



## FIGHT FOR OUR FUTURE

Saturday, April 23 | Washington, D.C.  
Lafayette Park in front of the White House



*Rally for Climate, Care Jobs and Justice in Washington, DC*

### Life After Session - What's Next?

By Gary Zuckett

We survived another WV legislative session (see our wrap up inside). So what's next? Celebrating Earth Day; PSC Energy Efficiency interventions; voter education; continuing our climate justice and Health Care for All campaigns - and all the other events, issues, and campaigns we're engaged in throughout the year! A return to negotiations on a federal Reconciliation bill that our senior US senator has to agree on for it to pass, a focus on making the best use of the millions of federal dollars already approved and heading into WV, and - oh yeah - a midterm election!

May 10th is the first primary election where candidates will be running in the newly gerrymandered election districts (see election article for links to your new district info.) Several of the newly drawn districts don't have an incumbent and several incumbents have decided not to run for reelection as the gerrymandering was so extreme as to make it nearly impossible to win or pits two incumbents of the same party against one another in this primary. The high level example of the latter is the primary election for the US House between Mooney and McKinley, although it was inevitable that two of our representatives would end up running against each other as WV went to two congressional districts from three.

Before the next Census we must wise up and establish an independent redistricting commission instead of letting either ruling party have carte blanche.

Federal infrastructure and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding will be flowing into our state for the rest of the year and local citizens need a voice in how these will best be used. Some of these ARPA funds are bypassing the governor's office and going directly to local governments. This is good considering the hijinks and

### URGENT: Support WV Citizen Action!

Our ancient heating and A/C system at our WVCAG house has *quit and needs replaced*. Please kick in a little extra when you become a supporting member at [wvcag.org/membership](http://wvcag.org/membership) or by sending in the enclosed membership form - THANK YOU!

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### HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT!

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lack of accountability surrounding funds the state has control of. Infrastructure funds are coming in too. Watch for more on this soon. We're looking for folks who want to monitor and organize in their community on getting the biggest bang for this one time stimulus. Let us know if you want to be active in your community on this issue!

Finally, we have one more bite at the federal reconciliation apple this fiscal year and our Senior Senator is still very much in the mix of deciding what it will look like read this EENews article here: ([tinyurl.com/manchinrec](https://tinyurl.com/manchinrec)). Senator Manchin says he favors climate action, lowering the cost of prescription drugs, reducing the deficit and increasing taxes on the super rich and tax-dodging wealthy corpora-

tions. We'll soon be delivering thousands of petitions to his office in support of moving on a new reconciliation package. You can weigh in by contacting by calling him or writing him a note via the WV New Jobs Coalition at [newjobswv.org](https://newjobswv.org). Please do!

Meanwhile, we're hoping this print edition in your hands will inspire you to pick up a paper check, write it out for your 2022 membership renewal (or new membership), and send it to us at WV Citizen Action Group, 1500 Dixie Street, Charleston, WV 25311 (see the form at the end of this newsletter). You can also renew or join via [www.wvcag.org/membership](https://www.wvcag.org/membership). Thank You in advance for your support! §

## Legislative Wrap-Up and Moving Forward

*By Julie Archer*

Given the current political climate, victory often takes the form of defeating bad bills. With that in mind, here's an overview of what happened in these major issue areas – there were some victories, as well as some losses – and what to expect as we try to pick up the pieces and move forward.

**Courts/Access to Justice** - We'll start with some good news on the **criminal justice** reform front where advocates were successful at stopping both an extended supervision bill (HB 2257) that would have added up to 10 years of extended supervision for people with drug offenses after they completed their underlying sentence, including any period of parole; and a major rewrite of the state's criminal code (HB 4006), that would have increased penalties for many crimes, adding more burdens to our already overcrowded prisons and jails.

The WV Criminal Law Reform Coalition was also successful in passing a bill (HB 4373) that would exclude fentanyl test strips from the definition of drug paraphernalia. By no longer including fentanyl test strips as drug paraphernalia, this bill will save people's lives from overdose. Both the House and the Senate passed a bill (HB 4522) that would have automatically expunged the criminal records of people acquitted of criminal charges or against whom criminal charges were dismissed, however the House did not agree to changes made by the Senate in time for the bill to be sent to the Governor.

