



# Capital Eye

Volume 3, Issue 11  
August 2004

## WV-CAG Makes First Round of Endorsements

In WV-CAG's first round of political endorsements, Democratic Senator John Kerry was unanimously endorsed for the office of U.S. President. This is probably not a big surprise to many people but a Kerry endorsement by a group co-founded by Ralph Nader reinforces the Board's commitment to "regime change."

Third District Congressman Nick Joe Rahall was endorsed for reelection. The Board also endorsed political newcomer Eric Wells in his campaign to unseat Second District Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito. In mid September WV-CAG will announce our endorsements for statewide and legislative offices.

As you may recall, in our summer fundraising letter we asked our members to participate in a straw vote on whom we should endorse for the Presidency and West Virginia governor. The results are in and proved quite revealing. Based on over a hundred "ballots", a whopping 96% voted to endorse John Kerry. Four percent suggested Ralph Nader should get the endorsement. George Bush did not receive one vote! Is there any other group more committed to regime change out there?

The results of the poll on the question of a gubernatorial endorsement were equally revealing. Almost exactly one-third opted for Democrat Joe Manchin, another third opted for Mountain Party candidate Jesse Johnson and almost one-third suggested "no endorsement." Republican Monty Warner received 3% of the votes.

Obviously there is no clear preference out there. The WV-CAG staff will be mailing out candidate questionnaires next week to all three candidates. To get a better look at where candidates stand on our issues, check out our website ~ [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org). We hope to have their answers posted by mid September.

# Clean Elections: Victories & Challenges

by Julie Archer, [julie@wvcag.org](mailto:julie@wvcag.org)

Over the past year we have celebrated some victories in our effort to advance Clean Elections legislation in West Virginia. During the 2003 interims both the subcommittee and the full Joint Judiciary Committee voted the "WV Public Campaign Financing Act" out of committee without recommendation. This allowed the debate over this much-needed reform to carry over to the 2004 regular session, and led to the bill's passage by the Senate Judiciary Committee. We were also successful in getting an interim study of potential funding sources for publicly financed campaigns.

While this positive momentum encourages us, many challenges lie ahead. Finding a suitable and stable funding mechanism remains central to the debate and is undoubtedly a major hurdle to passage of Clean Elections legislation. Even though a study committee has been appointed to determine which sources could most feasibly be made available it will be difficult to educate and convince legislators that a system of public financing is worth the small amount it would cost and that it might actually save the state money in the long run. Although the state budget director recently told lawmakers that West Virginia has a budget surplus, that surplus is expected to be quickly exhausted in the face of rising Medicaid costs and projected deficits in state pension and Workers Compensation funds.

Another major challenge that could jeopardize our work is the threat of repeal of Clean Elections in Arizona. Special interests, including developers, banks, insurance companies and lobbyists have already spent nearly \$300,000 on a deceptive campaign to get a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot. Their average donation to this effort has been in excess of \$9,000. Last month, Clean Elections advocates challenged the initiative in court on grounds that it violated the Arizona Constitution by posing two separate questions in one measure. A Superior Court judge agreed with Clean Elections supporters, setting the stage for the special interest backed No Taxpayer Money for Politicians to appeal the decision to the Arizona Supreme Court.

In the face of these challenges, we need your help to keep us moving toward our goal of making Clean Elections a reality in West Virginia.

Keep reading for more on what **you** can do to help!

## **How YOU Can Help Bring Clean Elections to West Virginia:**

√ Check the list of members of Select Committee F, the interim committee studying the “WV Public Campaign Financing Act.” If one of them represents you let them know you believe voter-owned, publicly financed elections are a good investment and a good way to revitalize democracy in West Virginia. (A list of committee members and contact information is available at the Clean Elections page of our website, [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org).)

√ Citizens for Clean Elections is looking for at least one person per county to help coordinate a post card campaign to urge legislators to support publicly financed elections in West Virginia. If you would like to help with this effort contact Citizens for Clean Elections coordinator Janet Fout at [ohvec@ezwv.org](mailto:ohvec@ezwv.org) or call 304-522-0246.)

