



WV New Jobs Coalition sponsored the Aug. 12th 9th St Live event in Huntington, WV



Special Session and More

By Gary Zuckett

After being blindsided by the governor's special session call for a 10% income tax cut, legislative leadership convened during July interims only to have another bill hastily added. This one was to 'update' West Virginia's criminal code on abortion that we adopted from Virginia when we became a state.

Thus began the week-long drama of lawmakers trying to sort out and come to agreement on two very contentious issues. It was a frustrating and infuriating week that ended with both Houses adjourning (with no completed legislation) to be reconvened at the call of the House Speaker and Senate President.

I'll cover the tax issue here. See Julie's article for where things stand on the proposed abortion ban. If you want my opinion on why government should stay out of the relationship between a pregnant person and their doctor, I outline it in my op-ed on separation of church and state here: tinyurl.com/wvgazoped2.

On the tax front, the governor actually weighted the percent of an income tax cut in favor of lower income taxpayers, but since the lowest earners pay little tax to begin with, the bulk of the total savings still 'trickled up' to those with the highest incomes. Using a one-time surplus in state revenue to permanently cut income taxes is a dangerous gambit that even the governor's advisors warned against in testimony to the Senate Finance Committee during the regular legislative session. Regardless, the governor has his own fantasy that cutting, and eventually eliminating, the state income tax will somehow magically create an economic boom in our state. There is no empirical evidence that this is the case.

The House basically agreed with the governor, passed and sent his bill to the Sen-

Inside...

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Learn how
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**MAKE MEDS
AFFORDABLE.**

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Awards Picnic - Sept. 15th

Join us on Sept. 15th from 5-7PM at the Soap Box Pavillion in Little Creek Park, South Charleston for food, music, and awards. Tickets available at tinyurl.com/WVPicnic22. Visit wvcag.org/membership to become a member!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
Medicare & Medicaid!
Thank You for 57 Yrs of Health Care.

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Special Cont.

ate, where it was snubbed by not even receiving the House message that they passed it. So it was DOA.

Instead, the Senate passed a resolution opining on the economic boom the passage of Amendment #2 will have, putting their eggs in one basket by betting on voters approving the "Property Tax Modernization Amendment" in November. This dangerous amendment gives our legislature extraordinary powers to give away property tax revenue that counties receive from business inventory and equipment (about a quarter of many counties revenue). They're dangling the elimination of property tax on personal vehicles out to voters as an enticement to vote yes. As tempting as this may be, one must pay the piper one way or another and if county services are strangled by reductions in revenue, other taxes will go up like on homes and local sales tax.

It's just a bad idea that will come back to bite us if passed, like the failed experiment of phasing out the business franchise tax and cutting the corporate net income tax rate in the mid-2000's. Pass the word to vote NO on Amendment #2 in November, as King Coal, the Frackers and the WV Manufactures Association along with the WV Chamber of Commerce will be pushing it hard. Kelly Allen from WV Center on Budget & Policy has a great op-ed out on this whole mess: tinyurl.com/wvgazoped1.

As mentioned earlier, this special session is not yet over and we fear the worst is yet to come on taxes and abortion access. Find contact information for your Senators and Delegates at wvecouncil.org/wv-legislature and let them know your thoughts on both issues! Stay tuned for our alerts when the 'bad idea factory' resumes. §

Much At Stake With Proposed Constitutional Amendments

Dangerous Power Grabs Threaten Checks & Balances, Essential Community Services and Public Education

By Julie Archer

In addition to the congressional, legislative, county and local elected offices that will appear on the ballot this November, voters must also consider four separate amendments to the state's constitution. During the 2021 and 2022 legislative sessions, the West Virginia legislature passed resolutions asking voters to consider each proposal. These amendments will become part of the State Constitution if a simple majority of voters who cast ballots vote in favor.

Although we have written about these amendments before, here's a quick refresher on what's at stake with these proposed changes to the West Virginia Constitution.

