



Top: Freedom to Vote Relay for Democracy Kickoff in Harpers Ferry on October 21st.
Above: Linda Frame, President of the WV Environmental Council, in a hippie Halloween costume at the October 30th Climate Rally at the Capitol.

Winter is Coming

By Gary Zuckett

December is upon us and we're already on that holiday slide beginning with Thanksgiving and ending with New Year's fireworks. There'll also be plenty of fireworks along the way as Congress has several must pass and a couple of really-need-to-pass bills they want to deal with before then.

The 'need to pass' are ones we've been advocating for most of this year. Of course we're talking about the Freedom to Vote Act (formerly For the People Act) and Build Back Better (what's left of THRIVE). You'll hear more in detail on both of these later in this issue, but in short, the Freedom to Vote Act will protect the foundations of

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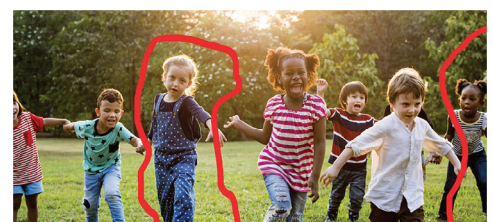
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our democracy. BBB will invest in social services and the human 'infrastructure' needed to un-rig our economic system, support our families and communities by laying the foundation for shared prosperity, and begin to address the climate crisis in a big way.

Senator Manchin continues to be a key voice in negotiations and a key vote on passage of these measures. That's why you'll find several 'asks' inside to reach out to our senior Senator to give him guidance in his deliberations and tell him we expect him to deliver for his state.

Senate leadership wants these bills passed and on the President's desk between now and the end of year holiday break so pressure is high and the stakes are even higher.

To put into perspective, these two bills are probably the most far-reaching and significant efforts to protect and strengthen our democratic institutions and reshape our economy in this nation since the passage of the Vote Rights Act of 1965 and Roosevelt's New Deal. They are for sure the biggest we've worked on here at WV-CAG.

Our advocacy on these policies has taken many forms. Most recently we helped organize a caravan across the state in support of the Freedom to Vote Act, and sponsored a rolling billboard for Build Back Better with Sen Manchin's picture and a call to action on it. WV-CAG also worked with the WV Climate Alliance to hold a big rally at Charleston's federal courthouse plaza on the eve of

Halloween. Did we mention the need to give him a call and send an email? Please do at tinyurl.com/WV4BBB!

Our goal is for you to play an active role in crafting progressive policy that will lift up workers, your families and our communities. We aspire to give you the tools and information for YOUR citizen action to make a difference in West Virginia and the nation.

The Forces of Winter are coming and we need to continue lifting up and advocating for these breakthrough policies that will bring the change needed to counterbalance them and THRIVE.

Finally, as we pull out all the stops to get BBB and the Freedom to Vote Act across the finish line, we also need to keep the lights on at Citizen Action.

Your membership renewal, or tax-deductible end of year donation, will help cover the cost of our basic necessities, while keeping us in the fight for passage of these transformative policies and more.

Please take a minute and go to www.wvcag.org/membership or use the enclosed coupon to send a check to 1500 Dixie Street, Charleston, WV 25311. Thank you in advance for your support and have a joyful holiday season! §



Legislative Forecast

By Julie Archer

Winter is coming, and that means the legislative session is just around the corner. With so much time and energy focused on federal issues, it's been hard to think about the legislative session — and, especially looking back at the 2021 session it's hard to see much good coming out of what's been dubbed "the Bad Idea Factory." However, we had a few wins, and especially in the current climate, sometimes victory means holding the line and not losing ground. As 2021 comes to a close and we head into a new year, and another legislative session, here are some issues we expect to take up time and attention under the dome.

Courts/Access to Justice - Big changes are coming to West Virginia's judicial system, after the passage in 2021

of SB 275, which established a new intermediate court of appeals that will review most trial court decisions before they reach the state Supreme Court. SB 275 also made other significant changes to the process of appealing objections to workers compensation claims that attorneys for injured workers say will politicize the process and deny or delay justice for their clients. These changes have been long sought by corporate interests, but their efforts to undermine access to justice for regular West Virginians have no bounds.