√ Help Clean Elections in West Virginia by keeping Arizona Clean. Donate \$5 (or more) to the Keep Arizona Clean campaign. For details visit our website and follow the links. Thousands of small donations can help stop this special interest-funded attack on Clean Elections.

## **Voter Drive Registers Thousands**

The Mountain State Education & Research Foundation (MSERF), formed last year as WV-CAG's “sister” tax-exempt educational organization, is in the middle of a vigorous non-partisan voter empowerment project. Its goal is to register 8 to 10 thousand new voters in traditionally underrepresented minority and low-income neighborhoods. So far they have 3,100 new voters registered!

If you would like to volunteer to register voters in your area, call Marge for details at MSERF at 304-346-8928.

**Visit us at the West Virginia State Fair, August 13 - 22, in Lewisburg! We'll be registering voters at the CHIP booth and in the crowd, too. Stop by and get registered!**

# A Land(fill) Mark Event

by Linda Mallet, [linda@wvcag.org](mailto:linda@wvcag.org)

We toss around the word “trillion”. The U.S. budget deficit is in the trillions of dollars. Investors work with stock portfolios that total in the trillions. And, since 1972, Americans have wasted over a trillion aluminum cans. We are desensitized to the meaning of “trillion.” Does it really mean anything? Is there really anything we can do about it anyway?

Here’s a way to wrap your mind around it: A trillion aluminum cans would weigh about 17.5 million tons and their scrap aluminum worth about \$21 billion in today’s market. And even things totaling in the **Billions** (especially dollars) still have significance.

If you recycle, you may think aluminum recycling is under control. You probably take some satisfaction knowing aluminum beverage containers lead the beverage container pack in recycling terms, especially when compared to glass and other materials. A lot of people recycle cans - they’re not breakable, they smooch down and you can turn them in at lots of places. This is all still true but not nearly as good as it could be. In 2003 only 44% of the cans sold in the U.S. were recycled - that’s 55 billion cans not recycled! This is especially discouraging when you consider that access to curbside recycling programs has tripled over the last 12 years.

How can we make sure this dubious landmark is not repeated? Support a West Virginia Bottle Bill. Under a bottle bill, West Virginians would recycle a lot more of our beverage containers, including aluminum.

To find out more about how you can help, please visit [www.wvbottlebill.org](http://www.wvbottlebill.org) or call me at 346-5891.

Thanks to the Container Recycling Institute for providing the facts and figures for this article. To read more, visit [www.toolkit.container-recycling.org](http://www.toolkit.container-recycling.org). This site provides information on existing bottle bill legislation and answers lots of questions on how to get new legislation passed.

In the meantime, WV-CAG plans to work with our Bottle Bill sponsors in the 2005 legislative session to advance the bill and raise more awareness. Call today to find out how YOU can help!

**P.S. If you haven’t yet, log on to the website to sign the on-line petition.**

# Touch Screen Controversy

by Julie Archer, [julie@wvcag.org](mailto:julie@wvcag.org)

Touch screens, or DREs (Direct Record Electronic), have caused election problems in jurisdictions nationwide, including votes being inexplicably lost, the disenfranchisement of thousands of voters, and the certification of questionable election results.

Think you are unaffected? The Secretary of State has recommended requiring a voter-verifiable paper ballot for all West Virginia voting systems. Unfortunately, none of the West Virginia's touch screen voting machines currently provide a paper printout, and the final decision to purchase or lease touch screen machines rests, not with the Secretary of State, but with each county commission.

Some counties already use touch screen machines, and specifically, iVotronics, made by Elections Systems & Software. Cabell County has used iVotronics since 2000, and at least four counties – Lewis, Marion, Monongalia and Wayne – recently switched to ES&S machines for early voting. Lewis County is considering discontinuing their use until the problems are resolved. Marion County, on the other hand, will be leasing the machines and expanding their use in November. Their decision to switch to touch screen machines was based, in part, on common misunderstandings about what is required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), and in spite of all the problems and questionable votes associated with their use.