Amendment 1: Clarification of the Judiciary's Role in Impeachment Proceedings

This amendment would make it so that no court in the state could intervene to protect the right to a fair hearing of a public official facing impeachment, no matter how frivolous the charge or constitutionally flawed the process. Despite what, legislators argued when they voted in favor of

putting this amendment before voters, this amendment is not needed to restore or protect the legislature's authority in impeachment proceedings. If adopted, this amendment would open the door to blatant abuses of power by the legislative branch, by cutting loose future impeachment proceedings of the state legislature from all constitutional restraint, potentially denying a public official faced with impeachment their right to due process. In the hands of a partisan majority, this new power could be abused to oust political opponents without cause, thereby eroding existing checks and balances between the three branches of government and undercutting public trust in the political process. **WV CAG OPPOSES this amendment.**

Amendment 2: Property Tax Modernization Amendment

This amendment is another dangerous power grab that would give the Legislature the authority to exempt business machinery and equipment, business inventory, and personal vehicles from taxation. This would give the state legislature control of \$515 million in property taxes that fund our schools and other vital services for our communities. The loss of this critical revenue will adversely im-



pact the ability of municipalities, county governments, and school districts to provide essential services that benefit all West Virginians, and will likely lead to cuts to services or increased taxes on other parties, like homeowners. Our friends at the WV Center on Budget and Policy have released a new issue brief that explains Amendment 2 and the negative implications of its passage. The brief can be found at wvpolicy.org/category/reports-briefs. **WV CAG OPPOSES this amendment.**

Amendment 3: Incorporation of Churches or Religious Denominations Amendment

This proposed amendment would allow churches and other religious organizations to incorporate in West Virginia. Currently, these institutions are prohibited from incorporating under the West Virginia Constitution – a provision borrowed from the Virginia Constitution. Virginia's prohibition was found to be unconstitutional several years ago. As a result of the Virginia court decision, the WV Secre-

tary of State began issuing certificates of incorporation to churches despite the constitutional prohibition in WV. Consequently, this proposed amendment would conform the WV Constitution to current practice, and the federal court's ruling in the Virginia case. **WV CAG and the ACLU of WV SUPPORTS this amendment.**

Amendment 4: Education Accountability Amendment

Although the summary of this proposed amendment says that its purpose is "*to clarify* that the rules and policies promulgated by the State Board of Education are subject to legislative review, approval, amendment, or rejection," its adoption would actually be a major policy change. In 1958, the voters of West Virginia amended our state constitution to give general supervisory authority over the schools of our state to the State Board of Education. This previous amendment, which was proposed in response to a legislatively commissioned study of the state's system of public education and was recognized as a necessary step "to provide our state's schools with a governance model that is thoughtful, managed by a diverse group of experts, and immune from the ebb and flow of politics," according to the State Board of Education. Granting the state legislature authority over state education rules and policies will, in the words of the Board, only make our system of education "less efficient, more chaotic and subject to partisan politics." **WV CAG OPPOSES this amendment.**

You can find the ballot order, stated summary of purpose, and full text of each amendment at GoVoteWV.com. As this newsletter goes to press, we are gathering and strategizing with partners and allies on Amendments 2 and 4. More to follow on their potential consequences for our communities, and how you can get involved to make sure your friends, family, and peers know what's at stake, so that we can defeat these power-grabbing amendments. §

Rediscovering Hope to Fight for a Better WV

By Richard Rose, Summer Intern and Democracy Fellow

This summer, I have had the incredible opportunity to work with WVCAG as an intern and Democracy Fellow. I have been able to organize and participate in pro-choice rallies to demand access to bodily autonomy for all, speak with voters about the barriers they are facing in accessing the polls, work with extraordinarily inspiring community leaders to amplify the voices of these voters and ensure their voices are heard in the voting booth and beyond, and so

much more! Although it is saddening that this experience is coming to a close in just a few short days, I am forever grateful for the practical knowledge WVCAG has given me regarding the navigation of nonprofit-based political advocacy and the abundant inspiration bestowed upon me by the countless community leaders I had the pleasure of working alongside.

Prior to this internship, I possessed very limited experience working with nonprofits as a mode of political advocacy.

Hope Cont.

Instead, I focused more on working with individual candidates and their campaigns as my primary method of engaging with politics. While this supplied me with a valuable perspective, I can confidently say that this summer has opened my eyes to an entirely different world of politics! I enjoyed the decentralized nature of the work I was a part of, for I could become involved in several issue areas simultaneously without an impending election and its associated polls looming over my head. As a result, I look forward to exploring more opportunities to immerse myself in the world of nonprofits and the political activism that stands as an integral aspect of it.

