



## Our Summer Vacation

by Norm Steenstra, [norm@wvcag.org](mailto:norm@wvcag.org)

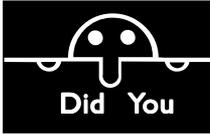
It's been 3 months since our last newsletter and you've probably figured no news means no news. NOT! I can't recall a busier time at WV-CAG than the last 3 months. Protecting Social Security from Bush's scheme to "privatize" it has been a major focus. We've been working with CAG-like groups in 27 other states to defeat the president's pet project. So far the public has heard the message and the president has started to distance himself from the plan. Our Social Security team, led by Gary Zuckett and ably assisted by Marge Michau and Ted Boettner, coordinated more than 40 events across the state ranging from public forums to "greeting" the president in Parkersburg, and hosting 11 birthday parties (see pg. 3). They also met with a very reluctant Congresswoman Capito.

Other federal issues we're working on include protecting Medicaid from Republican cuts and attempting to defeat anti-consumer, anti-victim Bush-backed bills (say that 3 times fast!) on medical malpractice and asbestos. We're also working hard to ensure the reelection of Senator Robert C Byrd, arguably one of the most important elections in the country next year.

Linda Frame (formerly known as Mallet) is continually working to move our "Bottle bill" closer to becoming law. She's held media events, lobbied legislators and is now working to help South Charleston become the most recycling city of its size in the country in a September contest (see pg. 7).

Julie Archer and CAG Board member Dr. Hedda Haning have become the citizen experts on the merits and demerits of the new voting machine options mandated by federal law. They have met with Secretary of State Betty Ireland, several county commissioners and other county officials to warn and advise them on the potential of error and fraud. Julie has also led the charge to seal loopholes in the "527" election laws that allowed Coal Baron Don Blankenship to put \$3.5 million into a campaign to buy himself a supreme court judge. In Julie's spare time she's completing our 5<sup>th</sup> comprehensive analysis of

*(continued on next page)*



Did You

*Capital Eye* comes out weekly during the Legislative Session and bi-monthly throughout the rest of the year. If you have questions or comments about its content, please contact us.

If you'd rather receive the *Eye* on-line, e-mail [linda@wvcag.org](mailto:linda@wvcag.org)

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membership  
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dedicated to  
increasing citizen  
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Our members work  
for progressive  
changes in federal,  
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by educating people  
about key public  
interest issues ranging  
from environmental  
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*(continued from front page)*

special interest money in state elections, to be released late fall. She has also completed a study of coal's role in the 2004 election.

We've been networking with new progressive groups in Parkersburg and Clarksburg, met with Governor Manchin several times on a variety of issues and represented progressive perspectives at three months of legislative interims.

Super volunteer Eleanor Spohr has been working on an analysis of West Virginia media ownership. We believe it will be the most detailed and revealing expose' of how a very few individuals and corporations control our access to the news.

The Monongahela Forest Plan is another CAG priority and we are working with the West Virginia Wilderness Coalition to improve the Plan by creating more wilderness areas and reducing timbering within the Forest. We also worked with Fayette County groups in opposing housing projects in the New River Gorge viewshed.

Federal Issues Coordinator Ted Boettner is producing our media access project that eventually will result in a weekly radio program highlighting CAG values and issues.

Although it's been a full summer, my own work has been a pleasure because I'm privileged to work with such a dedicated and talented group of people, people who work far harder than I do. In addition to a great staff and volunteers we have some wonderful coalition partners. You don't often see or hear WV- CAG's name in the media because much of our work is done in coalition with other progressives. United with groups like The West Virginia Council of Churches, the AFL-CIO, West Virginia Education Association, National Association of Social Workers, WV Trial Lawyers, OVEC, WV Free and the West Virginia Environmental Council, our ability to affect change is multiplied.

One last thing happened since our last newsletter and we think it's a compliment – we wonder if our members will, too. Conservative statewide radio host Hoppy Kerchival called us “the legitimate voice of the Left in West Virginia.” It's nice, but I really don't think we've moved to the left since our founding 32 years ago, it's just that virtually everyone else has moved to the right! Have a great Labor Day weekend and thanks for your continued support!