Concerned citizens in Marion and Cabell Counties aren't taking this issue lightly. The Marion County League of Women Voters, county residents and community leaders have urged the commission to reconsider its decision but to no avail (see *the Times West Virginian* coverage at our website's news section). The Huntington League of Women Voters recently held a forum on the security of electronic voting with the Cabell County Clerk, a computer expert from Marshall University and a representative of the Secretary of State's office. Unfortunately, Marion and Cabell County voters are among 31% of the nation's voters in scattered counties across 30 states who will cast ballots on electronic equipment this November.

Requiring a voter-verifiable paper ballot would enable election officials to recover voters' intents and protect election integrity. The legislature is considering requiring a voter-verifiable paper ballot for all West Virginia voting systems. In the meantime, only absentee voters will get a paper ballot in jurisdictions using touch screens.

# Fall Elections Include CAG Board

As a membership organization, WV-CAG must, from time to time, replace retiring board members with fresh faces. The next Board election will be held in mid-November. We're looking for individuals who may want serve on the WV Citizen Action Board.

If you know of anyone who would be interested in working with the most progressive organization in the state, ask them if you can send in their name to be considered by our nominating committee.

Don't be shy! If you have a desire to roll up your sleeves and help WV-CAG become a more effective voice for progressive change in our state, throw your own name in the mix.

Our Board meets 4-6 times a year in Charleston for an evening meeting that generally includes pizza and refreshments. Current WV-CAG members will receive a ballot after the November election.

## Another Way To Help - VOLUNTEER!

As with any non-profit organization, WV-CAG is always looking for a few good volunteers. No matter what your talents, we have a job for you, from light office work to drafting legislation to lobbying to filing. No matter what your schedule, we can find a time that works for you. Even a day a month while we put together this newsletter would be most appreciated! Contact Linda at 346-5891 or linda@wvcag.org today!

### UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP HERE!!

If you like what you see, **why not join WV-CAG today?** If you are already a member, now is a great time to renew your membership or send in an extra donation. Please clip and mail to WV-CAG, 1500 Dixie St., Charleston, WV 25311:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Here's my donation of \_\_\_\$15      \_\_\_\$25 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$100

Other      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send action alerts to my e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

# Events/Announcements

**August 18 - Citizens For Clean Elections** meets at 2pm at the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation (ACT) Building, 600 Leon Sullivan Way, Charleston (next to Capitol Market). Meet coalition partners and get an update on the status of Clean Elections legislation. For more information contact Citizens for Clean Elections coordinator Janet Fout at [ohvec@ezwv.com](mailto:ohvec@ezwv.com) or 304-522-0246.

**September 10-12: WV Environmental Council Fall Convention** at The Mountain Institute at Spruce Knob, Located near Circleville (outside of Elkins, WV). Featuring: Workshops, Music, Outings, Environmental & Sustainable/Small Business Booths, Regional meetings, Silent Auction & more.... **For more information** contact Denise at (304) 346-5905 or [deniseap@earthlink.net](mailto:deniseap@earthlink.net). You can also visit [www.wvecouncil.org](http://www.wvecouncil.org).

## **People's Election Reform Coalition (PERC-WV) to Release Analysis of Contributions in the 2004 Primary Election**

In October, the People's Election Reform Coalition (PERC-WV) will release its third report on campaign contributions made during the West Virginia primary election. The analysis will focus on contributions to legislative and statewide candidates and will compare this year's campaign giving with previous election cycles. Watch future newsletters for highlights.

In the meantime check out PERC's previous reports at our website to see who financed your representatives campaign(s) in past elections. PERC-WV is a joint project of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), Mountain State Education and Research Foundation (MSERF) and WV-CAG.

*West Virginia Citizen Action Group (WV-CAG) publishes Capital Eye during the Legislative Session and throughout the year. You can visit our website at [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org), call us at 304-346-5891 or e-mail us at [linda@wvcag.org](mailto: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!*