Additionally, my experience with this internship aided me in maintaining hope that a better future is possible and inspired me to continue fighting for that future. Recently, the terrifying rise of right-wing extremism and my journey toward realizing the countless colonial systems that are stacked against our collective liberatory efforts have made it incredibly difficult to maintain hope for a brighter future. However, as I listened to community leaders in strategy meetings and marched alongside them in Charleston, they inspired me to refuse to lose sight of hope in our future and to transform my anger and frustration into action. They reinforced to me the truth that the maintenance of hope itself is a crucial aspect of resistance; they forced me to remember that the moment we lose hope, we allow our oppressors to rip our liberation from our hands.

Ultimately, this summer has proven to be an incredible

learning experience in which I was supplied with the knowledge to expand my horizons when it comes to working in politics beyond individual campaigns and restored my faith in the fight for a brighter future despite the barriers we face. I send my sincerest gratitude to absolutely everyone who made this experience possible and ensured it was as valuable as it was! I cannot wait to bring everything I have learned this summer with me wherever my future journeys lead me. §



Richard Rose, our WVCAG Summer Intern and Democracy Fellow, now heading back to Macalester College in St. Paul, MN.

Health Care For All WV

Medicaid Summit, Candidate Forums and the IRA

By Kim Jones

On September 19th and 20th, Health Care for All WV will be presenting as part of the **2022 Medicaid Summit**. Keep an eye out for the link!

Hosted by West Virginians for Affordable Health Care, the annual Medicaid Summit provides a forum with policy makers, practitioners, advocates, and Medicaid recipients to examine current issues and trends related to Medicaid. HC4AWV will be discussing Health Equity issues in WV. CEUs for this event will be available for WV licensed social workers, nurses, and addiction recovery specialists.

In September and October, we will be holding a series of **Candidate Forums** based on the healthcare issues that

matter most to West Virginians. We value your opinion. If you would please fill out our survey, we will use your input to create questions for the candidates. *What healthcare issues affect you and your family? Accessibility? Affordability? Prescription prices? Mental Health? Kid's Health? Health Equity?* Tell us what is important to you, and we will ask our state and federal representatives.

Survey Link: www.tinyurl.com/WVCandidateQs

We will be hosting an in-person candidate forum for Kanawha County, and virtual candidate forums for Monongalia, Cabell, and Wood Counties.

- **Sept. 26th** – Cabell Co. – Virtual - 6PM to 7:30PM
- **Oct. 4th** – Wood Co. – Virtual - 6PM to 7:30PM
- **Oct. 11th** – Monongalia Co. – Virtual - 6PM to 7:30PM
- **Oct. 18th** – Kanawha Co. - Grace Bible Church - 6PM to 7:30PM

We are excited to be partnering with Charleston community leaders and other organizations to focus the Kanawha County forum on health equity and social determinants of health.

More information and event registration links to come! If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at healthcareforallwv@gmail.com.

Inflation Reduction Act Passed the Senate and House, waiting to be signed by the President!!

On August 7th, Vice President Kamala Harris cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate to pass the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), with all Democratic Senators voting for the Act and no Republican support. The House quickly approved the bill. President Biden has signed the bill into law and will host an event at the White House on September 6th to celebrate this historic investment that he has championed over the last 18 months. Prior to the celebration, the President will host a Cabinet meeting focused on implementing the Act, and has plans to travel across the country to highlight how the bill will help the American people, according to a White House statement.

So how will this plan help consumers access more affordable healthcare?

First, a longtime goal of the Democrats has been to be able to allow Medicare to negotiate drug prices. You have no doubt seen the many slick ads paid for by the prescription drug industry that made blatantly false claims that the Inflation Reduction Act would hurt those on Medicare and seniors. Here's the facts about the Inflation Reduction Act:

- 49 million Medicare Part D beneficiaries will have

out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs capped at \$2,000 per year.

- 80 prescription drugs will have Medicare price negotiation by 2030
- \$35 insulin copays for millions of diabetics on Medicare.
- Medicare recipients will not have to pay copays on vaccinations covered under Part D.

