

Capital Eye

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Counter-clockwise from top left: WV Environmental Council gathering at Camp Pioneer 4-H camp in Beverly; David McMahon, Ralph Nader, and David Grubb (l to r) at WV Capitol press conference on tort reform; Adrienne Worthy (left) and Kate Grubb (right) outside the Citizen Action Group office on Virginia St. in Charleston; Sally Roberts Wilson, Julie Archer, and Kris Olsen (l to r) at Bans Off Our Bodies rally, May 2022.

1974-2024: Celebrating 50 Years of Action!

By Julie Archer, WV CAG Project Manager

It's hard to believe it's been 50 years since David Grubb returned to West Virginia after working for consumer advocate Ralph Nader. David toured the state, talking to potential supporters about forming a statewide organization designed to represent the interests of average citizens. In less than three weeks, David raised the "start-up" money for this idea and WV Citizen Action Group was born.

Reflecting on our 40th anniversary, David said, "We had no idea back in the 70s that this thing would still be going in 2013. [The staff] often had to compare utility bills to see who needed to get paid that week!" Despite the challenges, we are still going strong. We are grateful to David, his wife Kate, and other former CAG staff members, Adrienne Worthy and Perry Bryant, who have agreed to serve on the planning committee for our 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Your participation is crucial in making our 50th Anniversary Celebration a success. In addition to lifting up the accomplishments of our awardees, we are looking to add an exciting keynote speaker to our celebration.

Inside this issue

1974-2024: Celebrating 50 Years of Action!	1
No Parks, No Libraries?	
No Levy	2
The 2024 WV Primary: Musical Chairs anyone?	2
The 2024 Legislative Session: It Just Keeps Happening	3
Transforming Appalachia: Renewable Energy in Southern West Virginia	5
Judicial Integrity: Ethical, Accountable Courts are a Pillar of a Strong Democracy	7
Medicaid's Wild Ride	7
Introducing the Care Over Cost Campaign	8
WV CAG's Organizing Revival: Building People Power	8
Barabara Fleischauer Honored with Rockefeller Award	10
CAG Expands the Team	10

We can't do it without YOU!

As someone who cares about the future of West Virginia and our communities, this is the perfect time to contribute to support our important work and help us make an even bigger difference in people's lives.

Visit: wvcag.org/membership

Here are some things you can do to help:

Join our planning committee: Volunteer your time and talents and share your ideas to ensure an amazing time as we celebrate our accomplishments, look to the future, and continue the work needed to make positive change in our state and nation.

Nominate someone for an award: The Mountain State is full of passionate folks doing the work needed to improve the lives of their fellow West Virginians and ensure our people are safe, healthy, and prosperous. Help us recognize someone you know for their contributions to our state and their community.

Recommend a speaker: Is there an inspiring local, state or national leader who embodies the mission of WV Citizen Action, shares our values and champions our issues?

Write a testimonial: To let others know why you support WV Citizen Action, encourage them to become a member and join us in the fight for a stronger democracy, a sustainable future, and quality, affordable healthcare for all.

To volunteer or get involved, please email us at julie@wvcag.com with your ideas and interests.

No Parks, No Libraries? No Levy

By Dani Parent, WV CAG Organizing Director

One of the most critical and least talked-about activities of West Virginia Citizen Action is that we offer fiscal sponsorship to grassroots community groups who want to fundraise and organize for change in their backyards. One such project, the No Parks, No Libraries, No Levy group out of Cabell County, was formed last year in response to the Cabell County Board of Education's proposal to slash the budgets of the Cabell County Library System and Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation District from their excess levy, a practice that voters' have enthusiastically authorized since the 60's. With some good old-fashioned community organizing, the voters failed the levy in this year's primary election while still voting a resounding YES on the two other levies. The group hopes to work together with relevant entities' boards, other community organizations, and leaders to pass a levy that will satisfy all parties in November.



The 2024 WV Primary: Musical Chairs Anyone?

By Gary Zuckett, WV CAG Executive Director

I'm writing this as the primary election results are still sinking in. At the statewide office level, it felt like a massive game of musical chairs among historic WV political dynasties. The only incumbent to run for the office he currently holds was Kent Leonhart, our Agriculture Commissioner, who fended off two primary challengers. Everyone else abandoned their chair to try for someone else's — Secretary of State Mac Warner ran for governor, and his brother has now won the Republican nomination to be the state's new chief election officer. US Senator Shelley Moore Capito's son, Moore Capito, battled it out with Warner, Chris Miller (son of Congresswoman Carol Miller), and our current Attorney General Patrick Morrisey to be the GOP nominee for governor. Morrisey came out on top of the heap with a whopping 33% of the vote. So, 67% of Republican voters chose some candidate other than Morrisey. What a mandate!

