



Rally for Health Care a Big Success

by Gary Zuckett, garyz@wvcag.org

Wednesday's rally for Health Care, Jobs and the Economy displayed the majority's support for "getting the job done" on health reform and then moving on to fix the economy and create jobs. Around 200+ citizens gathered in the lower rotunda of the State Capitol (in between Children's' Day activities) to hear speakers from faith, labor, and social justice groups and a special address from U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller.

Other speakers at the rally were: Rev. Dennis Sparks, WV Council of Churches; Gaylene Miller, WV AARP; Perry Bryant, WV for Affordable Health Care; Larry Matheney, WV AFL-CIO; Sam Hickman, WV NASW; Rev Watts, HOPE Community Development; Jan Lilly-Stewart, WV Fair Shake Network; and yours truly. A big thanks goes out to all the speakers and groups who made the event successful!

The media came all out for the event, including all the local TV and most of the print news. See www.wsaz.com/news/headlines/84609317.html for a video clip of the event.

A timely Washington Post poll now states that nearly 2/3 of Americans want Congress to finish the job of passing comprehensive health reform. Please contact Senators Rockefeller and Byrd and your Congressmen (don't bother with Representative Capito as she is not for universal health care) to ask them to continue working on passing this critical reform. Until we pass health reform that helps control the double-digit inflation of health spending, we won't be able to fix the rest of the economy since health costs right now consume more than one of every six dollars circulating in our country!



U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller Speaks at Health Care Rally – Wednesday, February 17, 2010 – State Capitol

Parliamentary Rules Mean Life or Death for Bills

by Gary Zuckett, garyz@wvcag.org

Monday, February 22 is the 41st day of the 2010 Legislative Session, the last day to introduce bills. This is a milestone in the session, since the number of bills being considered then begins to shrink as they are killed off in committees or on a floor vote. The next road mark is set for the 47th day (which falls on a Sunday this year), in which a bill must have moved out of its assigned committees in its house of origin in order to be read on three separate days and passed over to the other side (Senate or House). We've not heard any mention of the lawmakers working next Saturday so in essence, this would mean that Friday, February 26 is really the "move it out" target date. The last day for a bill to pass out of its house of origin is March 3 - bills that don't make this hurdle are thrown into the recycle bin.

I know this is somewhat arcane information but it really means life or death for many of our bills that do not have the benefit of leadership coddling which can suspend the rules and move bills outside of their normal calendar.

All this is a countdown to the end of the Session – midnight on March 13. From now on the heretofore slow pace of activity begins to speed up like the proverbial snowball rolling down the hill. The last days of each session are usually a flurry of activity as deals are cut and bills are amended into others to keep them alive. This is when a citizen lobbyist really needs to be on top of things as conference committees meet in the backrooms or on the floor to decide the fate of legislation.

Get Your News Today – and Keep Calling In! If we don't have your e-mail address, it will be hard to keep you up-to-date with the quick changes during these last few weeks. Please send a note to linda@wvcag.org to get on our electronic update list. This also gets you an e-mail copy of this newsletter into your inbox the same day it's put in the mail.

Remember, we're depending on concerned citizens like you to continue contacting your lawmakers about the issues that matter. Believe it or not, they pay attention to the voters back home when making their decisions. Our job down here is so much more effective when you call in to back us up! Voters are the ones who "employ" the lawmakers and we must make sure they are doing their jobs.

**"Until my last breath ... I will be fighting for health care for all Americans."
U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller, 2/17/2010**

Capital Eye is published by WV-Citizen Action, a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1974 and 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. Learn more about us at www.wvcag.org

Finish Implementing the Federal Unemployment Modernization Act

Under current law, part-time workers (20% of the modern workforce) who are laid off cannot draw Unemployment Compensation benefits unless they look for a full-time job. This is true even though they pay into the Unemployment Compensation System.

This is not fair to:

- Full-time students working part-time to put themselves through school.
- People who can only find two part-time jobs and get laid off from one.
- A spouse/second breadwinner who works weekends to help the family make ends meet.
- Women who make up 42% of the work force, though 70% of them work part-time.
- Minorities who disproportionately work part-time jobs.