The plan also extends higher premium assistance for people who buy insurance on the ACA Marketplace. The higher premium subsidies originally were part of the federal response to COVID and were due to end this year. In West Virginia, more than 20,000 residents depend on this premium assistance. It is estimated that 7,000 West Virginians would have become uninsured if the higher premium subsidies had expired.

For many West Virginians, **the extension of these credits will save them around \$10,000 a year in premiums!** Especially those over 50 and under the 400% Federal Poverty Level. This is a huge step forward to help working West Virginians afford health coverage.

We at Health Care for All, West Virginia Citizen Action Group, West Virginians for Affordable and West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy have been working tirelessly to help get this package passed. We are grateful to President Biden for his vision and the Congresspeople who have been working tirelessly to see some of this relief reach the long-suffering American people.

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

WV New Jobs Coalition

By Carey Jo Grace

WV New Jobs Coalition (WVNJC) has been busy in 2022! This partnership of organizations seeks to bring new, good-paying jobs to the Mountain State. We believe that West Virginians deserve:

- Full-time, good-paying, union jobs
- Affordable & accessible health care
- Clean water, air, and land
- Resilient, forward-thinking infrastructure
- Just and fair protections for our vulnerable com-

munities on the frontlines of the ever-increasing climate emergencies

WVNJC partners, including WVCAG, the WV Working Families Party, SEIU District 1199, and the Sierra Club, have been busy. The Coalition spent months planning a series of projects that kicked off this summer, as well as keeping up a presence at a variety of events.

Visioning Project - The newest addition to the coalition's work is a series of meetings and one-on-one conversations to listen to regular West Virginians about their community's needs, and their vision for the future of our state.

Rather than assuming we know what people need, then presenting our solutions, we want to hear directly from residents.

What are their individual stories?

What are the everyday struggles people face?

What would make their communities stronger?

Are there federal or state resources and policy changes that can make a real difference in people's everyday lives?

The visioning project is also about lifting the voices of community members and helping them to lead work in the place they call home.

Electoral Work - The WV Working Families Party is leading the Coalition's electoral work. Electoral Fellows hit the streets in the Eastern Panhandle, Northern WV, and Cabell County, educating folks about issues and voting. They had hundreds of conversations about climate, justice, care and jobs, and worked with candidates on the importance of door-to-door canvassing.

Events - Jammin' for Jobs and Justice - This event on June 20th, organized by the Chesapeake Climate Action Network and co-sponsored by CAG and the WV New Jobs Coalition, was a call to action for Manchin to vote 'yes' on reconciliation. Dozens stopped by our table (while eating delicious bbq) to send West Virginia birthday cards to the senator and sign up to stay informed about our work. We had conversations with everyone from college

students to retirees about climate concerns, cleaning up acid mine drainage and green jobs in the Mountain State, all while listening to some great live music.

9th Street Live - On August 12th, WVNJC sponsored the weekly summer concert in Huntington. The sponsorship included a series of radio spots to increase public awareness of the coalition and tout the benefits of the Inflation Reduction Act. Julie and Eve tabled at the concert and signed folks up to get involved in CAG and WVNJC projects.

Expanding the Coalition - The WVNJC recently formed an advisory committee including groups across the state who are also doing work around climate, jobs and justice. Ten organizations joined the initial call, a strong sign of support for the Coalition's work. This summer we'll be exploring plans and options to bolster the work we do together through the end of 2022.

Hope your group can join the next call! Send us a message at info@wvnewjobs.org to get involved. §



Inflation Reduction Act Passes Congress

By Gary Zuckett

Congress has passed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which makes historic progress on lowering drug costs for seniors, limiting Big Pharma's monopoly power to price gouge and ensuring affordable health coverage for [14.5 million](#) Americans. President Biden signed the bill into law on August 16th, enabling Medicare to negotiate prices for the first time and will create the first-ever out of pocket cost caps for seniors in Part D and for diabetics in Medicare. These are long-overdue improvements that make medicines affordable for seniors and their families, and that save taxpayers billions over the next decade. The bill

passed both the Senate and the House in party-line votes with Republicans all voting NO. The party of NO continues its obstruction...