Among the items still on their wish list is **restricting access to medical monitoring when someone is exposed to a dangerous toxin or defective product**. While it may take years for some diseases caused by that exposure, such as cancer, to develop, those who are exposed to the dangerous toxins need to have regular medical monitoring so that treatment can start as soon as any illnesses are found. Refusing to allow medical testing until disease occurs could be a death sentence. Early detection allows for early treatment which saves time, money and lives, but greedy corporations, the same ones pushing for the changes to our water quality standards described below, want to prohibit medical monitoring claims until someone gets sick, defeating the very rationale for these claims.

Health Care - Building on past successes capping insulin copays and adding adult dental coverage to Medicaid, the WV Health Care for All coalition has a new agenda that they will be working to pass in the upcoming session to ensure that all West Virginians have access to quality, comprehensive affordable health care. See Kim Jones' article on page 4 for more on the 2022 agenda and how you can get involved.

Racial Justice and Non-Discrimination - Although bills to prohibit hair discrimination and to protect members of the LGBTQ community from discrimination in employment and housing stalled in previous sessions, advocates for the CROWN (Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair) Act and the Fairness Act aren't giving up the fight. They've also been making significant headway at the local level. In the months since the 2021 legislative session ended, at least four cities (Charleston, Morgantown, Beckley and Lewisburg) across the state have adopted CROWN Act ordinances which ban discrimination against based on hairstyles associated with race, such as natural Black hair or dreadlocks. In July, South Charleston became the 15th city in West Virginia to ban LGBTQ discrimination. This year, Charleston and Morgantown also passed bans on conversion therapy, a pseudoscientific practice where a medical provider attempts to change someone's sexual

orientation or gender identity.

Reproductive Justice/Bodily Autonomy - On December 1, the nation watched as the US Supreme Court heard oral arguments in a case that directly challenges Roe v. Wade, the precedent setting case that has protected reproductive freedom for millions of Americans for nearly 50 years. If the Court overturns Roe, half the states in the US are poised to ban abortion entirely, including West Virginia.

Ultra-conservative legislators are chomping at the bit to impose further restrictions on abortion access in West Virginia after the Court refused to halt a Texas law banning abortions after six weeks from taking effect. This is a red alert moment for reproductive freedom. The right to decide if or when to have a child is essential to a person's ability to make highly personal decisions about their bodies and their futures. It is essential for social, economic, and racial equality in this country.



Jim wants a TAX CUT ... and YOU get to PAY!

Tax and Budget - During the 2021 session, WV CAG was part of a coalition of groups that helped defeat a bill to eliminate West Virginia's personal income tax. The proposal would have overwhelmingly benefited the wealthy by replacing the income tax with higher sales taxes that would be a net tax increase for low and middle income families, while also blowing a huge hole in the budget that would have resulted in huge cuts to critical programs and services. Although, people power played a major role in defeating the income tax repeal, disagreement between the House and the Senate was also factored in, so look for it's return in 2022.

Voting Rights & Democracy - You may recall that one of last year's victories was the defeat of a bill (SB 565) that would have eliminated the most popular days of early voting, gutted automatic voter registration and start the process of removing voters from rolls after two years (instead

of four) if someone hasn't voted. With voting rights under attack around the country — this year, 19 states have enacted 33 laws that will make it harder for Americans to vote — we fully expected to see this proposal again in 2022, if not sooner. It's important we remain vigilant and prepared to and ready to mobilize against measures to restrict access to voting in West Virginia.



These threats to our freedom to vote make it critical that Congress set national standards to ensure that all Americans have equal access to the ballot ahead of the 2022 elections. Passing the Freedom to Vote Act is our best opportunity to respond to these threats to our democracy, further voter protections, strengthen election integrity, reign in dark money, and end partisan and racial gerrymandering. Call Senators Machin and Capito today and urge their support.

Water Quality Standards - One of the anticipated policies that will be up for debate is a WV Department of Environmental Protection rule making revisions to the state's water quality standards. The proposed changes are part of a second round of revisions to the human health criteria, the portion of our water quality standards that protect our health from dangerous pollutants like cancer causing toxins, chemicals known to cause birth-defects, and poisons like cyanide.

As proposed, the **rule would allow more toxins in our drinking water sources AND create a loophole for polluters to discharge even more toxins in our water with less public involvement.** Prior to the rule going before the full Legislature, it will be considered by the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee, which can approve, disapprove or amend the proposed rule. The action by the Committee will set the tone for what happens during the legislative session.

