deserve the same opportunities and resources available to citizens in other states in terms of a suite energy efficiency services and rebates provided by the utility companies. For this, we need to think beyond the status quo, and acknowledge that conserving energy through energy efficiency measures provided to the public before purchasing expensive infrastructure is just common sense. What's the point in owning a Cadillac when a Civic will meet your needs?

At the Public Service Commission and through media outlets, we are shining light on utility schemes that are meant to profit FirstEnergy and American Electric Power through insider sweetheart deals – where prices of power plants aren't negotiated, but simply agreed upon, and where West Virginians will pay the price.

The Public Service Commission is still accepting comments in the Mon Power case to purchase the Harrison plant and the Appalachian Power case to purchase shares of the John Amos and Mitchell power plants. To submit comments to the PSC, visit our website directly at www.eewv.org/tell-psc-to-reject-aep-s-plan and www.eewv.org/tell-wv-psc-not-to-bail-out-firstenergy to learn more about the issues and for directions on how submit comments to the PSC.

You can also contact Stacy at stacy.eewv@gmail.com if you have any questions.

When we're not busy fighting for better programs for residential and commercial electric customers at the PSC, we have been working on an energy efficiency in schools project this summer, completing energy assessments of three facilities in Kanawha County to learn more about the no cost, and low cost implements that schools can take advantage of to start saving money that can be invested directly back into the classroom. With the help of a technical assistance grant from West Virginia Sustainable Communities, and a contract with the Michael Baker and Associates engineering firm, we are learning about the energy assessment process and look forward to sharing results with school facilities pros across the state.



Wellness & Water II, Marcellus Academy Educate Landowners, Activists and Others About the Impact of Fossil Fuel Extraction

By Julie Archer

You know some major problems exist when nearly 75 people devote a large amount of time on a summer weekend to exploring an issue in depth. On June 29-30, 2013, the second Wellness & Water public education event was held in Buckhannon, WV. Starting with the first event in September 2012, these gatherings have provided opportunities for members of environmental organizations and allied groups like our Surface Owners' Rights Organization (WV-SORO), and other concerned citizens to gather for networking and information sharing opportunities. In addition to WV-SORO, co-sponsors of this year's event were the Doddridge County Watershed Association, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club and the WV Highlands Conservancy.

Plenary speakers for the event included scientific experts like Yuri Gorby of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, public policy experts like Leslie Fields of the Sierra Club, and progressive thinkers like Grant Smith of the Civil Society Institute. Representatives from various organizations which seek to provide information and assistance to people who are concerned about their water quality and/or finding alternatives to fossil fuel usage were also on hand to lead workshops and participate in panel discussions. These included Marc Glass of Downstream Strategies, Rob Goodwin of Coal River Mountain Watch, and Brian Oram of B.F. Environmental Consultants. Also presenting were Dave Hanna with New Vision Solar, Samantha Malone of FracTracker, Aaron Sutch with the Mountain Institute, and Laura Rigell with the Swarthmore College Divestment Campaign. Attendees also heard testimonials from five coal and gas affected residents. Many participants said that this was the most powerful portion of the program.

Folks had some fun while in Buckhannon, too. The bluegrass band East Run performed on Saturday evening, and throughout the event, participants were encouraged to express themselves creatively by making "bendy stick" creations. These were judged on Sunday prior to the conclusion of the conference. Overall, it was a great weekend.

Wellness & Water II participants agreed that we need to come up with processes for continued information sharing. To that end, a permanent Facebook page will be created and all who 'Like' the page will be able to post comments and receive information. Future events, action opportunities, and networking possibilities will be posted there, Stay tuned to our action alerts and newsletters for more information about this. Portions of this year's Wellness & Water event were video recorded and we will be posting these as soon as we can. In the meantime, you can check out videos from the 2012 conference starting with the opening greetings and a presentation by environmental scientist Dr. Wilma Subra. Broken into 12 parts, part one can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znFOo7CloVg>



Dr. Wilma Subra discusses the health impacts associated with the shale gas development at the 2012 Wellness & Water conference.

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Two weeks following Wellness & Water (on July 13-14, 2013), more than 40 activists from around the state gathered again in Buckhannon for another educational opportunity sponsored by the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club. The goal of the club's third annual Marcellus Academy was to provide those working to address Marcellus drilling related issues in their communities with tools to organize others, to monitor industry practices, and to help guide local and legislative leaders toward implementing sound policies to address these issues.