On the Democratic side, Steve Williams, the longtime mayor of Huntington, was the only candidate on their ballot for governor. Williams has a good reputation for turning his city around (visit: ppls.ac/Williams), helping it win national awards and recognition for its effective response to the opioid crisis. Huntington also won the top prize in the America's Best Communities competition. It'll be an interesting general election for governor, for sure. JB McCuskey abandoned his position as WV Auditor to successfully run for the Republican nomination for Attorney General — the seat Morrisey left for the B McCuskey abandoned his position as WV Auditor to successfully run for the Republican nomination for Attorney General — the seat Morrisey left for

the governor's race. *See what I mean about musical chairs?* McCuskey defeated State Senator Mike Stuart, one of several state legislators seeking higher office. State Senator Mark Hunt won the republican nomination for McCuskey's current office, beating out current House Majority Leader Eric Householder, former Delegate Caleb Hanna, and Tricia Jackson, who was recently removed from her position on the Jefferson County Commission for skipping meetings and preventing the Commission from conducting business. Senate Judiciary Chair Charles Trump won a seat on the WV Supreme Court of Appeals. His victory will likely lead to an appointment to fill his Senate seat, depending on the timing of his departure.

The other high-stakes race on the ballot is the one to fill retiring US Senator Joe Manchin's seat, which could swing the Senate to Republican control if it goes red. Our current governor, Jim Justice, trounced Congressman Alex Mooney by more than a 2-to-1 margin for the chance to take Babydog to Washington. What will Washington do with Babydog if he's elected?

On the Democratic side, a three-way race between Glen Elliott, the current mayor of Wheeling; Zach Shrewsbury, a veteran and community organizer; and a bizarre cameo campaign by convicted coal baron Don Blankenship generated considerable interest. The Don pulled a surprising 18+ percent of the vote after airing a bizarre TV ad that prominently featured RFK Jr, and ended with Blankenship telling the TV audience not to believe it "... if you're told that I fell out of bed and hung myself!" Blankenship's votes likely skewed the race to help Manchin's endorsed candidate, Elliott, secure the nomination. So the Dems will have popular mayors running for governor and US Senate in November.

At the statehouse, several incumbents lost their seats to primary challengers. Most notably, Senate President Craig Blair was unseated by political newcomer Tom Willis in a three-way race. This will throw the whole Senate leadership into restructuring from the top down after the November elections and severely limits Blair's effectiveness as a 'lame duck' Senate President. With an anticipated special session coming up to 'finish up' the 'skinny budget' that was hastily passed at the end of the session, we may have some additional fireworks as members jockey for leadership positions in the new regime. This may not bode well for fixing our budget shortfall, funding Medicaid or dodging the im-

pending implosion in our state's revenue from the 'trigger' that was baked into last year's bill to phase out the state income tax.

Another member of Senate leadership, Mike Maroney, Chair of the Senate Health Committee, was primaried by an anti-vaxxer preaching 'medical freedom.' As a physician, Maroney had the nerve to rely on medical science to inform his decisions on vaccines and treatments for transgender folks. As the Republicans continue to drift towards more extreme positions, it leaves less room and tolerance for the likes of Dr. Maroney. He was someone who could work both sides of the aisle on issues related to his medical expertise, but the hard-liners want none of that! Oh yeah, no mention of 'medical freedom' during this primary fight was directed toward protecting bodily autonomy. Humm, no double standard here?

As the dust settles from this major primary election, it's evident that we all have our work cut out for us between now and November. We all need to do everything we can to help our friends and neighbors understand our critical juncture as a state and a nation. We must get like-minded folks registered and out to the polls to help restore balance and move toward a state government that better represents us all. We're listing so far to the right that our ship of state may tip over and capsize! Of course, once we've righted the ship, we can continue to push for a more progressive agenda that will make Mountaineers always freer!