Recent polls reflect [overwhelming bipartisan support](#) for this reconciliation package across the country, but rather than working with Democrats to tax price-gouging corporations and lower healthcare costs, Senator Capito and all three of WV's House members voted against this critical legislation, showing constituents which side they are really on. Senator Capito did not even join the [seven Republicans](#) who voted for lowering insulin costs for Americans who have private insurance, opting instead to keep the cost of insulin out of reach for constituents who don't have Medicare.

Democrats voted to make healthcare premiums for Affordable Care Act coverage more affordable and to lower en-

ergy bills for millions, reduce carbon emissions and create new jobs through its climate provisions - the largest investment in climate ever! To be sure the climate provisions are a mixed bag of 'all of the above' energy mix, but all in all it makes major progress and investments in solar, electric vehicles & charging stations, and more. See WV Public Broadcasting article here: [tinyurl.com/wvpubirapassage](https://www.wvpublic.org/story/2021-07-23/wv-public-broadcasting-article).

Senator Manchin should get credit for co-sponsoring this legislation and for his efforts to advance these reforms in the Senate even in the face of total Republican opposition, outright lies broadcast 24-7 by dark money groups over conventional and social media, and intense lobbying from Big Pharma, oil companies and other corporate special interests. In these tough times, West Virginians have been waiting long enough for these common-sense improvements.

These investments are paid for by enabling the IRS to finally track down wealthy tax cheats who have been dodging what they owe for years. The rate of audits for these tax

cheats has declined by 70% as the IRS has been starved of resources to do their job.

Finally, the IRA requires price-gouging corporations who offshore jobs and profits to pay a minimum corporate tax on their profits. The bill's tax provisions do not substantially increase taxes on anyone making under \$400,000 but will raise over [\\$300 billion](#) for deficit reduction. In all, these are long overdue reforms!

Admittedly, this is a 'watered down' package with some unhealthy climate tweaks like re-opening offshore federal property for drilling leases and a 'side deal' to expedite pipelines and other permits related to fossil fuel development (that has yet to pass and may or may not). However, this is a major accomplishment for our state and nation on many fronts! A big thanks to all our Citizen Action members who called federal lawmakers, showed up for countless rallies and actions and relentlessly kept the pressure on over the past 18 months to push this through. This is a big win for all of us! §

The Fight to Protect Abortion Access in WV Continues

Supreme Court Decision Leaves West Virginians Who Can Become Pregnant at the Legislature's Mercy

By Julie Archer

On June 24th, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned nearly 50 years of legal precedent and did away with the constitutional right to abortion. The Supreme Court's reckless decision will affect countless people in our state, robbing them of the ability to make the personal – and intensely private – decision about whether or not to become a parent.

On July 9th, we joined our friends at Planned Parenthood South Atlantic, ACLU of WV, Women's Health Center, and WV FREE for a day of dissent on the steps of the WV State Capitol. A crowd of nearly 1,000 gathered, in spite of the rain, to hear personal abortion stories, [share resources and take action](#). ICYMI: News coverage, photos, full and short live streams can be found at wvcag.org.

Decades of attacks left abortion rights hanging by a thread. That thread was cut with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, but we are not defeated. We must keep fighting until every person, no matter where we live, how much money we make, or what we look like, has the freedom to make our own decisions about our lives and futures.

WV Court Blocks 150-year-old Criminal Abortion Ban: As a result of the decision, Women's Health Center was forced



Del. Danielle Walker (D - Monongalia, 51) addressing pro-choice protestors at the Special Session in July.

to pause their abortion services, due to a pre-*Roe* criminal statute that was used in the past to punish abortion patients, providers and even people who simply accompanied people to their abortion procedure. Under this law, administering or causing an abortion is a felony punishable by three to ten years in prison.

The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of West Virginia, Mountain State Justice, and the Cooley law firm filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Center and its patients and staff, challenging the 1849 criminal code. Kanawha County Circuit Judge Tera Salango granted the clinic a preliminary injunction temporarily blocking the 150-year-old criminal

Fight Cont.

abortion ban pending appeal, allowing the clinic to resume providing abortion services. Attorney General Patrick Morrisey has filed an appeal with the WV Supreme Court urging them to overturn the injunction.