On Saturday morning, Dr. Michael McCawley of the WVU School of Public Health kicked off the weekend with a discussion of the results and recommendations from the assessment he conducted for the WV-DEP related to air, noise and light impacts from horizontal drilling operations. Gene Smith and Rick Campbell with the WV DEP Office of Oil & Gas followed with a presentation on their agency's role in gas drilling. Later in the day, Dr. Ben Stout of Wheeling Jesuit University spoke about the mounting problems with toxic drilling waste and the proposed Green Hunter wastewater facility near in Wheeling. That evening, former State Senator and environmental advocate Charlotte Pritt, and Delegate Mike Manypenny teamed up for a presentation on the WV Legislature – Who's Who and How It Works.

On Sunday, Alan Collins, Professor and Assistant Director, Division of Resource Management at WVU spoke about the results of the recent survey of West Virginia landowners he conducted to determine what impacts (both positive and negative) shale gas drilling has had on surface owners. (We'll be discussing these and the results of the WVU studies mandated by the Horizontal Well Control Act in our next WV-SORO newsletter, as we will be working to get the legislature to act on the DEP's one recommendation from the studies -- to measure the setback distance from occupied dwellings from the edge of the pad rather than the center. Visit www.wvsoro.org or e-mail julie@wvsoro.org for more details.)

The weekend also featured a series of presentations focused on monitoring industry activity. This included a primer by Bill Hughes of the Wetzel County Action Group on identifying all the big trucks and heavy equipment on our roads -- what they are, what they do and what drilling phase is happening when certain trucks and equipment arrive at a well site. Upshur County residents Cindy Rank and Tim Higgins presented a slide show of a nearby well site from site preparation to current production phase in preparation for a visit to the site before attendees departed for home.

(Robin Blakeman of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition and Chuck Wyrostok, Outreach Organizer with the WV Chapter of the Sierra Club contributed to this article).

Prosperity agenda should replace austerity measures

By Gary Zuckett, reprinted from the Charleston Gazette

"Across the nation, Head Start programs have ended their school years early, canceled summer programs, cut staff pay and benefits, and have begun to announce reductions in the number of children who will be served in the fall." Thus begins a letter sent to Congress this week by 146 national social, faith and labor groups, including the Coalition on Human Needs and USAction.org. Five West Virginia groups, in addition to WV Citizen Action have also signed on.

"Programs serving meals to seniors have started to reduce days of home delivery and have closed or reduced hours for dining rooms. The long-term unemployed have lost federal jobless benefits, while job training programs that might have helped them are cut back," the letter goes on. "Federal funds for education have been cut, with particularly harsh results for schools most reliant on these resources: those on Indian reservations or near military bases. Students counting on college work-study jobs are learning they will not get them. Poor

families or people with disabilities perilously close to homelessness after waiting years for a rental voucher have been told they will have to wait longer." This letter highlights the negative social impacts of Sequestration that will be made even worse if the recent House appropriations plan goes into effect.

The House of Representatives recently voted to continue the mindless Sequestration cuts on social programs while making even deeper cuts to them. However, they ignored the requirement that half of Sequestration's \$110 billion be taken from the bloated Pentagon budget. Instead, the House piled on an additional 5.4 percent to fatten the Pentagon's spending.

We're out of Iraq and leaving Afghanistan and should now begin to lower Pentagon spending to pre-war levels, not throw more money on the bonfire. In contrast, the House proposal pulls 18.6 percent out of funding for Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. Also, Energy, Environment, and Conservation programs get whacked by 11 to 22 percent.

What kind of backwards priorities are these?

Such austerity measures failed in Europe -- worsening their employment crisis and fomenting social unrest. What's needed instead is a prosperity agenda -- one that will put this nation back to work. Instead of even deeper cuts to vital programs to pay for more pork for Pentagon contractors, it is time to end unfair tax breaks for millionaires and multinational companies. We must stop their tax-dodging practice of off-shoring corporate profits that robs the federal treasury of needed additional revenue to rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges and put Americans back to work. This is the way forward, not more job-killing cuts.

We can't "cut" our way out of this jobless economic recovery, we must work our way out. The letter urges members of Congress "... to oppose appropriations based on House-passed levels. Congress should enact a budget based on the values of opportunity and security, to build an America that works for all of us."

The full letter and all 146 national signers can be read at usaction.org.

