



In This Issue:

PERC Report Hits Newsstands

Taxation Gets Our Representation

Social Security "Reform" - It's Back?

Less Fill For Landfills

If You Care Enough

Are you feeling Angry? Having trouble recognizing what this country has become? Frustrated over the value shifts that the right wing has orchestrated over the past 5 years? You name it: civil liberties, taxes, the environment, individual freedoms, health care, foreign policies? Well, you are not alone and we want to prove it to you. On Saturday, August 26th, hundreds of West Virginians are gathering in Charleston to express their collective disgust for what our country has become.

WV-CAG is a founding member of a new grassroots and grass tops coalition called West Virginians United for Social and Economic Change. New, progressive leadership within some of the largest state labor groups, WV-CAG, environmental and social justice groups, religious organizations and peace activists have begun working together on social and economic issues. Now is the time for us to go public and show Washington and the Statehouse that Progressive- Liberal values are alive and that we are getting organized.

Please take the gamble of giving up an August Saturday to come together with people of shared values from across the state. We promise a few short speeches, a short "march through downtown Charleston and a chance to hear a major speech by our senior US Senator. There is also a special "labor night" at the new ball park and some good musical entertainment. If you are a CAG member, call us and we may be able to line up free overnight accommodations. West Virginians United realizes that we must indeed become united and organized to gear up for whatever opportunities we will face in 2008. Come and help us become part of that process.

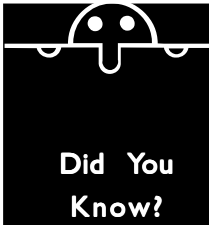
Take Back America

Rally and March:

Saturday, August 26, 2006 at 2 PM

Byrd Federal Bldg, Charleston

Bring your banners, flags, signs



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

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W V - C A G
was founded in 1974
as a non-profit
membership
organization
dedicated to
increasing citizen
participation
in economic and
political decision-
making.

Our members work
for progressive
changes in federal,
state, and local policies
by educating people
about key public
interest issues ranging
from environmental
protection and
consumer rights to
good government &
health care reform.



**To become a
member or to
send comments
and suggestions,
visit**

**www.wvcag.org,
call us at
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Retirement Security Forums Focus on Part D & Social Security

by Gary Zuckett, garyz@wvcag.org

WV-CAG and AFL-CIO are partnering this summer (through the West Virginians United Coalition) to present public educational forums each week on how to fix the Medicare Part D Prescription Drug program and warning that the fight continues to protect Social Security from the next privatization attack. Our road show will include stops in Clarksburg, Morgantown, Hinton, Parkersburg, Fairmont, and Elkins. Please visit www.wvcag.org's calendar page for more details or call us.

One feature of these Forums is the showing of the Families USA video "The Problems with the Medicare Drug Program – and How to Fix Them" narrated by Walter Cronkite. This short but hard-hitting DVD makes an impression on all who view it. Contact us if you'd like a Fix Part D packet complete with DVD to show to your local senior center or civic group.

CAG is looking for seniors who have fallen into the "Donut Hole" in Part D, during which they must pay full retail price for prescriptions until catastrophic coverage kicks in after their drug costs exceed \$5,100. If you or someone you know is in the "Donut Hole" contact us right away so we can tell their story. Call us at 346-5891 or 1-866-WVB-FAIR.

The big push to privatize Social Security last year was a complete failure. However, there is so much money in the SS Trust Fund that Wall Street won't quit in its attempts to raid it. As recently as June 27, 2006, Bush stated, "Now is the time for the Congress and the President to work together to reform Medicare and reform Social Security... If we can't get it done this year, I'm going to try next year. And if we can't get it done next year, I'm going to try the year after that."

Watch for Social Security to come back as an election issue this fall...

WVCAG: from Archer to Zuckett

by Norm Steenstra, norm@wvcag.org

I receive a lot of compliments on my staff. Arguably they are as fine a collection of progressive talents as any in our 32-year history. It is hard for CAG members to get a handle on the wide range of issues we are working on at any given time so I thought that I'd take you on a CAG tour from A to Z.

Julie Archer: Bright, focused, hard working and a bit anal.

Julie is putting the finishing touches on our 5th "PERC REPORT" that details the role of special interest money in state politics. She has pored over every election report by every legislative and statewide candidate. She also serves as our liaison with the anti mountaintop removal community and on the State Advisory Committee on regulating overweight coal trucks. Julie is the lead lobbyist on Clean Elections. She coauthored the bill, was as responsible as anyone in the state for getting new laws passed to require paper trails for electronic voting, and lobbied for the nation's first law regulating "527" groups like Don Blankenship's 2004 abusive smear campaign. Julie also is our resident expert on government ethics, voting machines and multiple dog management.