Meanwhile, the fight to protect abortion access in West Virginia continues. Visit the Women's Health Center of West Virginia online at womenshealthwv.org to learn more about the services they provide and how you can support their work.

A Not So Special Session: On Monday, July 25th, members of the WV Legislature gathered in Charleston for a special session called by Governor Justice to make cuts to the state's personal income tax. That same day, the Governor amended the call to include abortion and lawmakers moved swiftly to completely ban abortion in West Virginia. Although both the House and Senate passed versions of the ban, the two remain at an impasse over how draconian the ban will be.

The House narrowly adopted a Republican-proposed amendment that would allow victims of rape and incest to obtain abortions up to 14 weeks of pregnancy, provided that they first report the incident to law enforcement.

These Delegates Voted In Favor Of Forcing Rape And Incest Victims To Give Birth In West Virginia.



By a very small margin, the Senate voted to broaden the circle of people minors who are victims of rape or incest could report the crime to. Instead of limiting it to law enforcement, under the amendment offered by Senator Stephen Baldwin (D-Greenbrier), a minor could still qualify for an abortion if they reported to a teacher, guidance counselor, or other persons required by state law to report child abuse and neglect.

The Senate also adopted an amendment to remove the criminal penalties for doctors who perform abortions. Under the amendment, which was offered by Senators Tom Takubo (R-Kanawha) and Michael Maroney (R-Marshall), both physicians themselves, doctors could still face disciplinary action, including loss of their license, if the Board

These Senators Voted In Favor Of Putting Doctors Who Provide Abortion Care In Prison.



West Virginians Deserve Better.

HB302 HFA HARDY 7-27
HB302 SFA TAKUBO AND MARONEY #1 7-29
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of Medicine determined they acted outside the scope of practice permitted by state law.

As a result of these changes, some Senators voted against the bill because they felt the ban didn't go far enough. When the bill was reported back to the House, the House refused to accept the Senate amendments, and requested that a conference committee be appointed to work out the differences. Both bodies adjourned, suggesting they might reconvene some time in August.

What's next?

As we go to press, more than three weeks have passed with no indication when they might return to Charleston. In the meantime, we must continue to raise our voices in support of abortion rights and access in West Virginia, and our ability to live with autonomy, dignity, and equality. And with an election just around the corner, we must support candidates who are committed to protecting and promoting reproductive freedom, including the right to safe, legal abortion in West Virginia. §

WV New Jobs Coalition is **HIRING!**

By Carey Jo Grace

Organizer/Assistant Project Director: We're looking for the right person to help lead the visioning project, someone with solid experience in grassroots organizing, engaging volunteers, supporting leadership development and building strong partnerships that grow and deploy power to change policies, structures and culture.

- Job responsibilities include, but are not limited to:
- Collaborating with the WVNJC team to plan and implement the Visioning Project
- Assisting local groups and organizing fellows in planning community meetings
- Conducting one-on-one conversations with community members and partners
- Conducting media and social media outreach
- Attending and facilitating community meetings

WVNJC is also excited to announce three opportunities for anyone with strong ties to their local community through our **Community Organizing Fellowship** program. Our fellows will work directly with local people and or-

ganizations to identify groups to host visioning meetings and build relationships between the community and WVNJC. Ideal candidates will already have strong ties and relationships in their local community.

This is a part-time position, designed for new organizers to strengthen their skills.

To Apply for EITHER position: Please send the following to hiring@newjobswv.org with the job title in the subject line:

- Resume or CV
- A writing sample that answers the following prompts (*no more than one page total*)

According to some, the roles people play in social change can be categorized as helper, advocate, rebel and organizer. Which one of these do you think describes you best and why?

Give an example of how you work effectively with someone whose background or political views are very different from yours. §

Join Us for a **Make Meds Affordable Webinar!**

By Eve Marcum-Atkinson

On **August 25th at 7PM**, please join us for a [Make Meds Affordable educational webinar](#), the first in our health care webinar series.

Have you ever had to ration medications or skip them all together, because the price went up so high? Do you ever wonder why prescription drugs cost so much? Our webinar will explore one reason why.