# Social Security Turns 70

by Gary Zuckett, [garyz@wvcag.org](mailto:garyz@wvcag.org)

On August 14, 1935, FDR signed the Social Security Act. Ever since, the program's enemies have tried to repeal it. The current privatization scheme is just the most recent (and severe) attack on this most successful antipoverty program.

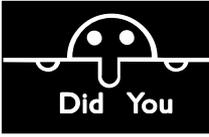
West Virginians United to Protect Social Security (see: [www.Americansforsocialsecurity.com](http://www.Americansforsocialsecurity.com)) helped organize 11 birthday celebrations across the state. South Charleston, Huntington, Wheeling, Morgantown, Clarksburg and the State Fair held parties to honor the program, a small part of the hundreds of parties held across the nation.

VIPs were abundant, including South Charleston Mayor Richie Robb and the mayors of Huntington and Parkersburg. Congressman Nick Rahall gave a rousing speech in Huntington and Attorney General Darrell McGraw was in South Charleston.

The event I attended in the Northern Panhandle was hosted by State Senators Bowman and McKenzie and Delegate Yost. Jack Yost shared his story of how his steelworker's pension, healthcare, and company stock investments were all wiped out by the Wheeling/Pitt bankruptcy. Now all he has left to fund his retirement is Social Security. His message that private accounts are not secure really hit home.

In Wheeling, senior citizen Waneta Acker, retired for 24 years, shared how she first got her Social Security card in 1937. She worked all her life starting in high school at \$1.50/week part-time at a local movie theater. "I never thought that 2 cents they took out of every paycheck back then would ever amount to much," she said, "but it turned out to be the best thing that ever happened."

Missing that day was **Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito** who has steadfastly refused to take a position on Social Security privatization. The only member of West Virginia's congressional delegation to not oppose the privatization plan, she obviously needs some help making up her mind. Please **call her today at 202-225-2711 and ask her to oppose the privatization of Social Security**. This is a critical time for Social Security since the Republican House leadership will likely try to move a Social Security Privatization bill when it reconvenes very soon.



Social Security  
Factoid: It is  
also known as  
the **Old Age,  
Survivors  
and  
Disability  
Insurance**  
program  
(OASDI), in  
reference to its  
three  
components

# Mon Forest Needs Your Help

by Ted Boettner, [ted@wvcag.org](mailto:ted@wvcag.org)

Earlier this month, the West Virginia Forest Service released the Monongahela National Forest Plan, which is designed to balance the goals of recreation, logging, and wildlife conservations. These plans are typically released every 10 to 15 years – the first one was adopted in 1986 –and can significantly impact the Mon's course for the next 20 years and beyond. When the first draft was put together in 1985 it offered little in the way of conservation, however the public was able to radically change many of the detrimental provisions of the plan with forceful public pressure and organization.

The new draft plan ([www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/plan\\_revision/plan\\_revision.htm](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/plan_revision/plan_revision.htm)) contains many regressive measures that would open thousands of acres of previously protected roadless areas to logging and only recommend a small fraction of the Mon's remaining wild areas for wilderness protections. The plan would open all or parts of at least nine of the 16 backcountry areas to logging and road building.

The draft plan contains four plans labeled as alternatives 1, 2, 3, and 4. Alternative #1 offers no changes to the current plan and Alternative #4 offers no new Wilderness and maximum logging. The Forest Service's Preferred Alternative is #2, which rolls back protections for roadless areas, fails to recommend adequate new wilderness areas. According to The West Virginia Wilderness Coalition (WVWC), **only Alternative 3**, with changes, goes the furthest in recommending new wilderness areas and protecting the Mon's remaining special wild places. It adds 99,000 acres of new wilderness and is the WVWC's preferred starting point for discussion.

Since the report's release, the WVWC and other groups have launched a campaign against Alternative #2 and are asking for your comments. Their goal is 2,000 comments by the November 14, 2005 deadline. Please visit [www.wvwild.org](http://www.wvwild.org) for more information or send your comments to:

Monogahela National Forest  
Forest Plan Revision  
200 Sycamore Street  
Elkins, WV 26241



The Mon National Forest cover parts of nine counties in eastern West Virginia—Nicholas, Greenbrier, Webster, Randolph, Pocahontas, Tucker, Preston, Grant, Pendleton.