The 2024 Legislative Session: It Just Keeps Happening

By Gary Zuckett, WV CAG Executive Director

Our legislative session gaveled out in March after passing 279 bills to the governor's desk. The governor vetoed seven of them, including a controversial one loosening school vaccination requirements and a popular bipartisan effort to allow our electric utilities to build more solar power in our state. Remember, Big Jim makes lots of money from his coal mines and evidently doesn't mind being seen as protecting his interests through his official acts as governor. Remember, this governor refused to place his business holdings into a blind trust as is (or was) the NORMAL procedure for our highest elected official.

The conservative majority ignored Net Metering and Community Solar bills and a Medicaid Bridge to Work bill, which we've worked on for years. However, sometimes, we measure wins by the terrible bills we keep from becoming law. HB 5018 - restricting the use of our community air monitoring data - was an industry-backed bill that stubbornly survived until the last few days of session. We defeated the bill working with allied groups and concerned citizens (like you) ready to mobilize at a moment's notice! For a deeper dive into the environmental efforts at the capitol, please visit our wrap-up at ppls.ac/CAGwrapup and the WV Environmental Council's summary at ppls.ac/WVECwrapup.

As usual, the leaders in the two chambers got together in the final days of the session and cut some deals to get key bills passed. This horsetrading looks something like, 'You pass my bill in the House, and we'll pass yours in the Senate.' Mountain State Spotlight (visit: ppls.ac/MountainState) spun it like this: "Del. Evan Worrell, R-Cabell, who delivered an impassioned speech against the unemployment bill, said the two chambers had made a trade — unemployment in exchange for pay raises and Social Security. Del. Eric Householder, R-Berkeley, the House Majority leader, would only say he was glad to see "good legislation being passed." Del. John Hardy, R-Berkeley, was more coy. "It's the last night," he said. "Things happen."

These bills passed: one to cut Unemployment Compensation, add more layers of paperwork for unemployed workers and make it harder for them to collect, and the other to eliminate the state income tax on Social Security payments to seniors, regardless of their income level.

One of the hazards of leading a supermajority in the legislature is that their caucus is so large that getting them to agree on 'must pass' legislation can be a heavy lift. This is in our favor as the extreme MAGA wing kept throwing tantrums and mucking up the works. As a result (and with lots of help from us), a lot of really bad bills died, including a "Woman's Bill of Wrongs" (attacking transgender folks) and the one to bring criminal charges against teachers and librarians for books or lessons someone might have an objection to. *Phew!*

Unlike last year, when they ran out of bills to pass 20 minutes before midnight, this year, they ran out the clock with several high-profile bills still in the hopper. There was even a little last-minute drama when Kanawha County Delegate Mike Pushkin stood up and did a

five-minute filibuster to run out the House clock to prevent them from passing a constitutional amendment ballot measure to prohibit non-citizens from voting in WV elections, which is already illegal.

One constitutional amendment that you'll be asked to weigh in on in November is HJR 28, which says, "No person, physician, or health care provider in the State of West Virginia shall participate in the practice of medically assisted suicide, euthanasia, or mercy killing of a person" (which, again, is already illegal in WV). Our ACLU affiliate is already forming a coalition to oppose this additional affront to our bodily autonomy.

The issues that weren't addressed during the 2024 Session are significant. Childcare deserts are preventing parents from working in our state, which has one of the lowest workforce participation rates in the country. The state is warehousing foster kids in motels both locally and out of state. Higher education is imploding and too expensive. State correctional facilities are still in crisis even with recent modest pay raises. I could go on and on.

Stop the presses! As we were getting ready to send this to the printer, our lame-duck governor (hoping for a US Senate seat) threw out 15 bills and called the legislature into special session. With a now lame-duck Senate president, the House and Senate sparred over funding for IDD waiver for Medicaid patients with disabilities, with the Senate thumbing their nose and going home instead of to a conference committee. (see Medicaid's Wild Ride on page 7) Also, check out WV Spotlight's coverage (visit: ppls.ac/MSS2024update)

Besides moving hundreds of millions of dollars of revenue from various accounts to patch holes in the budget, the 14th item on the governor's call was "Relating to political party nomination of presidential electors." This turned into SB1014, dispatched out of the Senate on the first evening of the Special Session (using their new trick of suspending the rules and due process). When it hit the House floor Del Fluharty proposed a really astute one-sentence amendment to the bill, "Any person that fraudulently represents that he or she is serving as a presidential elector who was not lawfully elected or appointed shall be guilty of a felony and be subject to imprisonment in a state correctional facility for a period of one to three years and be subject to a fine of up to \$5,000." However, the Republican majority frowned on his proposal and voted it down. Thanks, Delegate, for at least rubbing their noses in it!