To keep up with the latest, sign up for water policy updates from our friends at the WV Rivers Coalition at wvrivers.org.

Make sure you are subscribed to our Action Alerts to stay up to date on these and other issues starting in January. Sign up at wvcag.org/action-alerts-signup. §

Health Care For All WV

By Kim Jones

Virtual Health Care for All Summit 2021

On October 26th and 27th, Health Care for All, along with our coalition partners, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care, West Virginia Citizen Action Group, West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, and with the generous support of the Rx Foundation, held our **2021 Health Care Summit**. We had an excellent panel speakers who discussed the many health care issues the people of our state are facing, from finding affordable health insurance and childrens' health, to substance use disorder (SUD) and health equity (Video link to summit: tinyurl.com/HCSummit21).

We also launched our **2022 Legislative Health Agenda**. Our regional coordinators and coalition members introduced the individual policies that we have been working on and hope to get passed during the upcoming legislative session (policy issues listed on the right).

2022 Legislative Health Care Agenda:

- Medicaid buy-in
- Medical debt and collection
- Vision coverage
- Paid family leave
- Mental health coverage
- Doula care
- and much more!

Build Back Better CARE

We have also had the honor to work with many concerned West Virginians and our partner organizations on the Build Back Better Plan. As I write this, on this beautiful November morning, the House of Representatives has just voted on and passed this historic investment in the working people of America. It now goes to the Senate to be voted on in December. We will continue to support this legislation that will make healthcare more affordable and accessible to millions of Americans, invest in home healthcare jobs, childcare, universal pre-K, insulin copay cap, extension of the Child Tax Credit, expansion of Medicare services and more. We will continue to urge Senators Capito and Manchin to support the people of our state, who will benefit so greatly from this historic investment in the future of working families.

2022 West Virginia Legislative Session

Health Care for All, our coordinators, partners and volunteers are eager to start working with legislators on both sides of the aisle on the policies in our agenda. The bill topics we hope to pass were identified by asking the people of West Virginia what healthcare struggles their families and communities face and what changes they need to see made.

We deserve better laws supporting the health of our citizens. You can help!

If you would like to work with us to make the changes we need, please go to facebook.com/healthcareforallwv and like/follow, or contact me directly at hcfawv@wvahc.org. §

Democracy - Freedom to Vote Act

By Katie Blount

Coalition Working Tirelessly to Pass the Freedom to Vote Act



The WV Freedom to Vote Coalition has been working tirelessly this fall to ensure our voting rights are protected. The Freedom to Vote Act is a transformative package to realize the promise of our democracy, reduce the influence of big money out of politics, and guarantee that congressional districts are drawn to give fair representation for all.

Our coalition knows how imperative it is that this legislation is implemented, so we've been advocating for Senator Manchin and his fellow Senators to take swift action! From events in Charleston all the way to the Northern Panhandle, we've been able to cover a lot of ground throughout WV. (Take action at: wvfordemocracy.com!)

Freedom to Vote Caravan & Relay Kick Off

In October, we travelled from Charleston to Charles Town

to keep the conversations going on the importance of this once-in-a-generation bill. We started the day early at the Capitol and a caravan of cars made their way up 79, stopping in Fairmont and Morgantown. The day ended in Charles Town as a kick off to the Freedom to Vote Relay, which included runners and bikers relaying from Harpers Ferry to D.C. in the following days.

The day of travel was a success with great speakers, lots of fun, and much awareness raised about protecting our freedom to vote!



Freedom to Vote - Candlelight Vigil

In November, after Senate Republicans blocked another voting rights bill, we gathered at the WV State Capitol steps for a "Freedom to Vote: Time to Act!" candlelight vigil. Local community members joined together for a light display, personal testimony on why the bill is important, and singing.



Democracy Cont.

Speakers included Katonya Hart (pictured on left), emcee and member of WV NOW; Reverend Darick Biondi, Faithful Democracy; Josh Sword, WV AFL-CIO President; Deborah Ujevich, WV Family of Convicted People; Rick Wilson, American Friends Service Committee, WV Economic Justice Project; Sally Roberts Wilson, Rise Up WV and Kathy Ferguson, Our Future WV.