Under current law, a victim of domestic violence, who leaves a job to be safe, cannot draw unemployment benefits while the victim looks for a safe job because the law says the victim left work "voluntarily".

Under current law, when a worker starts looking for work after caring for a sick relative the worker cannot draw unemployment benefits because the law says they left their last job "voluntarily" to care for a sick family member.

Under current law, if one spouse is transferred to another city or state, the "trailing" spouse who moves to keep the family together cannot draw unemployment benefits when they start looking for work in the new location, again because they left their last job "voluntarily".

Updating this law, and making these workers eligible for benefits, will draw down \$22 million in federal funds for WV (and maybe more if other states do not make the same changes) into the fund that pays these benefits. That's enough to pay for estimated the 3% increase in benefits for 3, 4 or maybe 5 years -- well after economists expect the recession will be over.

Times have changed since the Unemployment Compensation Insurance Program was enacted in the 1930's. Modernization is necessary. We can't afford to continue having an out-of-date 8-track tape Unemployment Insurance Program operating in an iPod world.

Contact your elected representatives and urge them to support passage of HB 4332/SB 569, implementing the Unemployment Insurance Modernization Act and drawing down \$22 million in federal funds for West Virginia.

Volunteers Needed! If you can help staff the WV-CAG table at E-Day this Wednesday, February 24 at the State Capitol, please call Linda at 304-346-5891. We can work around whatever available time you have – thanks!!

Subcommittee Advances Public Financing Pilot Project

by Julie Archer, julie@wvcaq.org

On Thursday, House Judiciary Subcommittee B completed work on HB 4130 which would establish a pilot project to provide public campaign financing to state Supreme Court candidates. The subcommittee made some changes. Most significantly, committee members objected to requiring those who use our courts to pay an additional fee to help fund the program.

These "fair administration of justice" fees would have ranged from \$10 for filings in magistrate court to \$100 on each appeal and petition filed in the Supreme Court and would have provided an estimated \$1.2 million annually, accounting for as much as half of the program's funding.

Otherwise, HB 4130 is in good shape and we will work to get this funding restored in the House Finance Committee, assuming the House Judiciary Committee sees its way clear to recommend the pilot project. HB 4130 was on the committee's agenda this morning, but they spent all their available time on other bills. The committee will meeting again on Monday morning, so we hope we will have some good news to report next week.

Please ask House Judiciary Committee Members to support HB 4130!

Delegate Tim Miley (D-Harrison), Chair ~ (304) 340-3252, tim.miley@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Mark Hunt (D-Kanawha, Vice Chair ~ (304) 340-3392, mhunt@markahunt.com
Delegate Larry Barker (D-Boone) ~ (304) 340-3149, larry.barker@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Bonnie Brown (D-Kanawha) ~ (304) 340-3106, bonnie.brown@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Mike Caputo (D-Marion) ~ (304) 340-3249, mike.caputo@wvhouse.gov
Delegate John Ellem (R-Wood) ~ (304) 340-3394, ellem@wirefire.com
Delegate Michael Ferro (D-Marshall) ~ (304) 340-3111, mike.ferro@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Barbara Fleischauer (D-Monongalia) ~ (304) 340-3169, barbaraf@mail.wvnet.edu
Delegate John Frazier (D-Mercer) ~ (304) 340-3396, jfrazier@mail.wvnet.edu
Delegate Bill Hamilton (R-Upshur) ~ (304) 340-3167, bill.hamilton@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Tal Hutchins (D-Ohio) ~ (304) 340-3270, t.hutchins@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Patrick Lane (R-Kanawha) ~ (304) 340-3275, patrick.lane@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Linda Longstreth (D-Marion) ~ (304) 340-3124, linda.longstreth@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Harold Michael (D-Hardy) ~ (304) 340-3340, Harold@hardynet.com
Delegate Cliff Moore (D-McDowell) ~ (304) 340-3189, cmoore@mail.wvnet.edu
Delegate John Overington (R-Berkeley) ~ (304) 340-3148, john@overington.com
Delegate Mike Ross (D-Randolph) ~ (304) 340-3145, mikeross@mail.wvnet.edu
Delegate Robert Schadler (R-Mineral) ~ (304) 340-3191, rschadler@comcast.net
Delegate Patti Schoen (R-Putnam) ~ (304) 340-3141, pschoen@mail.wvnet.edu
Delegate Alex Shook (D-Monongalia) ~ (304) 340-3173, ashook@mail.wvnet.edu
Delegate Doug Skaff (D-Kanawha) ~ (304) 340-3362, doug.skaff@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Kelli Sobonya (R-Cabell) ~ (304) 340-3175, kelli.sobonya@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Sally Susman (D-Raleigh) ~ (304) 340-3183, ssusman@mail.wvnet.edu
Delegate Danny Wells (D-Kanawha) ~ (304) 340-3287, danny.wells@wvhouse.gov
Delegate Bill Wooton (D-Raleigh) ~ (304) 340-3164, wwooton@mail.wvnet.edu

