



Capital

Eye

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Compton & Chilton Honored by CAG

Late last month, WV-CAG held its Third Annual Spring Extravaganza at the Coonskin Park Clubhouse. With two previous events now under the board and staff's our collective belt, we successfully fed, entertained and welcomed our closest friends.

When we say staff and board, we mean it. Our board is amazing. After over four months in the planning mode, they seamlessly switched to cooking, shopping, ticket selling, greeting, schmoozing, auctioning and cleaning up modes. What a donation of time, talents, wallets and big hearts.

For those of you unable to make it, you missed a really cool panel of speakers that included Julie Pratt on family safety and security, Jill Miles on consumer protection, Kelly Elswick-Hall on citizens' rights to access to the judicial system, Mary Pearl Compton on good government and Norm Steenstra on the environment and clean elections.

We handed out this year's awards to Delegate Mary Pearl Compton (D-Monroe) and *Charleston Gazette* President Betty Chilton. Mary Pearl Compton is a 14-year House of Delegates veteran and has been a consistent leader on environmental and social justice issues. In presenting the In Defense of Our Democracy award, CAG Development Director Gary Zuckett called Mary Pearl "the conscience of the House of Delegates, willing to expose the good old boy politics."

Betty Chilton accepted the Don Marsh Public Service Award on behalf of the *Charleston Gazette*. The CAG Board of Directors voted to recognize the work of a strong, independent newspaper and its management that encourages its employees to cover the major issues in West Virginia. Presenting the award was Jeri Marsh, widow of former *Gazette* editor Don Marsh.

Donors from across the state gave us great stuff for the silent auction which turned out to be an eclectic jumble bringing in bids ranging from the single to triple figures. Everyone got a great deal. And to cap off the night, we all enjoyed tunes from the Carpenter Ants.

The event was a great success and we more than met our fundraising goals. Over 200 people including senators, delegates, DEP Director Mike Callaghan and Judge Margaret Workman attended.

For Sale: Your Legislature?

by Norm Steenstra

During the last legislative session the CAG lobby team did some “after hours” research observing how lobbyists with expense accounts operate. We went to hotels, bars, and restaurants and watched lobbyists interact with elected officials and their staffs. The project was made more interesting because of the off-the-record conversations with wait staff, bartenders and under-entertained legislators.

To put it bluntly, a lot goes on in Charleston at night. Industry lobbyists have found loopholes, use half truths and we believe sometimes downright fraudulent reporting on how much they spend on legislators and staff. The current ethics law has few teeth and almost no enforcement.

While CAG researchs ethics commission reports over the next few months, we think we’ll uncover some interesting facts on Capital City night life. Lobbyists are required to report legislator names on whom they spend a total of \$25 in a 30 day period. Our guess is that very few lawmakers names will be listed and that, just like environmental laws and overweight trucks, little enforcement of legislative ethics occurs.

Reining in lobbyists is long overdue. Major changes are critical if the progressive agenda has any hope of advancement. Coupled with real campaign finance reform, a stronger enforced law regulating lobbyist activities must become a reality prior to the passage of any other reforms.

New To the Eye?

Is this your first Capital Eye? We expanded our mailing list to include many folks who have not renewed their memberships or made a donation for a while. Why not renew today? We’ll send you this newsletter every month (weekly during the Legislative Session) and keep you up-to-date on issues important to you. Please see page 7 for details!

West Virginia Citizen Action Group (WV-CAG) publishes Capital Eye monthly. You can visit our website at www.wvcag.org, call us at 304-346-5891 or e-mail us at linda@wvcag.org to give us your comments and suggestions and to become a member. Since 1974, WV-CAG has been a nonprofit membership organization dedicated to increasing citizen participation in economic and political decision-making. By educating people about key public interest issues and involving them in the decisions that affect their lives, WV-CAG works for progressive changes in federal, state and local policies - ranging from environmental protection and consumer rights to good government and health care reform. Thank you for your support!

Clean Elections Gets Interim Study

House Judiciary Chair Jon Amores (D-Kanawha) and Senate Judiciary Chair Bill Wooton (D-Raleigh) have expressed interest and support for Clean Elections and the Joint Committee on the Judiciary is slated to study the **Clean Elections Act** during the upcoming interim meetings. A subcommittee and chair will likely be appointed at this month's interim, scheduled for May 19-21, and the real work will begin in June. We'll keep you apprised of details as they develop, but West Virginia is on the road to Clean(er) Elections. WV-CAG's Gary Zuckett, Julie Archer and Norm Steenstra will be working on this important issue.

We Have A New Bottle Bill State!

by Mel Tyree

Hawaii is a gubernatorial signature away from becoming the 11th bottle bill state. On April 26, the bill cleared the Hawaii legislature and went to Governor Cayetano who has previously promised to sign it once the legislature approved it. Barring an extremely unlikely event, Hawaii will be the first state in 20 years (Delaware and Massachusetts were the last states to pass a nickel deposit law back in 1982) to pass a bottle bill. How was Hawaii able to achieve this, given the fact that the beverage industry has spent tens of millions of dollars (30 times what bottle bill supporters have spent over the same period) over the past 20 years defeating bottle bills?