Finally: Charleston Christmas Parade, "Democracy is Sweet"

On December 9th, the WV Freedom to Vote Coalition joined in on the holiday fun with a float in Charleston's Christmas parade. We rode in our candy cane themed truck to display why keeping democracy intact is sweet and to celebrate all we've done this past year! §

WV New Jobs Coalition: Connecting with West Virginians

By Gary Zuckett

The WV New Jobs Coalition (www.newjobswv.org), formed at the beginning of 2021, is our collaboration with WV Working Families Party, Service Employees International Union local 1199, WV Sierra Club, and others with the vision of bringing new, well-paying clean energy and care jobs to the Mountain State. Part of that vision includes making our state a place where people want to live and work, raise families, and retire. This means championing Jobs, Care, and Democracy.

Our coalition hosted events across the state, in tandem with canvassing outreach into the community. This spring, we kicked off with a simultaneous three city concert called [Jammin for Jobs](#), both live and online. Summer began with a six city Summer Jam tour starting in Huntington and ending in Shepherdstown, followed by a rally in DC. The rest of the summer into fall, weekly actions were also held outside of Senator Manchin's and/or Capito's offices, to emphasize that we needed them to bring home both Build Back Better and what eventually became the Freedom to Vote Act. We made some solid connections, but more was needed.

From September through November, the Coalition delved deeper to build more direct connections with West Virginians, and we did this through both phone and door-to-door deep canvassing. The more that average West Virginians find out about the new employment opportunities, support

for child and eldercare, cost savings on prescription drugs, democracy protections and all the rest of the benefits we shared through these voter contacts, the more folks

opted to contact our Senators to urge them to get these bills passed. Our coalition work has resulted in thousands of West Virginians taking action!

Have you made your weekly call to Senator Manchin? If not, here's his number: **202-224-3954**, or send a note from his web page: www.manchin.senate.gov.

Both Build Back Better and the Freedom to Vote Act are still in negotiations but we're hearing that Congressional leaders want to wrap them up before the end of the year so keep those calls and letters coming!

Next year will bring new challenges and opportunities for this power-building coalition and WV Citizen Action is ready to be part of the action in 2022! §

DEMOCRACY, JOBS + CARE - a-VAN Summer Jam

LIVE MUSIC! FREE FOOD! FAMILY FUN! FIND A JAM NEAR YOU!

WORKING FAMILIES PARTY NEW JOBS COALITION SEIU

TEXT SUMMERJAM TO 30403 www.workingfamilies.org/wvsummerjam

HUNTINGTON 6/28	Ritter Park 5PM-8PM
BECKLEY 7/2	New River Park 5PM-8PM
PARKERSBURG 7/5	Point Park 5PM-8PM
HINTON 7/10	City Park 11:30AM-2:30PM
MORGANTOWN 7/10	243 Pleasant St. 3PM-6PM
SHEPHERDSTOWN 7/11	Morgan's Grove Park 4PM-7PM
WASHINGTON D.C. 7/13	National Mall

REDISTRICTING

New Maps Reinforce Need for Reform

***Demand Fair Maps! Tell Our Senators to
End Gerrymandering & Pass the Freedom to Vote Act!***

By Julie Archer

In October, the Legislature convened in special session to draw new boundaries for state legislative and congressional districts. Despite the good intentions of some members of the Joint Committee on redistricting for the process to be open and transparent with ample opportunity for public input, the approved maps were drawn behind closed doors and ignored the pleas of residents around the state who asked that their communities be kept whole. (For indepth reporting on the process and how it played out, visit mountain-statespotlight.org.)

The final House of Delegates plan unnecessarily divides many communities and towns across the state, including Elkins, Lewisburg, and Shepherdstown, as well as the historic and majority Black community of Institute and the neighboring town of Dunbar, which also has a large African-American population. The House maps were approved by a nearly party-line vote after the Republican majority blocked a number of amendments that Democrats proposed to address concerns raised by constituents and local elected officials in their districts.

Similarly, the final Senate redistricting plan, which was

passed after considerable drama and disagreement within the Republican party ranks, carves up some of the state's largest counties, attaching portions of their urban areas to adjacent rural counties that are more conservative. Kanawha County will now be divided into three districts instead of two. Monongalia County remains split between two districts, even though the county's population only deviates from the target population of 105,513 by 309 people, large enough to have its own district.

Experts and advocates warned that this year's redistricting process was particularly prone to gerrymandering as the WV House of Delegates moved from a mix of single and multi-member districts to comply with a law the Legislature passed in 2018 that requires all delegates be elected from single-member districts for the first time in the state's history. And that's exactly what happened.