Farm Bureau Cozy with Industry

by Julie Archer and Norm Steenstra III

We've had a bit of a crazy week at the legislature. First, late Tuesday, we learned that the Senate Energy, Industry and Mining (EIM) Committee was going to take up the Surface Owners' Rights Recognition Act (SB 529) the next day (February 17). Unfortunately, the committee had a full agenda and did not get to the bill. It is possible that EIM will take up the bill next week and we will work to get the bill on the House Judiciary Committee agenda as well. This means your calls and e-mails to committee members are very important. Lists of committee members and their contact information are available at http://www.wvsoro.org/updates/2010/02_14.html. Please call and encourage House Judiciary Chairman Miley (HB 4408) at 304-340-3252 and Senate EIM Chairman Green (SB 529) at 304-357-7831 to take up the bills. Let them know how important action on these bills is to you.

After receiving a request from the state leadership of the Farm Bureau last week that we issue a retraction of our press release, we learned that Don Michael, Director of Government Affairs for the Farm Bureau, had written an article in the Independent Oil & Gas Association's (IOGA) February newsletter touting the Farm Bureau's close relationship with the industry. It was shameless that Mr. Michael did not mention all the help and free legal advice that WV-SORO provided to Farm Bureau members and others at the informational meetings we co-sponsored with them. However, what is more egregious is that the state leadership of the Farm Bureau appears to want to have it both ways -- pretending to represent its members' interests while abandoning them in order to remain cozy with the industry. We'll have more on this at our website, www.wvsoro.org. If you are a Farm Bureau member, please contact the state leadership in Buckhannon at 1-800-398-4630 and remind them that they work for you. Ask them to clarify their position on surface owners' rights and ask them what they are doing in Charleston to protect and further those rights.

Finally, thanks to all of you for your efforts to contact your legislators and a special thank you to those who have managed to make it to the Capitol to meet with legislators in person, despite the lousy weather. We're more than happy to take folks around to meet with their legislators. Just call Julie or Norm at 304-346-5891, and we'll work out when and where to meet.

Something Strange is in the Air

The *Charleston Gazette* reported this week that Dow Chemical had a leak that went undetected for nearly two weeks. Think this is unacceptable? Downright scary? Read the latest at www.peopleconcernedaboutmic.com. And the next time you smell something strange, call and report it at 800-642-3074 (lines open 24 hours a day).

The Verizon Sale in a Nutshell

In a deal that enriches Verizon and leaves the state of West Virginia and its residents out in the cold, Verizon proposes to sell off all of its land line operations in West Virginia to Frontier, a small Connecticut-based company.

The acquisition of phone lines in WV will put \$3.3 billion in cash into Verizon's coffers along with \$5.3 billion worth of stock in Frontier. The transaction has been purposely structured this way to take advantage of a tax-loophole called "The Reverse Morris Trust," that ensures Verizon won't pay any taxes on the profit it will reap from the sale.