Their feelings of hopelessness and anger are valid. We acknowledge that southern West Virginia, particularly the smaller, less economically stable towns, have been neglected by Washington and “the bubble” in our state capital, Charleston.

We emphasize this money is available across the U.S. for many and that the sooner they apply, the better their chances of receiving it. WV New Jobs Coalition wants to motivate communities to channel their emotions into creativity and funding initiatives. This money belongs in southern West Virginia, and they deserve it as much, if not more, than anyone eligible.

This initiative reinforces that it is not about undermining coal and leaving our fossil fuel workers unemployed. Instead, it was about empowering our workers to transition into new careers and create fresh job opportunities for those who have long grappled with unemployment. We discuss the potential direction a move to energy efficiency could take amongst the West Virginia workforce.

We share a vision of bringing renewable manufacturing jobs to West Virginia, creating plants to build solar panels and windmills in the state, resulting in new industries and career paths for a multitude of jobs.

By harnessing federal funding, communities can generate enough employment to sustain workers year-round, lessening their dependence on seasonal or part-time work and fostering lasting economic growth throughout the region.

The Positive Impact of Renewable Energy Initiatives on Rural Coalfield Towns in Appalachia

Transitioning to renewable energy sources mitigates the environmental impacts of fossil fuel extraction and combustion. It reduces greenhouse gas emissions, improves air quality, and protects natural resources such as waterways and ecosystems, safeguarding the health and well-being of residents and future generations through this environmental stewardship.

Renewable energy initiatives empower local communities to take ownership of their energy resources and shape their sustainable future. Community-owned renewable energy projects, cooperative models, and decentralized energy systems promote democratic decision-making, foster social cohesion, and ensure that the benefits of energy development are shared equitably among residents, fostering community.

Next Steps:

Federal and state support is vital for Appalachian renewable energy success.

Investment and Funding: Federal and state governments should allocate sufficient funding and resources to support the development and implementation of renewable energy projects in rural coalfield towns. This includes grants, tax incentives, low-interest loans, and technical assistance programs to overcome financial barriers and facilitate project deployment.

Policy Support: Enact policies and regulations that promote renewable energy deployment, streamline permitting processes, and remove regulatory barriers hindering project development. Implement renewable energy standards, renewable portfolio standards, and net metering policies to create a favorable policy environment for renewable energy investment and adoption.

Capacity Building: Invest in workforce development programs, vocational training, and education initiatives to build the skills and expertise needed to support rural communities' renewable energy industry workforce. This includes training programs for installers, technicians, engineers, and entrepreneurs to ensure a skilled labor force that drives renewable energy innovation and growth.

Community Engagement: Foster collaboration and partnership between government agencies, industry stakeholders, non-profit organizations, and local communities to ensure that renewable energy initiatives are tailored to the specific needs, priorities, and aspirations of rural coalfield towns. Empower communities to participate in decision-making processes, project planning, and implementation to maximize local benefits and ownership.

By heeding this call to action and supporting renewable energy initiatives in rural coalfield towns throughout Appalachia, we can unlock renewable energy's full potential to drive economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and community well-being across the region.

Visit newjobswv.org/report/ to view the full report.

Judicial Integrity: Ethical, Accountable Courts are a Pillar of a Strong Democracy

By Julie Archer, WV CAG Project Manager

As I write this, I am preparing to attend the Judicial Integrity Convening hosted by the Piper Fund in Minneapolis, MN, from June 3 to 5.

The Piper Fund has generously supported different aspects of our democracy work for nearly 30 years, including our money in politics research in the late 1990s and our campaign in the early 2000s to establish a system of public campaign financing for state legislative candidates. Piper also began funding our fair court work after we strengthened the state's disclosure laws and won public financing for candidates to the state Supreme Court over a decade ago. Since then, we have passed an amendment to the state constitution, granting the legislature oversight of the judicial branch budget with procedural safeguards to preserve the balance of powers. We also helped defeat an amendment that would have denied public officials facing impeachment their right to due process. The amendment sought to prevent any court in the state from intervening in the impeachment process, regardless of how frivolous the charges were or how constitutionally flawed the process.

However, many of our achievements have come under attack, and opponents of democracy have added several other strategies to seize power and undermine judicial independence and access to justice. Throughout it all, the Piper Fund and Piper Action Fund have stood with and supported groups like ours across the country that have pushed back against these increasing attacks and attempts to corrupt or usurp the authority of state courts.