The public was told that neither voting behavior nor... the addresses of incumbents were considered, however, both the House and Senate plans have a decidedly Republican lean, giving the majority party a significant advantage in elections over the next decade.



Kathy Ferguson of Dunbar, pictured to the left, talked about the history of Institute, the community around the historically Black college West Virginia State University, at a public hearing on the House of Delegates redistricting plan on October, 13, 2021. She objected to the way Institute would be divided.

"I'm asking you to please consider redrawing those lines. I'm asking you to make an amendment so we can at least stay together. Let us love one another. Let us vote together. Let us stick together."

Fair districting should reflect the will of the people, rather than ignoring or undermining their political preferences. Actually taking voters' preferences into account so that the potential makeup of both bodies would be proportional to total votes cast for candidates of each party in prior elections would have resulted in fairer, more competitive districts than what we ended up with.



The outcome has only reinforced calls for establishing an independent redistricting commission rather than letting legislators draw the maps that govern their own elections. Although commissions in some states have given this potential solution a bad wrap for falling short this cycle, experts have pointed out that most of the problems have surfaced in states with poorly designed commissions that

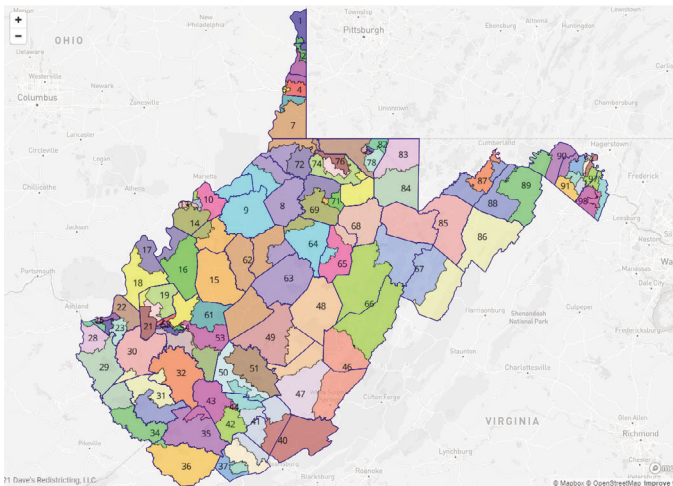
leave partisan actors heavily in the mix.

Short of an independent commission, establishing a specific list of factors that can/cannot be considered in the redistricting process, including factors designed to promote partisan fairness and prevent favoritism toward incumbents, as well as requiring public hearings be held **after** redistricting plans are proposed but **before** they are adopted, would go along way toward improving the process.

Additionally, with hyper-partisan legislative and congressional maps being adopted around the country it's critical that we pass the Freedom to Vote Act to end partisan gerrymandering once and for all. The House of Representatives already passed this transformative legislation to protect our freedom to vote and realize the promise of democracy for all. **It's urgent that the Senate acts before it's too late** to counter the attacks on voting rights before the 2022 elections and before a decade of partisan gerrymandering takes hold.

Call our Senators now (or take action at wvfordemocracy.com) and tell them to do whatever it takes to pass the #FreedomToVoteAct and get it signed into law. #Recess-CanWait §

Our New Legislative & Congressional Maps: What New Districts Are You In?



1) START HERE:

The new legislative and congressional maps can be viewed and downloaded in various formats on their website at: wvlegislature.gov/redistricting.cfm.

2) To view your new districts via Google Earth:

- Under "Final Maps" download the [.KMZ] file for the Congressional, Senate or House Map.
- Go to earth.google.com/web
- From the sidebar Menu click Projects then Open, then Import the [.KMZ] file from your computer.

3) To view via Dave's Redistricting:

- Go to davesredistricting.org
- From the home page, click WV on the map, then click "Redistricting Resources", then "Official West Virginia Plans in DRA 2020"
- You may be asked to set up a free account. The new maps were modified on Nov. 16. The others are the old/current maps populated with the latest census and voting age data. §

"Unemployment
makes health
care a
nightmare."

- WEST VIRGINIAN IN MAY 2020

YOUR STORY

Has

POWER!

Will you share it?

"I was dead in a helicopter."

Alan Brown had COVID-19 in January of 2021, and it was miserable but manageable. He felt lucky. Then, a few weeks later, he was in the ER.