Register Here: tinyurl.com/wvmawebinar

We'll be hearing from medical and community professionals about how Big Pharma companies control patents and keep prices so high, in an effort to maximize profits off of the backs of patients. We'll also talk about what the Biden Administration can do about it, using existing laws.

The second in our health care webinar series is tentatively set for **September 8th** on the topic of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBM's) and the [recent Senate bill](#). This new bipartisan legislation was introduced in the Senate in May



to empower the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) to [crack down on PBM practices](#), such as spread pricing, and boost their enforcement powers. **PBM's are a big reason why prescription drug prices are so high.** And, in January, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) [proposed a new rule](#) that would stop PBM's and health plans charging "clawback" fees of uncertain amounts from pharmacies, sometimes several months after the pharmacy counter transactions.

Other proposed topics in our health care webinar series

include:

- Supporting Workers by Expanding Access to Medicaid and ending the Cliff effect;
- The Medicare REACH Program, how it will raise prices and lower patient care; Diabetes in WV
- How do we make affording Insulin and Supplies possible;
- Health Disparities and Environmental Impacts in WV.

Keep an eye out for more details! §



2022 Environmental Summit



Join us to discuss the future of
WV's environmental movement!

Sept 24-25

WVU Natural Resources Center
Morgantown, WV

REGISTER HERE: tinyurl.com/WVECsummit



Lifting Up Families And Saving Lives



By Eve Marcum-Atkinson

At noon on Saturday, July 30th, a coalition of organizations and groups hosted a Happy Birthday Medicare & Medicaid celebration at Cabin Creek Health System's Kanawha City Health Center, located at 4602 MacCorkle Ave SE in Charleston, WV. This event was open to the press and was centered around the 57th birthday of Medicare and Medicaid.

See the full-length video here: youtu.be/dlm_3cx8zNU

Speakers at this event discussed important healthcare issues, such as:

- Protecting and Expanding Medicaid
- Protecting Medicare from Privatization
- Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiation
- Eliminating the Medicaid Cliff for West Virginians

This event was co-hosted by Cabin Creek Health Care Systems, Health Care for All West Virginia, WV Citizen Action Group, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care, Physicians for a National Health Program of West Virginia, Rise Up WV, Protect Our Care, and others. As a follow-up to this event, a [joint statement](#) was released.

"As with the now over 30 community health centers in WV, we would not exist without the Medicare and Medicaid program", said Craig Robinson, Executive Director of Cabin Creek Health Systems. "These were giant steps in bringing health security to elderly and disabled and were necessary to create the healthcare infrastructure that all rely on."

"Medicare and Medicaid have now had over a half century of providing lifesaving healthcare to seniors and low-income families," said Gary Zuckett, Executive Director of West Virginia Citizen Action Group. "The next phase should be to expand and improve on these services and make them available to everyone."

The anniversary came days after Democrats announced they had reached a historic deal to drive down prescription drug costs and lower premiums for millions of Americans.

Along with fighting inflation and making key investments in climate and energy, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which was signed into law by President Biden on August 16th, lowers prescription drug prices by giving Medicare the power to negotiate, and extends ACA financial assistance that lower premiums for the next three years. §

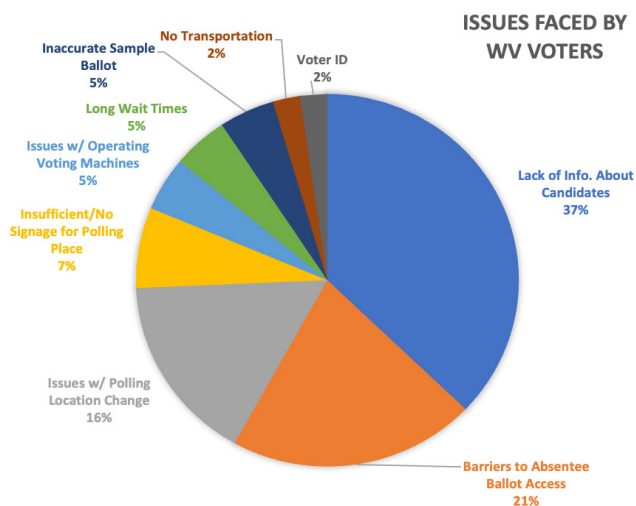
Major Issues Facing West Virginia Voters

By Richard Rose, Summer Intern and Democracy Fellow

Earlier this summer, CAG and its partners in the WV Freedom to Vote Coalition launched a Voter Issue and Action Survey (VIAS) as part of a campaign that aims to expand voter access to the polls by directly listening to West Virginians and collecting information about the challenges they have faced while attempting to cast their votes.