Why attack state courts? In the current political climate, state courts and constitutions are playing an increasingly central role in protecting and advancing rights around reproductive freedom, gender justice, voting rights, and more. The convening will discuss national trends and threats to judicial integrity and identify the major players behind these attacks on the courts. It will also provide opportunities for state leaders to share impactful organizing and communications strategies for countering these attacks and highlight promising avenues for building judicial accountability through policy reform and campaigns to strengthen judicial ethics and discipline.

This will be the first in-person gathering since 2019 to bring together state and national leaders working in the judicial integrity field. I'm excited to have this opportunity to reconnect with colleagues from around the country and have two of our state partners join me as we continue to reassess our goals related to strengthening judicial independence and accountability, determine how we can build and leverage the power of state courts to achieve justice, and develop a plan for the next phase of the work in West Virginia.

Medicaid's Wild Ride

By Mindy Salango, WV CAG Healthcare Organizer

The momentum of the ACA and Medicaid expansion has helped us build a significant and growing movement for healthcare access. We were facing extreme cuts to both Medicaid and I/DD services from the legislature. These budgets are now in the red in West Virginia; the Medicaid program alone has a \$147 million shortfall for fiscal year 2025. WV Medicaid is a state/federal matching program, and if the state did not fully fund Medicaid, the program was set to lose \$628 million, which represents 12 percent of the program budget. Fifty-three percent of the children in West Virginia depend on Medicaid for healthcare.

The governor called a special session to address this shortfall on May 17th as the legislature would be in session for the May interim starting May 19th. However, on Monday, May 20th, the bill was debated back and forth between the House and Senate, and there was no resolution. On Tuesday, the games began. The Senate had the bill and added language introducing some alarming provisions. The most concerning was that the \$183 million 'reserve fund' has a sunset provision that states any of the dollars that aren't used by March 31st, 2025, go back to general revenue. This poses a problem as the funds would not be available during the last part of the fiscal year when the agencies and programs would need it most.

To ensure that these provisions would either pass or kill the bill, the Senate adjourned sine die before the House could even gavel into session. This move forced the House to pass the bill so that the funding would be available before the end of the fiscal year on June 30th. The health and well-being of the most vulnerable populations in our state should not be held as a political bargaining chip.

While we are not yet giving out any congratulations for getting the bill passed, WVCAG will be carefully monitoring the situation to see how it unfolds. As always, we stand ready to fight for everyone to have access to healthcare and the services they deserve. Our fight to protect Medicaid continues.

We encourage everyone to contact their local Senators and tell them that this type of political chess match will not stand. We, your constituents, are watching, and our lives are NOT a game.

Introducing the Care Over Cost Campaign

By Mindy Salango, WV CAG Healthcare Organizer

Is your insurance company denying the medication or care that you need? Join us in the Care Over Cost campaign!

Hundreds of millions of people are denied health care every year by their private insurers. As a result, people stay sick or injured and sometimes die. People are stuck with bills they can't pay, take money from rent and food, and go bankrupt. We are mobilizing West Virginians to FIGHT BACK! How can you? Telling your story can help expose the greed of the insurance industry. Personal stories have power, and we can shed light on how insurance claim denials are hurting the people of West Virginia.

Do you want to learn more? We are scheduling a series of Healthcare Town Hall events around the state this summer and fall. Watch our website and social media for more information as it becomes available. Let us know if your community could benefit from a town hall event!



Together, we are working to transform our healthcare system, placing Care Over Cost and people over profit. Your story matters!

Feel free to contact our Healthcare Organizer, Mindy Salango, at mindy@wvcag.org or go to wvcag.soapboxx.com/category/hc4awv_story to record your story.

Building People Power: WV Citizen Action's Organizing Revival

WV Citizen Action staff and leadership are proud to announce that our Organizing Revival is underway in West Virginia! Along with our partner People's Action organizations, we invite you to join us in the Organizing Revival to empower communities by creating infrastructure through training, building a bigger "we," winning issue campaigns, and organizing philanthropy.

Training to Build Power

This collaborative learning space is open to all and is designed to empower you whether you're staff, a member, or a volunteer, to become a strong trainer and leader in the movement.