"This thing called MIS-A. My immune system reacted so violently to the COVID antibodies that it started putting my organs in a state of shock. I was in heart - liver - kidney - lung failure. I was in ICU for almost a week."

The final bill was almost \$600,000. "That's a very expensive couple of weeks." Thankfully, his insurance covered most of it. But, his out-of-pocket costs were in excess of \$30,000 which is more than many working West Virginians earn in a year. "Even though I met my deductible, there's still medicine I'm going to have to take for like a while. It's just kind of crazy to think about how expensive it is to [get to] live."

"I still get emotional thinking about it. I woke up to a GoFundMe that someone had put in place."

Alan Brown - Huntington WV

"It's just kind of crazy to think about how expensive it is to [get to] live... My friends and family are the reason that I don't have to declare bankruptcy or have crazy bills."

"My friends and family are the reason that I don't have to declare bankruptcy or have crazy bills."

Share Your Health Care Story!

By Eve Marcum-Atkinson

Right now, we are helping to collect WV Health Care stories via www.tinyurl.com/WVStories21. And we need your help!

Health Care for All WV, our coalition partnership with West Virginians for Affordable Health Care and the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, has been working to make health care in our state more affordable and accessible.

To that end, they have been reaching out to West Virginians to listen to their health care stories. Through our partnership with Health Care for America Now Education Fund, West Virginia Citizen Action Education Fund is lending a



Health Care Stories Cont.

hand in collecting these stories and helping to share them beyond our state to our federal policy makers.

What kind of stories are we looking for? Here's a list of questions that might help clarify:

- Are you living with little to no HEALTH CARE coverage?
- Are co-pays, out of pocket expenses, or prescription drug prices overwhelming?
- Are you struggling with the health and economic consequences of COVID-19?
- Have you benefited from the Affordable Care Act, Medicare, Medicaid?
- Does lack of affordable HOME CARE (child, elder, etc.) or PAID LEAVE (Family/Medical) affect your ability to work? Is the process of applying for and/or receiving Paid Leave overwhelming?

If any of these hit home for you or someone you know, we would love to hear your story.

Our goal is to use these stories to help educate the public, the media, as well as our state legislators, and members of Congress on what it's like for the average West Virginian just trying to seek and receive health care.

Our policy makers won't know unless we tell them.

I've shared my story. I was working full-time as contract labor. I had no sick days. When I was sick and lost time, I either had to make that time up or I simply had to accept a smaller check. I had put off procedures, treatments, and refills because we just didn't have the disposable cash to pay for it. And, I had coverage through my husband. Our two-income household still didn't bring in enough for us to get the care we needed. We were better off than most.

The reality for most West Virginians is struggle — struggle to afford out-of-pocket expenses, struggle to afford insurance, struggle to stay healthy enough to work and keep a job, especially if that job doesn't provide health insurance. Most of us in West Virginia have chronic health issues. Most of us are working and still struggling. And those West Virginians who cannot work are struggling the most.

Please, consider sharing your WV Health Care Story.

Decisionmakers won't know our struggles unless we tell them. Change can't happen unless we raise our voices.

Share your voices with us. Help make health care change possible. §

"Out of pocket expenses, including office visits and testing make seeing provider and getting healthcare extremely limited except in extreme emergencies."

LISA

"Every time I would get a medical card, I would have it for a month and then I'd get told that 'I make too much money' and then they'd take it away again."

-Emily

WE NEED TO BUILD BACK BOLDER

By Gary Zuckett

House passage of the President's major social infrastructure agenda now puts our Senior Senator in the spotlight as a needed swing vote and we're counting on him to get this one over the goal line. Build Back Better (BBB) is just what is needed right now because roads and bridges are not enough to fix our country. Just as our pavement and steel infrastructure has been neglected, so have the girders that underpin our social support for our kids, elders, families and communities. We need to Build Back our human infrastructure to heal our nation.

For instance, the minimum wage has not even [kept up with inflation](#) over the past 40 years and its purchasing power

has declined by nearly a third since 1968. Too many can't afford the cost of childcare in order to hold a job. It's still common for someone who has worked and saved all their life to get sick and go bankrupt, losing house, savings, and everything. College and higher education is now unaffordable for far too many of our young adults. I could go on and on...