# Media Reform Important Step Toward Change

by Dr. Hedda Haning, WV-CAG Board Member

There are so many issues that need attention that we progressives hardly know where to turn first. Personally, health access issues have been on my front burner, but then there is the environment, civil liberties, war and peace, gender equity, global warming, economic justice, over-population, etc. etc. all crowding the back burners. I don't know about you, but my stove isn't that big. Then I had an epiphany: We will never get anywhere on any of these if we cannot be heard.

There are 3 basic things we must accomplish if we are truly to live in a democracy. CAG is already working on getting money out of the voting process so that every citizen truly has one vote and that vote isn't trumped by corporate money—clean elections. We are striving to be sure the votes are tallied as voted—a voter verified paper ballot. To complete the trilogy, we must be sure we have an informed electorate. As Thomas Jefferson said, “Information is the currency of democracy.” To understand our concerns one must realize that the vast majority of major media at all levels, including all technologies, is in the hands of 6 conglomerates, and that the same can be said for advertising which controls the content of our consumer driven media. The progressive voice is rarely heard.

To that end, the CAG board has decided to build a coalition that will work toward diverse, local, accessible and independent media through which the many and varied voices of West Virginia, the nation and the world can be heard. Our guiding principle is that an open, factual and fully informative media, operating in the public interest, is a fundamental requirement for a functioning democracy. Circumstances will dictate the precise paths we will take. We will produce our own liberal radio message; support public broadcasting; support efforts to bring West Virginians universal access to high speed broadband connectivity; and support enabling legislation in Congress for Low Power FM radio, and then build our own when it passes. Our natural partners in these endeavors will be any underserved local group needing a voice, any progressive group wanting to be heard, and any activist needing a forum to educate the public. We hope you will all join and support us.

*“If those in charge of our society - politicians, corporate executives, and owners of press and television - can dominate our ideas, they will be secure in their power.*

*They will not need soldiers patrolling the streets. We will control ourselves.”*

*-Howard Zinn, historian and author*

# Municipal Broadband Vital for West Virginia

by Ted Boettner, [ted@wvcag.org](mailto:ted@wvcag.org)

Within 5 to 10 years, broadband (high-speed) Internet technology could replace dial-up modems as the standard means of Internet connection. As one business leader put it, “Broadband is to a 21st century community what electricity, water and paved roads were to a community at the start of 20th century. It is an essential infrastructure.”

While President Bush has said the nation must have “universal, affordable” broadband service by 2007 and that a broadband network is a “great opportunity” for any community, the U.S. ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in the world in broadband services. Having wide access to affordable broadband services will be essential to West Virginia’s economic growth, healthcare, and education. West Virginia towns and rural communities that don’t have affordable broadband access will lose jobs and be on the wrong side of a growing “digital divide.”

Since most statewide telecommunication companies, like Verizon, charge either exorbitant monthly fees for broadband access or deem certain towns and neighborhoods to be unprofitable, municipalities will have to play a vital role in the universal deployment of broadband services. This is especially true in West Virginia where 50 of our 55 counties are considered rural.

Municipalities play a significant role in building and maintaining critical infrastructure, such as sewer networks, schools (not to mention new ballparks), and hospitals. As broadband becomes a necessary utility for commerce, education and healthcare, the public necessity for affordable and extensive access to broadband services will increase and be pivotal to West Virginia’s future.

The fight for broadband access is becoming fierce. On the federal level, Sens John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) introduced a bill to specifically permit municipalities to offer low-cost broadband service, “The Community Broadband Act of 2005” (S. 1294). Meanwhile, the Senate and House have introduced bills antipodean to the McCain and Lautenberg bill and many states around the country have banned municipal broadband projects.

No anti-community Internet bills have come out of the West Virginia legislature. Earlier this year Sen. John Unger proposed a bill (S. 740) designed to encourage deployment of broadband by municipalities. Verizon effectively lobbied to kill the bill, and the House and Senate introduced resolutions calling for a study of the broadband issue. So far neither have come to a vote.

iTown Communications, a small business in Vienna, Virginia led by West Virginia native Keith Montgomery, has launched a statewide advanced broadband project called “West Virginia First” to create Local Community Public-Use Networks

(LCPN). These networks aim at developing public-private partnerships with local communities and the West Virginia State Development Office to create an advanced broadband infrastructure that will encourage low prices and a border range of services, especially for non-urban areas.