Date: Saturday, July 27th

Time: 10 am to 4 pm

Location: Kanawha County Public Library
Floor 3, Room 311C, 123 Capitol St.
Charleston, WV 25301

By participating, you will:

- *Gain tools to expand your organization and drive your organizing work*
- *Learn skills to shape your organization's direction to make a lasting impact*
- *Strengthen your ability to train and lead others effectively*

Strong organizers make strong trainers, and vice versa. This training will help you develop the skills you need to grow your organization.

Register online at ppls.ac/PeoplePowerJuly27

Canvassing for Utility Issues - The Rates are Too Damn High!

WVCAG's dedicated staff and volunteers are hitting the streets in seven key towns to engage residents on pressing utility issues. We designed these canvassing efforts to inform and mobilize citizens around the challenges they face with utility services, including affordability, reliability, and transparency. By gathering stories and data directly from the communities, we aim to advocate for fairer utility policies that better serve the needs of West Virginians.

Neighbors Working Together for Energy Justice

Following the canvassing efforts, WVCAG will hold Community Action events in each city. The meetings include a workshop about West Virginia's energy landscape, a conversation about what makes it hard for people to get affordable energy, and a chance to learn more about energy rights and access to affordable energy, like using solar panels and saving energy. Join us for our next community meeting in Martinsburg on June 27th, register online at ppls.ac/CommunityActionMartinsburg.

Why are the bills so dang high?!



Empower West Virginia with Air Quality Monitoring

In response to community concerns about air quality in the Chemical Valley, WVCAG is canvassing around the Kanawha Valley, Huntington, and Parkersburg to place free Purple Air monitors in impacted areas. We're knocking on doors to engage with residents about the importance of air monitoring and distributing air monitors to those in need. This initiative aims to equip communities with the tools and knowledge necessary to track air quality and advocate for a cleaner, healthier environment for themselves and their communities

Healthcare Town Halls: Navigating the Changing Landscape

This summer, WVCAG will host a series of healthcare town halls across the state, with events planned in Huntington, Beckley, Morgantown, and Wheeling. We designed these town halls to connect residents with essential resources and provide the information they need to understand and navigate the evolving healthcare landscape. Topics will include changes in healthcare policy, access to services, and how to advocate for individual and community health needs.

Stay tuned for further information!

HEALTHCARE @WVCAG TOWN HALL

West Edge 1040 Vernon St Suite 1 - Huntington

June 25th from 5:30-7pm

How to navigate the evolving healthcare landscape including changes to Medicaid and how your coverage may be affected

WVCAG
WV CITIZEN ACTION GROUP

Join the Movement!

If you're reading this, we want you to be part of West Virginia's Organizing Revival! Whatever your issue, area of interest, or abilities, your involvement is crucial and there's a place for you in the movement. Together, we can amplify the voices of West Virginia's citizens and strengthen, invigorate, and empower our communities.

For more information on how to get involved, visit wvcag.org or contact our Organizing Director at dani@wvcag.org.

Barbara Fleischauer Honored with Rockefeller Award

By Mindy Salango, WV CAG Healthcare Organizer

Members of WVCAG were recently on hand to celebrate as former Delegate Barbara Fleischauer was honored at the Charleston Women's Club with the West Virginians for Affordable Healthcare Rockefeller award. This distinguished award was given to Barbara in recognition of her lifetime of tireless work improving access to healthcare for West Virginians.

"Barbara Fleischauer served in the WV House of Delegates for over 20 years, where she sponsored and passed important legislation protecting the rights of women and children; expanding health care; advancing civil rights; and improving benefits for veterans and disabled Mountaineers," said Ellen Allen, executive director of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care.

Just a few of Barbara's most notable achievements include capping insulin copays, increasing access to medical care in rural West Virginia, increasing funding and insurance coverage for children with autism, and creating the Office of Oral Health. She's now working with a national organization on GOTV on university campuses across the country. We expect we haven't seen the last of Barbara at the statehouse.



Gary, Mindy, and Kim were honored to be at the event to celebrate one of West Virginia's greatest healthcare heroes. Thank you, Barbara, for your work, and congratulations on such a well deserved award.

Meet Mindy Salango

I am excited to join WVCAG as a Healthcare Organizer. Having worked with WVCAG on a volunteer basis, I look forward to taking on this new full-time role. As a type 1 diabetic who has been forced to ration insulin

due to its high cost, I have first-hand knowledge of just how broken our healthcare system truly is.

In 2021, the federal House Oversight Committee invited me to speak regarding the rising cost of prescription drugs. Later that same year, I had the honor of attending President Joe Biden's first State of the Union address.