Verizon has been busy spinning off companies with disastrous effects for consumers and Verizon employees. In New England, Verizon sold its landlines to Fairpoint and now Fairpoint is bankrupt. Ditto for Hawaii Telecom which bought Verizon's operations in Hawaii in 2005 and has already filed for bankruptcy. Another bankrupt spinoff, Idearc, was originally Verizon's yellow pages company.

Questions about Frontier's ability to handle the service abound. In a state that sees its share of wind and flood damage, how quickly will Frontier be able to restore service during emergency situations? How will Frontier be able to provide broadband service when it lacks the technology and high-capacity fiber lines? If it's buried in debt from purchasing Verizon's land lines, how will it have the money to invest in its employees and new technology?

Verizon's corporate greed puts West Virginians at risk in terms of quality and security of service. At a time when other states are expanding broadband and creating the jobs that come with it, Verizon is pushing West Virginia back decades.

Help us stop this shady deal. Last week's newsletter had a petition to circulate to your friends and neighbors. We will present them to the Public Service Commission next month. Please return your petitions to WV-CAG by March 15. You can also download a copy of the petition at www.wvcag.org and learn much more at www.bad4wv.org. Thank you!

Contact Your Representatives!

WV Senators and Delegates:

The Honorable _____
West Virginia Senate/House of Delegates
Building 1, State Capitol Complex
Charleston, WV 25305
Call toll-free: 1-877-565-3447

On the web: www.legis.state.wv.us where you can find legislators' e-mails. Or e-mail any legislator at cglagola@mail.wvnet.edu. Be sure to type the legislators' names in the subject line so your e-mail can be delivered.

The Governor's office:

The Honorable Governor Joe Manchin
1900 Kanawha Blvd East
Charleston, WV 25305
Call toll-free: 1-888-438-2731
e-mail: governor@wv.gov

You can also visit www.wvcag.org, type in your zip code and find info on all your federal and state representatives. **Make your voice heard!**

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Upcoming Events and Actions!

February 23: Seneca 2 Forum. 7:00 PM. WVSU Student Union. Only Informed Citizens Can Save US Democracy. Featuring investigative reporters Ray McGovern and Robert Perry. Free and open to the public.

February 24: E-Day at the Capitol. 9 AM til 2 PM. Lower Rotunda. This is the Environmental Lobbying Day - a perfect opportunity to "go ye out and lobby" for everyone. Booth displays, announcements, press conference and more. **For more information, or for table/booth reservations:** contact Kevin Smith at a_clean_wv@yahoo.com.

February 24: E-Day Benefit Dinner & Awards Ceremony. Woman's Club of Charleston. 5:30 - 8:30 PM. Celebrate achievements and honor recipients of WVEC awards. Homemade Soup & Salad buffet. Admission is a donation of \$15 to WVEC. **E-Day After Party!** Live music at the Empty Glass, 410 Elizabeth Street, Charleston. Admission only \$5 per person.

April 16: **WV-CAG Spring Fundraiser** at the Charleston Woman's Club. Music, silent auction, food and great people. Tickets are \$30 (student - \$10) and are available now. If you have something you'd like to donate to our silent auction, please e-mail linda@wvcag.org.

April 17 & 18: WV Sustainable Fair. Davis & Elkins College Elkins, WV. Speakers & Workshops on Energy, WV Agriculture & Organic Foods, Community Gardening. Green Booths . " A Sustainable Feast" Benefit Dinner Friday evening. Live Music throughout the event, culminating with a Saturday evening concert from 7 PM - 10 PM. Musicians include Mike Morningstar, The Ginsangers and others to be confirmed. **For more information**, contact Denise Poole at deniseap@earthlink.net.

May 22: Kanawha Valley Connections' second annual Kanawha Valley Sustainability Fair, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Habitat for Humanity ReStore, 301 Piedmont Road in Charleston. Kanawha Valley Sustainability Fair is the signature event of Kanawha Valley Connections, a volunteer organization dedicated to creating pathways to sustainability throughout the Kanawha Valley and surrounding communities. For more information, e-mail robin@wvcag.org.

***We should not let our fears hold us
back from pursuing our hopes.
John F Kennedy***



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