With regard to **civil justice**, there was also good news. A

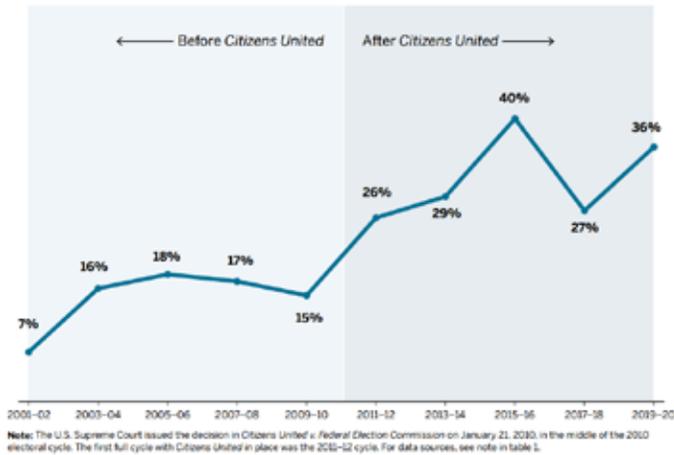
bill (HB 4394) that would have eliminated 'deliberate intent' liability, which allows workers to sue companies for additional damages beyond their workers' compensation payments when employers ignore safety hazards resulting in workers injuries or deaths, died when it was not taken up by the House Judiciary Committee ahead of the deadline for bills to be out of committee in the house of origin.

Perhaps, as a consolation prize, during the final week of the session, the Committee took up and passed a bill (SB 7) that would have eliminated an important West Virginia law that ensures that corporations that expose their workers, their customers or those living near their factories and plants to dangerous chemicals and other carcinogens that could lead to serious injury or death pay for medical monitoring. Fortunately, after being sent to the House floor, SB 7 was moved to the inactive calendar and never taken up for a final vote.

Eliminating these protections remains on the wish list of the powerful special interests that lobbied for the creation of the new intermediate court of appeals (ICA), and spend millions to elect their preferred candidates to our state Supreme Court. In order to put a check on their undue influence, it's important that we have strong recusal (anti-bias) rules in place to avoid conflicts of interest and promote accountability when outside groups choose to weigh in on elections.

The Supreme Court is currently considering the rules that will govern when a judge on the intermediate court should be disqualified from hearing a case. Unfortunately, as pro-

### Share of Spending by Interest Groups



*Share of spending by special interest groups in state supreme court elections before and after the US Supreme Court decision in Citizens United.*  
 Source: [brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/politics-judicial-elections-2019-20](https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/politics-judicial-elections-2019-20)

posed these rules leave it to the judge who is subject to a recusal motion to decide whether to step aside. To avoid the risk of bias, it is critical that this decision as to whether a judge is and appears to be impartial not be left to the judge who has been challenged. We submitted comments to this effect on behalf of the WV Citizens for Clean Elections coalition and urged that the proposed rules be strengthened to ensure that everyone is treated equally under the law.

**Health Care** - Unfortunately, like some of the bills described above, the clock also ran out on the two priority bills for the Health Care for All WV campaign, the Medicaid Buy-In bill (HB 3001) and the bill to cap the cost of insulin and other life saving equipment that diabetics rely on (HB 4252). However, this didn't put a damper on the support and momentum behind getting these bills passed. We can build on the positive steps taken this year, to get these bills across the finish line in 2023. See Kim's update for what comes next and how you can support Health Care for All WV's ongoing work on these important bills.

**Racial Justice and Non-Discrimination** - Over the past several weeks we included actions and alerts on the various classroom censorship bills working their way through the Legislature. After the House Judiciary Committee determined the so-called "Anti-Stereotyping Act" (HB 4011) needed further study, they took up and passed a more extreme bill (SB 498) sent to them by the Senate. This happened just after midnight on the last day scheduled for committee meetings in the House. This antithetical "Anti-Racism Act" took up hours of debate in committee and on the House Floor, but ultimately fell short because Senate leadership decided to use parliamentary procedure in order

to avoid another lengthy debate. This strategy backfired as the vote to concur with the House occurred six seconds too late. While it's fortunate these bills met their demise along with other regressive, anti-civil liberties and anti-LGBTQ bills, it's telling that so many of these bills advanced while bills like the CROWN Act and the Fairness Act languished in committee. With local fairness ordinances protected for now, hopefully advocates will continue to make progress at the municipal and county level, in spite of the Legislature's unwillingness to take action to ensure that all West Virginians are protected from discrimination.

**Reproductive Justice/Bodily Autonomy** - Abortion bans - a ban on abortions after 15 weeks (HB 4004) and a "reason ban" (SB 468) - passed both house of the Legislature. HB 4004, which mirrors a Mississippi law currently under review by the US Supreme Court, failed, but SB 468 passed minutes before midnight on the last night of the session, and the Governor has signed it.

Legislators like Delegate Evan Hansen (D-Monongalia) argued, SB 468 is just another step to chip away at abortion access, and "a distraction from the real goal, which is to ban all abortion in West Virginia." Hansen also called the bill's supporters out for using people with disabilities as props, to justify what he said was "government mandated trauma."