Hawaii's success was the result of the following factors: (1) the bill holds down recycling costs by not requiring bottles to be sorted by brand and grocery stores are relieved from container collection as long as a redemption center is within one mile of the retailer, (2) some last minute reduction in handling fees (from 2 cents to 0.5 cents on certain containers), (3) the state's tourist industry sees litter as a threat to business and (4) Hawaii's Sierra Club made it a major lobbying priority. However, in the end the factor, which broke the inertia, was the massive outpouring of public support the bill received from Hawaii's citizens.

During the final weeks the bill was in the legislature literally thousands of citizens flooded lawmakers offices with e-mail, phone calls, letters and petitions. It can happen here, too, where tourism is a major revenue generator. Once WV's citizenry is focused on an environmental issue (such as out-of-state waste, water quality or banning hazardous waste incinerators) change happens. For more information regarding the many environmental benefits of a WV Container Law go to www.polsci.wvu.edu/ipa. (then click the "Technical Reports Series" link).

Sources: bottlebillhawaii.org & commondreams.org/news2002/0501-12.htm

A New Senate in '02?

by Gary Zuckett

This month's senate primary elections could significantly change that lawmaking body's politics. In many races the real election IS this month's primary. In overwhelmingly Democratic parts of the state, the Democratic primary winner is a shoo-in against a weak or nonexistent challenger in the fall. In fact, off-year primary elections often have bigger turnouts than November's general election.

In the 10th district, Delegate Mary Pearl Compton is running against entrenched incumbent, Senator Anderson. During her 14 years as a delegate, Compton repeatedly defended the average citizen's rights and interests. As chair of the House Health and Human Resources committee she championed CHIP (WV Children's Health Insurance Program), Patient's Bill of Rights and Mental Health Parity.

The senate's primary election has several more worthy challengers coming from the House, noteworthy newcomers, and incumbents we need to reelect. If they all win seats we'll have the most progressive Senate since the early 90's when Lucht, Grubb, Withers, MacNaughton, and Claypole were in the mix. Please do what you can for them.

African American Delegate Charlene Marshall is running in the 13th district that runs through Marion and Monongalia and includes Fairmont and Morgantown. Delegate Randy White is running in the 11th district of Fayette, Nicholas, Clay, Webster, and Upshur counties. Newcomer Wayne Spiggle, a retired doctor and friend of the environment, is setting his sights on the 14th district seat now being warmed by a republican doing nothing for the counties of Taylor, Preston, Barbour, Tucker, Mineral, and parts of Grant and Monongalia.

African American Senate incumbent Marie Redd, from Cabell County's 5th district, faces a tough reelection race because of her progressive voting habits. The state's political machine doesn't like uppity women who vote their values. Huntington, please return this educator to her seat to teach the Senate some civics!

All the candidates on our endorsement list (see other side of this page) deserve your support. Space limitations won't allow an in-depth assessment of all the significant races this primary season. For details on any given race, contact Norm at 346-5891 and he'll fill you in.

P.S. Probably this election's highest profile race is the 2nd US Congressional District seat. The Vice-President, no less, was in town recently to promote "Shirley's" reelection. Former Supreme Court Justice Margaret Workman is battling lawyer Jim Humphreys over the right to challenge the Republican incumbent in the fall. A Workman/Capito race in November is the best shot the Democrats have to take back this nationally significant seat.

Coal Truck Public Hearings Set

by Julie Archer

During the 2002 session, legislators and our governor refused to take leadership on the overweight coal truck problem. In response to calls for a special session, the governor created a panel, comprised of six administration officials and four legislators, to find a compromise on the issue. He has caught criticism for excluding coalfield residents and citizen groups from the panel and rightfully so. Delegate Mike Caputo, who championed our cause during the legislative session, was also excluded. Wise said he wanted a small, relatively apolitical panel, but judging from its make-up we're likely to see another coal industry victory. Of the panel's four legislators, two have direct ties to the coal industry.

The panel is planning a series of public hearings where the public will be able to voice their concerns, but we believe that coal companies and truck drivers will stack the meetings creating a bully atmosphere. On May 3, representatives from CAG and Coal River Mountain Watch addressed the panel and urged it to come up with a format that would allow citizens to voice concerns without being intimidated by others at the hearings. Chairman Browning said that there will be ample security at the hearings and that he will end them if the situation gets out of hand. While we undoubtedly will be outnumbered we hope to have a visible presence at the hearings to get our message out. This issue is about public safety, not economics. No job is worth a child's life. Please attend a public hearing in your area. All hearings begin at 6PM.

- Weir Middle School in Weirton on May 9.
- Nicholas County High School in Summersville on May 16.
- Robert C. Byrd High School in Clarksburg on May 21.
- Elkins National Guard Armory in Elkins on May 23.
- Wyoming East High School in New Richmond on May 28.
- Tug Valley High School near Williamson on June 6.
- **Riverside High School in Quincy (near Charleston) on June 11 (tentative).**
- Madison Civic Center in Madison on June 13 (tentative).

Join WV-CAG, renew your membership or make a donation. **We could use your help!** Please clip and send to: WV-CAG, 1500 Dixie St., Charleston, WV 25311. Remember - it's easy to donate on-line at www.wvcag.org!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Send me future newsletters on-line at: _____

Enclosed please find my contribution of:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$ Other