PROGRAM	FUNDING STATUS
COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS	ON TIME
MEAT INSPECTIONS	ON TIME
HEAD START	CANCELED
MEALS ON WHEELS	CANCELED
CHILD CARE	CANCELED
CANCER TREATMENT	CANCELED
STUDENT AID	CANCELED
DISASTER RELIEF	CANCELED

Information

Passenger update: Congress pushed through a bill to reshuffle funding and avoid flight delays – hours before they flew out of town. Meanwhile, fixes have been grounded for the devastating sequester cuts that are forcing seniors to go hungry, cancer patients to go untreated, and the unemployed to be stranded.

Please proceed immediately to afscme.org/inaction.

More sequester turbulence is coming soon. Fasten your seatbelts.

Brought to you by the 1.6 million members of AFSCME who remind you that tampering with, disabling or destroying the relationship between Congress and the super-rich is strictly prohibited.

Congress fixed the sequester cuts to Air Traffic Controllers so as not to inconvenience them in their travels. When will they fix the Kids getting bumped off Head Start?

Spring Fundraiser- Huge Success and Timely Too

by Norm Steenstra

Our annual spring fundraise held on May 17 was a financial success and a morale booster after a dismal political season. Generously supported by our “Champions” The Dunn Foundation, Chris Green, and the WV Association for Justice and our “Advocates” Allan and Mille Karlin, Marge Michau, and the AFL-CIO assured a successful event.



2013 CAG Awardees Darrell McGraw and Jorea Marple, flanked by current Director Gary Zuckett on left and our founding Director David Grubb on the right.

The defeat of longtime WV-CAG Hero, Attorney General Darrell McGraw and then the blatant political firing of WV State Board of Education Superintendent Jorea Marple, wife of Darrell McGraw, was a real blow to the progressive movement in the state. The WV-CAG Board decided to honor these two outstanding public servants and bestowed its two most prestigious awards to Darrell and Jorea.

Darrell McGraw received the Si Galperin “In defense of Democracy Award” for his life-long commitment to progressive issues as both Supreme Court Justice and Attorney General.

Jorea Marple was honored for her many years as educator, school administrator, and Superintendent of the State Board of Education with the Don Marsh Public Service Award. The award named after the late Si Galperin, legislator, congressional candidate, and long-time WV-CAG Board Member. The late Don Marsh was the long-time editor of the Charleston Gazette, largely responsible for the Gazette being perhaps the most progressive newspaper in Appalachia.

The evening was probably best summed up when Jorea Marple said, “It is always a good thing to take the time be with friends and to celebrate an honor like this.”

Tax Fairness Resolution – Time for Action

by Gary Zuckett

We are the state lead for Americans for Tax Fairness (www.americansfortaxfairness.org) which is fighting to make millionaires and multinational companies pay their fair share of taxes instead of dodging them by renting a post office box in one of scores of off-shore tax havens. This summer we are asking local citizens to take up the campaign in their local counties, cities and towns by asking their local elected officials to pass a resolution asking Congress to fix this mess and fill the holes in the federal budget with the tax dollars that should be paid by these tax dodgers.

Not only do these tax cheats hurt the federal budget, they also punch a hole in our state funds since, like our personal income tax, the state uses the corporate federal tax returns as a basis for figuring state taxes. A PIRG report we released this spring called “[Picking up the Tab](#)” lists how much each state is losing from offshore tax dodgers. The report calculates that our West Virginia budget is shorted over \$100 million!

If this makes you as mad as we are, give Norm a call at (304) 346-5891 or e-mail norm@wvcag.org and he'll set you up with the info you need (and a draft resolution) to take this issue to your local city council or county commission. West Virginia needs this revenue to keep our state services from being axed!

"If I can't dance, I don't
 want to be part of your
 revolution."
 ~Emma Goldman

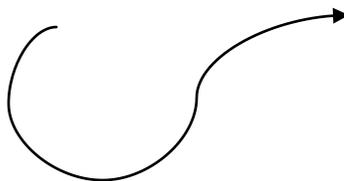
Games for You and the Family

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Hint: L=E



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| AMERICA | HOUSE | SENIORS |
| BILL | LEGISLATOR | SEQUESTER |
| BUDGET | LOOPHOLE | SPENDING |
| CHILDREN | NEUTRAL | STRATEGY |
| CITIZEN | OFFSHORE | SUSTAINABLE |
| COMMITTEE | POLICY | TAXES |
| CONGRESS | PROGRESS | |
| CORPORATION | PROSPERITY | |
| DEBT | REFORM | |
| DEMOCRAT | REGENERATE | |
| DODGING | REPATRIATION | |
| EQUALITY | REPRESENT | |
| FAIRNESS | REPUBLICAN | |