**"This abortion ban further erodes the right of people in West Virginia to make decisions about their own bodies, their families, and their futures. Politicians have shamefully exploited people living with disabilities in an effort to further restrict and stigmatize abortion. Government officials should never have control over private medical decisions or tie the hands of trained medical professionals. We will never stop fighting for the people of West Virginia to have access to quality, affordable health care, including birth control, cancer screenings, menstrual products, and abortion services."**

Emily Womeldorff  
 Constituency Engagement Specialist  
 Planned Parenthood Votes! South Atlantic

Meanwhile, Women's Health Center of WV, the state's only abortion provider, said in an email to supporters, "the future or abortion access hang in this country hangs in the balance," with 26 states including West Virginia poised to further limit or ban abortion all together depending on the the US Supreme Court ruling. While we don't know exactly what the ruling will be, we fully expect that it will create a patchwork of abortion access laws—differing from state to state. This will mean that state courts, state laws, and state constitutions will become even more important than they are today.

**Tax and Budget** - Thankfully some of the worst attacks on vital government services and benefits died, including the

*Legislative Cont.*

proposal to eliminate the personal income tax (HB 4007) and bills (SB 2 & SB 3) to reduce earned unemployment benefits for West Virginians who find themselves out of work due to now fault of their own. However, as the WV Center on Budget and Policy pointed out, the surplus shell-game and a flat budget mean we are failing to invest in critical needs such as making higher education more affordable, and ensuring that West Virginia families are more economically secure, even though we have the means to do so.

**Voting Rights & Democracy** - Unfortunately, three of the four of the bad election bills I wrote about ended up passing. These bills eliminate an important check on the governor's power to fill judicial vacancies (HB 4785), increase money in elections (HB 4419), and increase penalties for illegal voting (HB 4311). The latter is apparently part of a national trend to crack down on a crime wave that doesn't exist and make examples of individuals who were just trying to be responsible citizens and fulfill their civic duty, but misunderstood or were unfamiliar eligibility requirements. On the bright side, the bill to criminalize the distribution of absentee ballot applications (HB 4293) did not pass.

Although some other bills that are ostensibly good passed, none of these bills eliminated barriers to or made voting more accessible for the majority of West Virginians. This includes bills to allow poll workers to work half days (SB 191), to prohibit non-public sources of funding for election administration (HB 4097), and to allow qualified first responders to vote an electronic absentee ballot (SB 4312). Although four bills – SB 200, SB 240, HB 2928, HB 4468

– would have allowed universal absentee voting modeled after the successful 2020 elections, none of these bills was considered by their respective committees. Perhaps the biggest disappointment was that the bill that SB 488, which would have restored voting rights to thousands of West Virginians on probation and parole, did not make it across the finish line due to an unrelated political dispute.

*“Voting rights is not a separate issue; it relates to all those other things: whether we decide to go to war, the economy, the Supreme Court. The bottom line is voting is foundational to every single one of those issues. What we’re talking about right now is a democracy – that’s the fight we’re talking about.”*

– LaTosha Brown, Co-Founder, Black Voters Matter in an interview with the Washington Post

With the two key federal voting rights bills – the Freedom to Vote Act and John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act – stalled in the Senate, the fight for setting a national standard must continue. Black Voters Matter is proposing a One Million for Voting Rights campaign that will champion the country's desire to see these two bills passed. Take the pledge at [www.blackvotersmatterfund.org](http://www.blackvotersmatterfund.org).

**Energy & Environment** - As with most of the other issue areas covered here, the highlight of the session may have been what didn't pass, although the list of energy and environment bills that died includes bills good and bad. Carey Jo has an update on the notable deaths, as well as the good and bad bills that passed. You can also read alternative takes and recaps from our friends at the WV Rivers Coalition and the WV Environmental Council. §

## Health Care For All WV

### WV Health Care Bills Gaining Momentum - Let's Keep It Going!

By Kim Jones

In 2019, Delegate Barbara Fleischauer took a group of West Virginians on a bus to Canada to buy insulin. This trip was followed by the introduction of the first Insulin Affordability Bill in 2020. I am the parent of a diabetic, and was invited to volunteer and advocate for passage of the bill. We had to work very hard to help senators and delegates understand why this bill was so necessary. We had to tell them that West Virginia is the state with the highest percentage of diabetics (16% who are diagnosed and approximately 45,000 who are yet to be diagnosed),

and the highest rate of death because of diabetes and complications of diabetes. We showed them receipts of how the cost of insulin had gone from \$600 a month before insurance in 2009 to almost \$1500 in 2017. We told them our stories.

We were asking for a copay cap of \$25 a month. The bill eventually passed, but with a \$100 a month copay cap, which is still too high for most West Virginians. In 2021, we again asked for a \$25 copay cap on insulin and copay caps for supplies like test strips, lancets, pump supplies, continuous glucose monitor supplies. That year was the height of the COVID pandemic and our bill didn't get much traction.

This year HB 4252 was introduced. It would have capped insulin copays at \$35 a month, supplies at \$100 a month,

and \$250 every two years for a new insulin pump. The difference between this year and previous years was three years of education and building support for this bill. Delegate Dr. Rohrbach was the lead sponsor of this bill, and we were proud that it had so much bipartisan support in the House and Senate. There was a lot of light on this bill.