So far West Virginia First's initial phase is focused on Beckley-Bluefield and Wood County, despite heavy reluctance from incumbent monopolies, and future projects will focus on the Eastern Panhandle. West Virginians need to encourage their communities to establish affordable, accessible municipal broadband. If telecommunications giants have it their way, many West Virginians will never be able to afford it.

## Get Your Can To CAG

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

Not surprisingly, handing people cash when they recycle has been getting their attention. We found that out earlier this month in Morgantown when we collected over 6,000 containers in just over 3 hours. We hope to top that this month in South Charleston.

Why are we giving out money? To show people how a West Virginia bottle bill will increase recycling. Almost everyone who "redeems" his or her cans for the dime also signs the Bottle Bill petition. While some are just in it for the cash, others recycle religiously and wish others would do the same. They agree a 10-cent incentive will help.

In September we will help spread word about the benefits of a Bottle Bill and try to bring national recognition to our area as well. With the support of Mayor Richie Robb, WV Citizen Action has entered South Charleston in a national contest sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. The city recycling the most aluminum beverage cans between **September 1 and 16** wins \$5,000. The city using the most creative way wins another \$5,000.

Help us out – **bring your aluminum cans to the South Charleston Community Center** (on Jefferson Road near the State Police offices). There will be a city truck available **24 hours a day** where you can drop off your cans. If you can't get your cans there, contact me and we'll try to pick them up (or, as this article title alludes – bring your cans to CAG at 1500 Dixie Street in Charleston). It's just for a two week period and every can counts.

We will use this event to raise awareness for the Bottle Bill... we are still waiting for it to be taken up in the interims and legislators will be back in town September 7. Please call them and ask them to support this legislation.

For more information, visit [www.wvbottlebill.org](http://www.wvbottlebill.org) or contact me at [linda@wvcag.org](mailto:linda@wvcag.org) or 346-5891. Thanks!

# Urge Counties to Choose Optical Scan

*by Juile Archer and Hedda Haning*

The deadline for West Virginia counties to have voting equipment compliant with the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) is fast approaching and **now is the time to contact your county clerk and commissioners to urge them to choose optical scan systems**. It's clear from our research and from news reports that operating and initial deployment costs are higher for direct record electronic (DRE) or touch screen machines than for precinct-based optical scan systems.

In Florida's Miami-Dade County, election officials recently recommended scrapping its new \$24.5 million DRE system in favor of optical scanners. Much higher than expected operating costs and the exponential increase in operational headaches make it more cost-effective to scrap the system than to keep it.

Please contact your county clerks and commissioners and urge them to choose an optical scan system over DREs. Contact information is available at [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org). Letters to the editor are also helpful!

## **Reasons to choose optical scan systems over DREs:**

- **The optical scan ballot is the voter verified paper ballot.** It can be reviewed before it is cast, and is available for recounts. Nothing could be simpler.

- The cost of equipping each precinct with a single ballot marking device and a single precinct scanner is **considerably less** than equipping an average precinct with touch screen voting machines.

- Most West Virginia voters and election officials currently use and are already familiar with optical scan ballots.

- Counties using optical scan equipment can meet the HAVA accessibility requirements by adding just one ballot marking device per precinct. Think of it as an automated magic marker designed to provide privacy and accessibility to voters with disabilities.

- Counties can insure against over and under votes (as HAVA requires) by having a ballot scanner in each precinct.

- An optical scan system requires fewer machines to distribute on Election Day. Fewer poll workers are needed and storage is much easier.

- A touch screen voting system will not reduce printing costs since paper ballots must still be available for absentee and provisional voters. They are also needed in case touch screen machines fail to boot up or there is an extended power outage.

# The Real Friends of Coal

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

As we go to press, PERC-WV, a joint project of the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC), WV-CAG and its sister organization, the Mountain State Education and Research Foundation (MSERF), is putting the finishing touches on a full-length report on coal industry involvement in West Virginia political campaigns.