Ted Boettner: Intense, youthful, intellectual, hard worker, resident egghead.

Ted's goal is to make himself (and our sister group, MSERF) the authority on progressive state tax policy. He works on federal issues such as budget, Internet access, and Social Security reform and is our representative to West Virginians United, working on social and economic justice issues in the state. Ted is very interested in economic development issues and increasing the minimum wage. Since his narrow defeat in the primary, he has had at least 3 job offers and our goal is to keep him here as long as possible. His secret desire is to be photographed with his Congresswoman while wearing his duck costume.

Linda Frame: organized, efficient, adept at tactful nagging.

You may think of Linda as the Bottle Bill Guru but she's also so much more. She's our *Eye* editor, e-mail list server and membership database manager, and generally keeps CAG's trains running on time. Currently she is working with the Kanawha County Commission to coordinate a series of public forums on recycling and solid waste issues. She is gearing up to lobby for the bottle bill, which in large part she wrote. If you've been to our annual Spring Fundraiser at Coonskin Park and marveled at how it works out so well- that's Linda's baby, too.

Marge Michau: Everybody's older sister, right arm. Hostess extraordinaire.

She is often the first voice you hear when you call CAG. She keeps our homey office, well homey. Picture an event, be it a rally, board meeting, fundraiser or public forum and it is Marge who makes it happen. She helps out on every issue "de jour" and was the key person in 2004 when we registered 8,000 new voters and is
(continued on page 7 - see "A to Z")

MSERF Tackles WV “Tax Modernization Project”

by Ted Boettner, ted@wvcag.org

Earlier this year Governor Manchin launched his “Tax Modernization Project” with the goal of identifying potential state and local tax reforms. To accomplish this task Manchin put together a project work group, made up of about 15 state tax department officials and two university professors, and has elicited suggestions from stakeholders across the state – including MSERF.

MSERF partnered with Rick Wilson from American Friend Service Committee and formed a diverse coalition of over 25 organizations. Each participating organization endorsed a statement of fair tax principles and policy suggestions drafted by Wilson that aimed at protecting education, vulnerable families, infrastructure, revenue-neutrality, and encouraging investment and entrepreneurship.

On July 5, the day before Gov. Manchin held his Tax Summit in Charleston, our coalition had a very successful press conference. We had over 20 coalition members in attendance, not to mention many members of the media. However, the best part was the next day. We had a large front page article in the *Charleston Gazette* outlining our policy positions, which helped our group set the debate as we headed into the Tax Summit that morning.

The summit included over 200 people representing business, labor, consumers, seniors, and other trade groups. (Here is the breakdown of the ‘stakeholders’ who signed up for the Tax Summit by interest group: government officials = 49, Elected Officials = 30, Business = 79, Professional (mostly accounting firms) = 18, non-profit = 23, education = 17, corporate law firms (can be counted as business) = 15, labor = 5, medical (some business) = 8, press = 2.) In mid November, lawmakers will be asked to “modernize” the state tax structure at a special session and what happens will depend heavily on the recommendations of the West Virginia Tax Modernization Work Group and other stakeholders around the state.

The West Virginia State Tax Department has urged West Virginians to visit their website at www.state.wv.us/taxdiv and complete the online Tax Modernization Project Informational Questionnaire. Information gathered from the questionnaire will be utilized in developing the team’s report and recommendations. It’s important to recognize that most of the input will most likely come from the business community and not from individual taxpayers. Currently, MSERF is working on a guide to help people navigate the questionnaire. It will be up on our website soon, so be sure to check it out at www.mserf.org.

As we head into the fall, tackling these tax reform issues will be a major part of MSERF’s agenda. If you have any suggestions or questions, please send them to me at ted@wvcag.org or call 346-5891 or 1-866-WVB-FAIR (toll-free) .



More than half of the 99 billion cans sold in the U.S. last year were landfilled or incinerated. This means new cans must be produced using virgin materials. One-third of the primary aluminum produced worldwide uses coal-generated electricity.

Speak Out On Recycling

by Linda Frame, linda@wvcag.org

CAG works on a variety of environmental issues and there's one on which we can all have an immediate impact. We can all reduce the trash we send to the landfill. Increased recycling and litter prevention are goals we can all can work toward in a variety of ways. Years ago our legislature saw the worthiness of these goals for itself when it passed the West Virginia Recycling Act, mandating a recycling goal of 30% by 2000 and 50% by 2010.