It passed the House on a near-unanimous vote! Then it was brought up in Senate Health two weeks before the end of session. It passed but was sent to Finance. Because a Health Committee amendment added PEIA to the bill, the bill was initially tabled in Finance, but was brought back later and sent to the full Senate. The Senate passed it, but with a last-minute amendment, the last day of session. The amendment, which added a provision that placed limits on a spouse's ability to be covered by PEIA, had nothing to do with our bill. It was sent back to the House, but there was no time to discuss it or fix it, and the bill died.

Now, it looks like there will be a special session in the summer to find ways to make PEIA more affordable. We are hoping to bring this bill back up and hopefully get it passed then.

We want to thank everyone who called their representatives, told their stories, and spread the word about this bill. Together we will keep trying to bring this much-needed relief to the people of this state that suffer so much from this disease.

There is hope for relief on a federal level. The Affordable Insulin Now Act ([congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6833](https://congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/6833)) passed the House of Representatives at the end of March. This bill would cap insulin copays at \$35 a month or 25% of the insurance company's negoti-

ated price, whichever is lower. It passed with 12 Republican Representatives voting with the Democrats. Senator Warnock of Georgia has sponsored a companion bill in the Senate. Call Your Senators!

Another priority for the Health Care for All WV coalition was HB 3001, the Medicaid Buy-In bill. It would have helped thousands of West Virginians go back to work, get raises, and take on more hours without losing their essential health coverage. It would fix the long-standing problem of the Medicaid Cliff. And it can be done using existing federal funds at no cost to the state.

Like the diabetes bill, we have been working on the Buy-In for two years, gaining more and more interest, and getting more bipartisan sponsors. This year, bills were introduced in both the House and the Senate. The rest of this year, leading up to the 2023 legislative session, we will build an education campaign around the bill, getting the word out, and asking folks to share their stories of being unable to raise the level of their incomes without having themselves and their families kicked off of Medicaid. If you have a story you would like to share, please go to [tinyurl.com/wvstories21](https://tinyurl.com/wvstories21) to submit your story directly, or contact Mariah Plante at [mariah@wvahc.org](mailto:mariah@wvahc.org).

If you would like to work with us to make the changes we need, please go to [facebook.com/healthcareforallwv](https://facebook.com/healthcareforallwv) and like/follow, or contact us at [hcfawv@wvahc.org](mailto:hcfawv@wvahc.org). §



## Environmental Update

By Carey Jo Grace

*The good and bad that passed this Legislative Session...*

HB 4408, It expands private development to all of our state parks and forests, potentially allowing casinos, mountain roller coasters, ORV trails; 50 year leases; and increased fees. Tourism dollars help our state, but we shouldn't allow a free-for-all on public lands. Keep an eye out for development proposals at your favorite park over the next few years - then be sure to give your input!

A couple of bills that benefit the oil and gas industry were signed into law by the Governor: SB 650, eliminating the number of royalty owners needed to develop a tract; and SB 694, a complex, sweeping bill addressing application requirements, regulation, and compensation options for horizontal wells. Portions of these bills may be controversial among environmentalists, pitting forced pooling detractors and land/mineral owners against those who see fewer holes in the ground as an improvement over multiple wells.

*Environment Cont.*

HB 4758 also passed. This law will allow the DEP to comply with a federal mandate to accurately track mine reclamation liability. Nothing like a federal threat to get some action!

SB 279, signed into law back in February, is a mixed bag. It updates the human health criteria for water quality

standards, weakening some parameters and strengthening others. It also changes the review process for future changes in the standards by assigning the sole approval authority to the DEP without legislative review.

*Notable deaths...*

Here's a rarity: two really BIG WINS killing bills that would have put profit over public and workers' safety.

The full House never voted on HB 4840, which would have stripped the WV Office of Miners' Health, Safety and Training of the power to issue orders and fines for safety violations, eliminated permit fees and mine inspections, and a whole host of other horrible actions.

UMWA spokesman Phil Smith was quoted in the Gazette-Mail saying, "We are completely opposed to this insult to West Virginia miners and especially to their families, who have a right to expect them to come home safe and sound at the end of every shift."

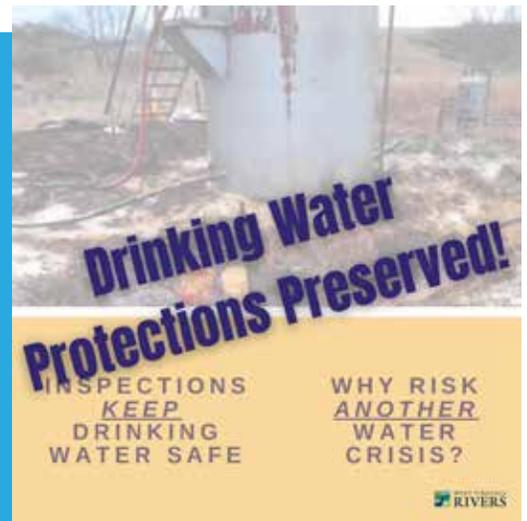
## HB 2598

– Remember when 300,000 West Virginians in nine counties had their water contaminated by a toxic chemical leak? Apparently some members of the Legislature have a really short memory, or simply don't care.