My opinion piece for Newsweek Magazine, titled "*I Need Insulin to Stay Alive. It's Gradually Being Priced Out of My Reach*", highlights my personal struggles and the urgent need for change. Visit ppls.ac/InsulinPricing to read the full article.

Alongside my duties at WVCAG, I serve as the Chapter Leader for T1 International in West Virginia, working to advocate for those affected by type 1 diabetes. I live in Morgantown with my fiancé, Paul, our three children – Morgan, Colin, and Izzy – as well as our goddaughter Abi and our beloved cat Luna. I am passionate about working with WVCAG to achieve our shared goal of making healthcare accessible and affordable for everyone.

Meet Jillian Welsh

I'm thrilled to join WVCAG's communications team. During my time with the West Virginia Environmental Council (WVEC), I had the pleasure of working with WVCAG during two legislative sessions. I have

always been impressed by CAG's dedication to empowering citizens and advocating for a better future for all West Virginians. Through my continued work as Communications Coordinator at WVEC, I organize events like E-Day at the WV State Capitol. I also fought against harmful bills like Community Air Monitoring this past session.

I grew up in Massillon, OH, and attended Ohio University, where I studied Visual Communications. During my 13 years in journalism, I also worked as an illustrator



and designer for The Orange County Register and The Columbus Dispatch. Serving my community has always been a priority for me. I volunteered as a Project Leader for the Young Leadership Council's Recycles program in New Orleans, engaging volunteers to cre-

ate a more sustainable community through education and service. My work and service have deeply connected me to the community and its environmental future. Joining the CAG team is an excellent opportunity to continue that commitment. When not causing trouble for the Bad Idea Factory, I am hiking, walking dogs at the local animal shelter, or hanging out with my dog and cats. I look forward to working with all of you to serve West Virginia!

Meet Cassandra Wiley

Hey members! As Communications Assistant, I'm proud to help CAG by making sure that tech speaks well with such a diverse and flexible team as the advocates at WVCAG. My goal is to bring West Virginians engaging, note-worthy information on how to influence the wellness of their community. I strive to bring my best work to the team and every WVian reading.

I grew up in Mason County until I was 6 when my family decided to move around the Southeast U.S. and Great Lakes area for work, ultimately moving back to WV in 2011. I headed straight to Marshall after I finished high school, taking a pause at the beginning of my senior year in 2018 to gain some worldly experience.

Regardless of the chaos in my life, I find myself drawn repeatedly to activism, community building, and intentional tech. I began working with WVCAG in 2021, combining skills in communicating science to the public, public health, and digital communications to get actionable information in the hands of active West Virginians.



Meet Tyler Cannon

Hello, CAG members! I am the new Climate Coordinator for West Virginia Climate Alliance; I prefer male pronouns. I live in Lewisburg, West Virginia, and grew up in Logan, West Virginia. I bring a background of both grasstops and grassroots organizing, project management, and a commitment to climate justice. I have spent years working towards environmental, food and economic justice in different contexts across West Virginia. I am also a Certified Arborist with the International Society of Arboriculture, a skateboarder, whitewater kayaker, trombonist, father and husband.

As a graduate of Marshall University, I studied plant science, horticulture, soil science, anthropology, and geography; this technical background informs and supports my organizing. People in communities impact-



ed by resource extraction and a changing climate are the ones who have both the most understanding of the issues they face. Learning from them and supporting them in taking

action based on their needs is a central tenet of my organizing strategy.

I am excited to hit the ground running! Expect more activity from the West Virginia Climate Alliance in the coming weeks and months. For more information, contact me directly at tyler@wvcag.org.

WV Citizen Action Group
1500 Dixie Street
Charleston, WV 25311

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Keep Us Going and Growing! WV CAG Membership & WV CAEF Support Form

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Individual: ___\$35 Family: ___\$50 Student/Senior: ___\$15

Sustainer: ___\$250 Public Citizen: ___\$500

Enclosed is \$ _____ made payable to WV Citizen Action (WV CAG) (not tax deductible).

Enclosed is \$ _____ made payable to WV Citizen Action Education Fund (WV-CAEF) (tax deductible).

Please mail checks to:

WVCAG or WVCAEF | 1500 Dixie Street | Charleston, WV 25311

You can also donate online at

wvcag.org or wvcaef.org.

Please consider setting up an automatic monthly recurring donation.

Thank you for your support!