The campaign surrounding the VIAS concluded on Friday, July 15th. From this campaign, we received a total of 44 responses from West Virginia voters. While this is a smaller sample than we originally hoped for, it provides plenty of valuable information that allows us to identify some of the major issues voters are facing in our state.

A simple breakdown of the data is shown below:



Out of all the responses we received, the largest issue people faced was a lack of information about candidates on the ballots with 36% of respondents flagging it as an issue of concern. One respondent stated that the lack of information is concentrated on local candidates, which made it difficult to make an informed decision on the ballot. Other respondents echoed this complaint and added that information was often spread out to different websites (social media, news sites, etc.), and they had to spend unnecessary amounts of time to find it. Oftentimes, their research was limited by exclusionary paywalls. Constituents would benefit from a centralized voter information site and/or a state-sponsored voting guide mailing, similar to other states.

Furthermore, 20% of responses reported experiencing issues with obtaining an absentee ballot ahead of the election. These barriers ranged from not having access to a printer in order to print out an application to being unnecessarily questioned or challenged when requesting one and being uncertain about their eligibility. Many of these issues may have been solved by calling the SOS office or going to

GoVoteWV.com, but this survey goes to show that voters are not even being informed of these resources to resolve their issues. People cannot solve these issues if they do not know these resources are available to them.

Additionally, 16% of responses cited unexpected changes in polling places as major issues of concern. Several respondents claimed that they arrived at the wrong precinct, and poll workers were uninformed about where to send them. This resulted in one respondent traveling to three different locations before arriving at the correct one and another traveling 35 minutes to no avail. Another claimed that they did not receive notice of their precinct change until after the election while another stated that their precinct is often changed on short notice (Kanawha).

Interestingly, this survey attracted an unexpected amount of responses that were dismissive of the existence of issues regarding voter access and spouted conspiracy theories surrounding voting machines. We do not view this as a flaw in the survey; instead, we view this widespread disinformation as yet another barrier to voter access. Moving forward, political organizations, like us, must remain steadfast in lifting the voices of those facing barriers to the polls as well as addressing the rampant disinformation disseminating from the rhetoric surrounding the 2020 election. Dismissing the prevalence of disinformation and allowing it to fester will only create more barriers to the polls.

Ultimately, the VIAS campaign was very successful in calling attention to many of the issues voters face when attempting to make their voices heard at the polls. We are confident that this will serve as a stable foundation as we work with our partners to devise new initiatives to hold election officials accountable and encourage them to resolve many of the issues through this campaign. You can read a full summary of the VIAS at wvcag.org. §

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Don Marsh & Paul Nyden Public Service Award
Takeiya Smith
Thomas A. Knight Excalibur Award
Natalie Tennant,
Si Galperin in Defense of Democracy Award

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Annual Awards Picnic Order Your Tickets Today!

On September 15th, from 5-7PM, WV Citizen Action Group and WV Citizen Action Education Fund will host our Awards Picnic at the Soap Box Pavillion in Little Creek Park, South Charleston. There will be civic awards, food, music, and much more. Dinner will be catered by Gourmet Fast. Live music will be performed by Sandy Sowell and Gerry Collyard.

Our Awardees are:

- Natalie Tennant for the Si Galperin In Defense of Democracy Award
- Takeiya Smith for the Thomas A. Knight Excalibur Award
- Crystal Good and Emily Thompson for the Don Marsh and Paul Nyden Public Service Awards

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Not able to attend? You are always welcome to donate online at wvcag.org/membership (C4 – not tax deductible) or at wvcaef.org/donation-info (C3 – tax deductible). Checks can be mailed to 1500 Dixie St., Charleston, WV 25311.

We ask that everyone follow masking and social distancing guidelines. Let's celebrate safely!