The original Aboveground Storage Tank Act gets weakened almost every session, and this year's attack was HB 2598. It catered to the oil and gas industry by relaxing inspection requirements for oil and gas waste tanks located in zones of critical concern – the tanks just upstream from drinking water intakes. Surprisingly, this one never made it out of the Senate Energy, Industry and Mining Committee!

Maybe there is a little hope.

Not surprising is that the Legislature doesn't think we need more oil, gas, or air quality inspectors. SB613, SB 480, and HB 3082 addressing the documented shortages were all killed this session. §



## Earth Day and Climate Action Now!

*By Gary Zuckett*

As Spring brings life back to our hills and hollows, our nation's weather continues to demonstrate the effects of the climate change that is barreling down on us like a freight train. The latest UN Climate report ([news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1115452](https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/04/1115452)) is literally saying we're rapidly approaching an unlivable planet. Our time to fend off the worst-case effects is drawing to a close and measures to mitigate must be "Now or Never"!

WV punches way above its political weight in the realm of Climate with our Senior Senator sitting as the chair of the

Senate Energy Committee and one of the key swing votes to get anything passed in Congress.

As such, WV-CAG has been working with other state environmental and labor groups to build the WV New Jobs Coalition ([NewJobsWV.org](https://NewJobsWV.org)) to lift up the economic opportunities presented to our state by taking bold and ambitious steps to avoid the worst climate outcomes.

On Feb 12th, the coalition led a day of action knocking on doors in five WV cities asking folks to send a message to Senator Manchin to step up his support for bringing new energy economy jobs to WV.

Later this month the Coalition will be delivering thousands of petitions to Senator Manchin's office that were collected at doors in Huntington and Morgantown urging our Senator



Part of the volunteer canvass crew in Beckley for our Neighbor to Neighbor event.

to support bold moves to keep WV from being left behind as the rest of the nation moves into the renewable energy economy. Please take a minute and contact Sen Manchin now: [manchin.senate.gov/contact-joe](http://manchin.senate.gov/contact-joe).

As Earth Day #53 is upon us this month, we all must do whatever we can to push for a new direction for our state, nation and planet!

The WV New Jobs Coalition will be hosting booths at Earth Day events at both Marshall University (4/20 from 11AM-2PM) and WVU (4/22 from 4-8PM). We'll have t-shirts, signs, and opportunities to volunteer and take action.

These student-led events will include food, music and will be lively and entertaining. We highly encourage you to attend. Additionally, the WV Rivers Coalition is rolling out a climate pledge ([wvrivers.org/climatepledge](http://wvrivers.org/climatepledge)) for folks to show support during Earth Week.

Finally, we're exploring options for an Earth Day Bus to the big rally outside the White House in Washington, DC on Saturday, April 23rd. Go to [fightforourfutures.com](http://fightforourfutures.com) for info and join in to demand bold action on climate, care, jobs, and justice! Our Future WV is doing the scheduling and asking folks to write to [admin@ourfuturewv.org](mailto:admin@ourfuturewv.org) if they're interested. §

## Over It!

By Gary Zuckett

As we start to get on with life post-session, we also wanted to get you this wrap-up on what was definitely a doozy of a session....

Out of the 2,216 bills introduced during the 2022 legislative session, only 239 survived. Lots of really bad bills died, along with most of the good ones. Not an uplifting appraisal but, with a supermajority of conservatives in control, it could have been much worse.

*Some of the worst that we successfully opposed:*

- **Income Tax Deform** - using an artificial 'surplus' created by a flood of federal relief dollars as an excuse to eventually eliminate the income tax that would lead to

catastrophic cuts to social and other programs in future budget years.

- **Unemployment Cuts** - SB 2 & 3 were a top priority for the Senate but failed in the House
- **Anti-Critical Race Theory** - to hamstring educators when teaching 'uncomfortable' subjects - actually was passed by the Senate but not until after the midnight cut off.
- **Deliberate Intent** - would have blocked injured workers from suing when employers knew about safety issues that were ignored.
- **15 Week Ban** - would have made abortions illegal after 15 weeks, a time before many women even know their pregnant.
- **Annual Tank Bill** - reducing inspections on Aboveground Storage Tanks upstream of public drinking water

Over Cont.

intakes. Remember MCHM? This has become an every year fight.

- **Natural Immunity** - substituting immunity for the required immunization for any disease.