With all this in mind, CAG is teaming up with the Kanawha County Commission to hold public hearings on solid waste issues in our community. These hearings will take place at three locations around the county with the kick-off on September 13 at the Kanawha County Planning Commission Meeting.

Citizens can present their ideas to the Commission which will in turn present them to the Kanawha County Commission and ultimately the state senators and delegates representing the county. Come and help Kanawha County take a proactive stand in reaching this goal. For more information, contact Linda at 346-5891 or visit our calendar at www.wvcag.org.

Bottle Bill To Get Another Look

by Linda Frame, linda@wvcag.org

This fall the legislature will again study the WV Container Recycling and Litter Control Act, AKA Bottle Bill, during its interim process. While the bill was selected for study last year as well, the subcommittee to which it was assigned did not take up the issue until the final hours leading up to the regular session. We hope the bill will get a more lengthy review this year.

With an opportunity to bring in representatives from industry and activists from Bottle Bill states we can show why such legislation has worked so well in other states for decades.

We'll keep you posted. To find out more, please visit www.wvbottlebill.org.

PERC-WV Makes Recommendations to Improve Elections

by Julie Archer, julie@wvcag.org

Since 1996, the People's Election Reform Coalition (PERC), a joint project of WV-CAG, the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition and WV-CAG's sister organization, Mountain State Education and Research Foundation (MSERF), has been monitoring campaign finance in West Virginia and issuing reports on its findings. Although PERC uses its research to underscore problems, it also offers solutions. In addition to adopting Clean Elections, our recommendations include:

Adequately funding the Secretary of State's Election Division. While significant improvements have been made since 2004, adequate funding to ensure effective oversight and candidate compliance with campaign finance disclosure laws remains a critical need.

Mandatory electronic filing of campaign finance reports. Electronic filing would streamline filing and oversight, and make it possible to develop a searchable on-line database of contributors to West Virginia political campaigns.

Closer monitoring of how candidates spend "excess funds." Legally, candidates can only transfer monies from their campaign account to another after an election, when the law allows liquidation of "excess funds." However, a loophole exists where a candidate may indefinitely hold funds in a prior campaign account. Nothing in the law prevents candidates from using such accounts as a personal PAC.

Additional disclosure of lobbying activities, including compensation paid to lobbyists. Full disclosure of lobbyist salaries would provide a more adequate picture of what special interest are willing to pay to influence public policy. Additionally, legislators should be required to disclose potential conflicts of interest by revealing all investment property they own and the occupation of their spouse.

We plan to meet with Secretary of State Betty Ireland to discuss our recommendations and how we might work together to advance these and other reforms aimed at improving our electoral process in West Virginia.

The 2004 PERC report will be available at www.wvcag.org in the near future. For more information on who contributed to your legislators or to request a hard copy of the report, please contact Julie at 346-5891 or julie@wvcag.org

(“A to Z” - continued from page 3)

coordinating our ‘06 efforts as well. Our “First Friday” social events are a huge success entirely because of her hostess skills and hard work. She is also our “details” liaison in our coalition with West Virginians United.

Gary Zuckett: calm, wise, steady, needs afternoon naps because he works late.

He’s the guy I’ve gone to for the past 15 years to help me separate good ideas from not so good ideas. Currently he’s working a lot on federal issues such as prescription drugs and Social Security. As our resident authority on Universal Health care, he represents us on several coalitions. Gary always has double-digit irons in the fire. In his spare time he lobbies the legislature on victims’ rights, consumer protection and just about every other important issue. His calm, laid-back manner makes him the ideal soother of clashing egos that can occur in coalition politics.

An issue on which we are all working is a corn bread and bean dinner on July 26 at the same time a very rich local politician is hosting a fundraiser for a certain congresswomen. The \$4,200-a-couple gala’s special guest will be Laura Bush’s husband George. Our dinner only costs \$4.20, with all proceeds going to the new veterans’ hospital that Imus is building in New Jersey.

Well, that’s a quick look at the staff. When you have a team that works well together, likes each other and has the work ethic and values that these 5 people have, you’ve got something very special. We work so many issues that it’s hard to describe what were up to. Keeping this staff together is my goal and we need financial support from our members to do so. Please, if you haven’t renewed your membership or contributed lately these are tight times for us.



We Need Your Support!
We can’t do it without you !

Please renew your membership or send a donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

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

Donate safely and securely on-line at www.wvcag.org!!!!

THANKS!