Using the 2004 data and data from previous election cycles, the report details the contributions coal interests have made from 1996 to 2004 and gives examples of favorable legislation and other perks that the industry has received during that time. We hope this in-depth analysis will be a powerful tool to help illustrate the influence the coal industry wields over our political process. For a copy of the finished report, e-mail [julie@wvcag.org](mailto:julie@wvcag.org).

For a sneak preview of some of the report's highlights visit our website to download copies of the handouts PERC-WV prepared for the July 30th mobilization and rally against mountaintop removal organized by Friends of the Mountains. The handouts expose the "Real Friends of Coal"—elected officials who have received the most coal contributions from 1996 to 2004 – and summarize the amount of coal money that went into various races during the 2004 elections cycle. PERC-WV's analysis revealed that **coal interests contributed nearly \$1.7 million to state political campaigns in 2004**. "Coal's Investment Portfolio" highlights top industry contributors. This includes individuals, as well as companies who gave tens of thousands of dollars to candidates, by bundling contributions from company executives and employees and their spouses.

In addition to our report focused the coal industry, in late fall PERC-WV will release its 2004 Election Cycle Report, its 5th comprehensive analysis of special interest money in our state elections.

## Bless You, Drew & Thank You

Longtime WV-CAG member and social activist Drew Forrester passed away last year. This spring we learned that Drew had bequeathed us with an extremely generous gift. Drew's donation helped us through some tough financial times and enabled us to launch our new Media Access Project. He also made similar gifts to three other organizations with whom we work closely. The Highlands Conservancy, the ACLU, the West Virginia Environmental Council and WV-CAG will all have their efforts strengthened because of Drew's gift of support.

# Important Events

## Washington War Protest March Saturday September 24<sup>th</sup>

A growing number of WV-CAG members are planning on attending the War Protest event in Washington D.C. We are trying to coordinate buses, carpools and overnight accommodations. If you're thinking about being part of the growing momentum to expose the folly of US policy in Iraq by being part of the demonstration, give us a call at 346-5891.

## Important Kanawha County Commission meeting September 15<sup>th</sup>

Perhaps the most important meeting you can attend this fall is a public hearing to obtain citizen/voter input on the types of new voting machines the county will purchase. The state's most populous county will likely set the standard for many others. WV-CAG strongly recommends the optical scan system because its ballots are voter-verifiable and the system is both reliable and cost effective. Help ensure our elections are unlike those in Ohio and Florida and represent the actual vote of the people. The hearing will be **Thursday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at 5PM** in the County Courthouse at 407 Virginia St. Call Julie Archer for more information.

## WVEC Fall Conference

West Virginia Environmental Council's 17th Annual Fall Conference. Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup> - through Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup> Camp Frame, Hedgesville, WV (near Berkeley Springs in the eastern panhandle). Conference includes: Workshops, excursions, music, booths and more. Registration: \$10 adults, \$5 students, children 12 and under attend free. Lodging: additional small fee and includes bunk beds and camping available on site. More info available at [www.wvecouncil.org](http://www.wvecouncil.org)

### *First Fridays*

## WV-CAG Office

Mark it on your calendar - the first Friday of every month, WV-CAG will host an alternative to "Happy Hour." Join us for light snacks, stimulating conversations and an opportunity to meet fellow WV-CAG members.

Do you have a good book, video or DVD that you'd like to pass along? Bring it and trade it with someone.

First Fridays are free but please BYOB.

# Thanks So Much!

Our efforts to expose and reduce the influence of special interests over our elected officials would not be possible without the support of our members. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who rose to the occasion and gave generously to help us raise the \$25,000 we needed to meet the challenge posed to us by the Piper Fund. **We made it!** Your contributions and the matching funds we will receive from Piper will allow us to continue our election reform work and to spread the word about how we can change the way we “do” politics in West Virginia. It’s gratifying to know that so many of you value and support the work we are doing. **Thank you!**



**Please renew your membership or send a donation.**

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

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

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

Clip and mail with your check to West Virginia Citizen Action Group, 1500 Dixie St., Charleston, WV 25311

**NEW! Now you can donate on-line at [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org)!!!!**

**THANKS!**