*Some of the worst that passed:*

- **Coal Bailout** - sets up a \$50,000,000 taxpayer funded private insurance company (without any legislative oversight) to cover land reclamation bonds needed to operate coal mining operations when companies are too high a risk for the open market.
- **DHHR Split** - forces the biggest state agency to split in half in the next 9 months when no one has a clue how to do this and maintain services, including the head of the agency. This bill was so bad, it was vetoed by the Governor!

- **Forced Pooling** - oil & gas corporate welfare from legislators went full tilt this year. One bill they've been lobbying for years forces reluctant mineral owners to let drillers get to extract their property without consent.
- **Abortion "Reason Ban"** - Punishes doctors who perform abortions if a woman seeks to terminate a pregnancy because a genetic disorder or disability has been detected in the fetus.
- **Micro Schools** - or 'Pods' can be groups of home-schooled kids of any size, the 100 student limit was thrown out by the Senate. Buildings these 'pods' are in have no safety requirements. Yet another attack on the state's public education system.
- Too many more to list here! :(

THANK YOU! Your efforts in reaching out and educating your representatives were critical in many of the bad bills going down. It really made a difference! §

## Jo's Fight for Coverage During COVID

By Eve Marcum-Atkinson

Through our Health Care for All WV project, we and our coalition partners have worked to collect health care stories from real West Virginians, to help educate the public and our representatives, to try to make positive meaningful policy change in our state. Here is one such powerful story, from a single mother who asked that we keep her name anonymous, using "Jo" as her pseudonym. Her story is shared with her full consent.

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Jo was a teacher's assistant for 15 years when COVID Hit. "I had to decide to go to work or take unpaid leave. I have a daughter who has several health problems and I am the only caregiver for my mother who is 75 and has multiple health problems. I made my decision for them, and took unpaid leave."

Unpaid leave meant she was without her primary source of income. "I couldn't afford to by any means. I had no savings and very little money in the bank. But I didn't feel that I could risk the lives of my family members by working with the public during a pandemic."

This also meant she lost her insurance coverage. "Along with losing my pay, I lost my health insurance, and my daughter's insurance." She luckily found a part-time remote



work position to cover most of their expenses, like rent, food, etc. Being part-time, it was without benefits.

Jo attended one of our coalition's Health Coverage events last summer. "I had heard that because of COVID, there were changes in the Affordable Care Act and applied. I was hoping to get an affordable health plan that I could have and still pay rent. I have health problems that require medication and monitoring. My daughter couldn't go a day without insurance. I was very nervous about how much it would cost. If it was \$700 (like I would have paid for COBRA) there is no way I could do it."

She was surprised to hear she and her daughter both qualified for Medicaid. "I am so grateful that Americans in crisis

can access this essential coverage. Those few weeks when I was waiting to hear if we would have health coverage were some of the most stressful in my life.”

After a few months on Medicaid, Jo is still learning about how it works. “One thing I have discovered is that we can get services I could never afford to get with the employer-based insurance I paid for for all of those years. I had paid thousands of dollars over 15 years for insurance, and I could not afford certain supplies that would help my daughter’s health, therapies we needed or particular medicines. The out-of-pocket expense was too much, or the insurance refused to pay for certain medicines or supplies.”

“I have come to believe,” Jo said, “through my experiences and the experiences of other people I know, that private health insurance is not the healthiest coverage for many people. Health should not be for-profit. People should not pay for insurance that makes decisions about their health based on the company’s well-being instead of the patient’s well-being. People should not pay for insurance that makes the out-of-pocket costs, premiums and deductibles prohibitive to them seeking the care they need.”

Medicaid has made a significant positive difference in Jo and her daughter’s lives, and she wishes everyone had this option. “I want the peace I feel right now for everyone. I am shocked everytime I go to the pharmacy and have to pay a small copay or none. That is money that can go to bills

and food. The stress of affording healthcare in our country is detrimental to our health. People lose their houses paying for healthcare. I don’t know why that is acceptable. We need to transform our healthcare system into a system that takes care of the health of every citizen. We can’t keep this structure that just works for those lucky enough to be able to pay the very high price of being healthy and alive here.”

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If you or a friend have a WV Health Care Story to share, please visit [www.tinyurl.com/wvstories21](http://www.tinyurl.com/wvstories21). Use Google Chrome to visit this form, tell us your stories, and digitally sign it. Your stories will NOT be used without YOUR approval or consent. We’d greatly appreciate your help in gathering these stories.