Hence the excitement and anticipation generated by what is the most comprehensive rebuild to our society's foundations since the original New Deal. Build Back Better will also help 'unrig' our economic system, which is now designed to benefit the wealthy and Wall Street. It delivers

once in a generation policies to lower everyday costs for working families. Contrary to the misleading TV and radio commercials, it will not increase taxes for anyone except the wealthy. BBB is paid for by a millionaire/billionaire wealth tax and by making multinational corporations pay their fair share of income taxes. It's about time!

You and 99% of those reading this all pay our income taxes. They are taken right out of our paychecks. However, according to an [April article in Fortune 500 magazine](#), 55 of their list of profitable companies like Nike; Amazon; FedEx; even Zoom paid NO income taxes in 2020 – that's how bad the system is rigged right now. BBB is a step toward balance in this regard.

Build Back Better has been slammed and misrepresented by conservatives, but still, when individual parts of it are polled in WV, it receives majority support. In fact, [support increases significantly higher](#) after voters are told it's mostly paid for by making millionaires, billionaires, and tax-dodging mega corporations pay up on their taxes.

Here are some of those individual parts in the BBB bill now in the Senate.

Lower Health Care Costs: Medicare will begin to negotiate Rx costs with Big Pharma and seniors will save big! Medicare will also start covering hearing aids.

It places a \$35 a month cap on insulin costs, saving diabetics hundreds every month.

BBB reduces Affordable Care Act marketplace premiums – estimated to cut WV's uninsured population by over 1/4 – a 38,000 drop in folks without insurance in our state.

Lower Childcare & Family Care Costs: Most families will see up to 50% reduction in childcare expenses, and the rest of our country would now have what WV has – universal preschool for 3-4 year olds.

Paid family and medical leave could replace as much as \$200 Million a year in lost income by WV workers who have to take unpaid time off to care for sick family members.

BBB would continue the expanded Child Tax Credit. 98% of WV kids would be helped with essential needs through this policy.

An affordable housing program would help an estimated 8,000 West Virginians stay housed.

Addresses Climate with Renewable Energy: A 10 Year investment in Clean Energy & Civilian Climate Corps modeled after CCC will help us transition to a carbon neutral future where our grandkids can live and thrive. Clean energy manufacturing jobs will blossom building turbine blades and solar panels in the US now instead of importing from China.

Naysayers are wrong on BBB.

Opponents say we can't afford it, even though it's mostly paid for by increased revenue as described above. Then, when that's debunked they say it'll increase inflation, which also has been debunked. Finally, they resort to the 'Socialism' boogeyman, a fear mongering criticism that is usually equated with communism and totalitarianism. Yeah, right, if we make sure kids have enough to eat and their parents can afford childcare and eldercare so they can get to work, our country is going to turn into Russia. Please give me a break from that tired, stale propaganda.

Democratic Socialism consists of our society deciding, through its democratically elected representatives, to make sure that everyone has what they need to build healthy families, communities and to THRIVE. Unemployment insurance, free libraries, fire stations, schools – all are social benefits. Medicare/Medicaid, and, yes, Social Security are all democratic socialism in action. These three most popular social programs of all time were also opposed by a majority of Congressional Republicans at passage, just like BBB is being fought now.

Two of our WV Congressional Republicans even voted no on the bi-partisan infrastructure package and are now going after members of their own party who supported it like Rep. David McKinley and Sen. Shelley Capito. McKinley and Capito did right by West Virginians and ignored their party's political hacks that voted no just to keep our new president from having a 'win' before midterm elections next year. They did what was good for their state and country instead of party.

Both Senator Manchin and Capito were crucial in the bi-partisan negotiations for the Infrastructure package and both deserve our appreciation on this one.

The bipartisan roads and bridges infrastructure package is now signed into law by the President. However, that's as far as Republicans seem to be willing to go. We've also neglected to invest in our social infrastructure. BBB is the other side of the coin needed to build strong families, & healthy communities that can thrive moving forward.

Senator Manchin, as a member of the majority party in Congress, is going to have to work with his caucus to get Build Back Better to pass without the Republicans. How about it Senator Manchin? Please don't let bipartisan deadlock block all the good things coming to West Virginians through Build Back Better. In these hyper-partisan times the majority party needs to go it alone at some point to make a difference for us all. §

Take Action at www.tinyurl.com/wv4bbb!

WV Citizen Action Group
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