For more information about the Health Care for All WV campaign, visit [www.healthcareforallwv.com](http://www.healthcareforallwv.com). §



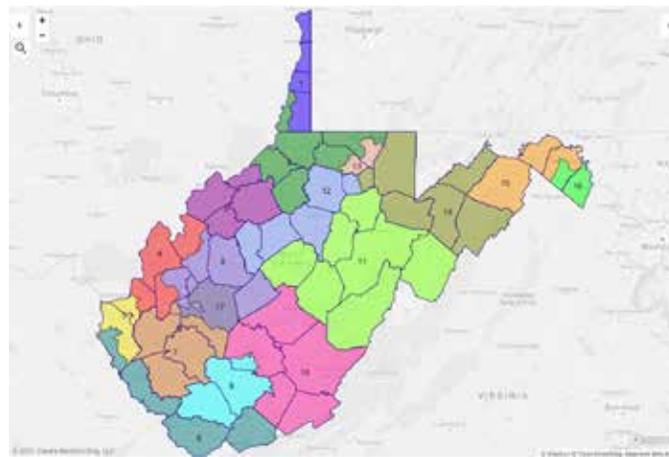
## Elections Have Consequences - Do You Know Who Your Candidates Are?

By Gary Zuckett

Elections have consequences and we are experiencing these at the WV Legislature. One way to change the trajectory of future legislative sessions is to help change the faces behind the desks. The 34 member Senate now has 11 Democrats and 23 Republicans, while the 100 member House has 22 Democrats and 78 Republicans - pretty lopsided!

In these midterm elections, candidates for governor or president will not be on the ballot, but the whole WV House and half of the Senate will be. If you like the folks that are representing you ([openstates.org/find\\_your\\_legislator](http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator)), get out and support them by volunteering for their campaigns!

If you’re not happy with your senators and delegate(s), find out who’s running against them ([apps.sos.wv.gov/elections/candidate-search](http://apps.sos.wv.gov/elections/candidate-search)) and see if you can support one of the challengers.



WV Senate Districts 2022

Right now there are lots of empty spots on the primary election ballot. If your wrong-headed incumbent doesn’t have a challenger, it may not be too late to get your party’s local committee to place you (or a friend) on the ballot to challenge them. Democracy is not a spectator sport. Dive in

*Elections Cont.*

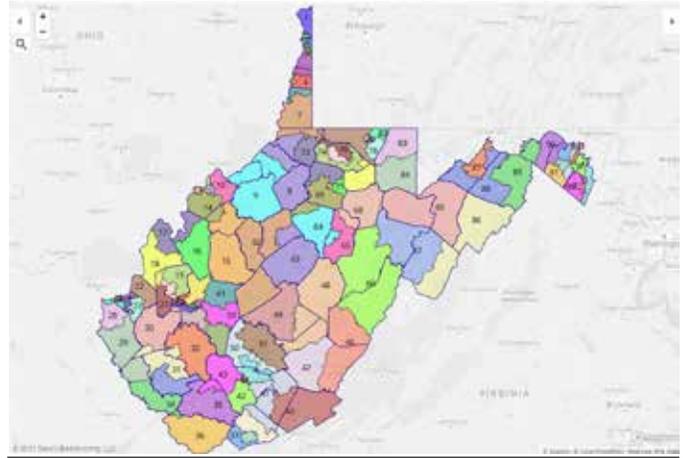
and splash around!

Remember that due to last year's redistricting, congressional and legislative districts have changed and your voting precincts may have also been redrawn. The Secretary of State has released an interactive map ([mapwv.gov/vote](http://mapwv.gov/vote)) for voters to find their district and precinct information.

However, this convenient lookup tool "is not an official source of information for voters' precinct and voting district information." So if something doesn't look right or you have questions, contact your county clerk (see directory at [GoVoteWV.com](http://GoVoteWV.com)).

To find out more information on progressive candidates follow the WV Working Families Party facebook page ([facebook.com/WVWorkingFamilies](https://facebook.com/WVWorkingFamilies)). They'll be listing endorsements in both the Primary and November's elections.

Labor's primary endorsements can also be found on their website at [www.wvafcio.org](http://www.wvafcio.org) under the "Legislative and Political" tab. §



WV House Districts 2022

## Action Needed in Support of Economic Justice Proposal

*By Julie Archer*

In early March, WV CAG joined with the other organizations, faith leaders and community members at the state Capitol to support the Tuesday Morning Group's Economic Justice, Fairness and Equity Proposal. This proposal seeks to address long-standing disparities in health care and economic opportunity in minority and low-income communities across West Virginia. Addressing these disparities is long overdue, and the Tuesday Morning Group proposal would address them through common sense investments in education, job training, economic development, housing rehabilitation, programs to support at-risk youth, and initiatives to improve rural and community health access.

Although the Tuesday Morning Group, which is composed of ministers and community leaders across Charleston, has been diligently working to address poverty and lift up our most distressed communities for much longer, the basis of this particular plan was a May 2020 proposal from the WV NAACP, the Charleston Branch NAACP, and members of the Tuesday Morning Group, which outlined a plan to address these disparities, as well as the disproportionate negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic using a portion of the \$1.25 billion in CARES Act funding that West Virginia received.

Unfortunately, despite support from a number of organi-

zations around the state, this initiative (dubbed the Hope 20/20/20 Economic Justice & Equity Fund) was not funded.

Instead significant portion of the CARES Act money, which was intended to address immediate needs and help West Virginians with basic necessities during the ongoing pandemic, was hoarded, squandered on budgetary shell games and making a downpayment on future taxes typically paid by businesses, resulting in a missed opportunity to begin to address systemic poverty, and promote health and economic equity in the state's minority and low-income communities.

With the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act we have a second chance to begin to address poverty in a meaningful way, and move our state economy towards one that meets and serves the needs of all of our people. And unless or until we can convince our senior U.S. Senator of his wrong-headedness, and break the persistent gridlock in Washington we may not get a chance like this again. West Virginia should seize this opportunity by supporting and funding the Tuesday Morning Group's Economic Justice, Fairness and Equity Proposal.

Please contact the Governor's Office, Senate President Craig Blair, House Speaker Roger Hanshaw, and Senate and

House Finance Committee Chairs and encourage them to support this proposal to address the challenges facing our most impoverished and distressed communities, and begin to transform and restructure our economy in a way that is responsive to the collective needs of all our people.

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Senator Craig Blair, President, WV Senate  
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Delegate Roger Hanshaw, Speaker  
WV House of Delegates  
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304.587.9947

Senator Eric Tarr, Chair Senate Finance  
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For more information and background on the TMG Economic Justice, Fairness and Equity proposal, visit [BlackByGod.org](http://BlackByGod.org) and click on Civics. §

## ACA Turns 12

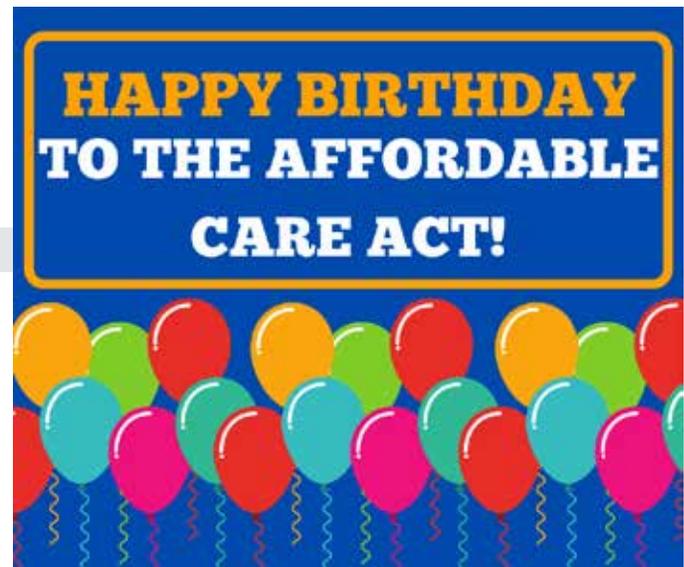
*By Eve Marcum-Atkinson*

Twelve years ago, on March 23, 2010, the Affordable Care Act was passed. Since then, many of us have been working hard to defend it from countless attacks from Congress, the courts and state legislators. The ACA stands as a pillar of our healthcare system, covering tens of millions and making healthcare better for well over one hundred million thanks to provisions like ending gender discrimination, discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions and arbitrary limits and caps on coverage which used to make healthcare inaccessible even for people who already had insurance. It's not the Medicare for All - Universal Health Care we're still working towards, but here are some amazing data points I wanted to share.

Today, over 30 million people have coverage under the ACA's provisions through either private health insurance or Medicaid. Over 130 million people have gained protections from discrimination against pre-existing conditions and now have freedom from arbitrary caps or limits on coverage.

The ACA has brought the number of uninsured people in the United States to historic lows.

- Between 2010, the year ACA passed, and 2016, the number of nonelderly uninsured adults decreased by 41%, falling from 48.2 million to 28.2 million.
- The number of uninsured people has fallen in all 50 states and the District of Columbia since the implementation of the ACA, with states that expanded



Medicaid experiencing the largest reduction in their uninsured rate.

- California, Kentucky, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Washington, and West Virginia have reduced their uninsured rate by at least half from 2013 to 2019 through enrollment in Marketplace coverage and expansion of Medicaid to adult populations.
- Over 14.5 million people have signed up for Affordable Care Act Marketplace coverage for 2022. That's a 21% increase over last year

The ACA and ARPA made big improvements to health care affordability and access, but we're not done. Some improvements made over the past two years in response to the public health crisis created by COVID will expire before year's end unless Congress takes action now to make them permanent.

President Biden and the new Congress must take action in the coming months to ensure the continuation of coverage and affordability, to lower drug prices, and to strengthen Medicaid and Medicare for the future so that everyone in America has equitable access to the quality affordable healthcare they need. Make those calls! §

WV Citizen Action Group  
1500 Dixie Street  
Charleston, WV 25311



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