



Public Financing Passes House Judiciary!

by Julie Archer, julie@wvcaag.org

This week the House Judiciary Committee advanced several bills aimed at limiting the influence of special and corporate interests in our electoral process.

On Monday, the committee passed HB 4130 which would establish a pilot project to provide public campaign financing to candidates for the state Supreme Court. The bill is now before the House Finance Committee and we are anxiously waiting to see if it will be taken up. As we mentioned previously, a House Judiciary subcommittee removed one of the major funding sources, and we have been working with friends on the House Finance Committee to get adequate funding restored. Our position is that we would rather not have the bill at all than have a pilot that is inadequately funded and doomed to fail.

THIS JUST IN: The House Finance Committee passed HB 4130! Funding sources have been put back into the legislation and we look forward to this bill continuing on its way to the House floor, the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Senate Finance Committee, the Senate floor and Governor Manchin's desk! Thanks for all of your calls, e-mails and letters in support of our campaign finance reform legislation!

On Tuesday, the House Judiciary Committee advanced two other good bills. One, HB 4647, seeks to change West Virginia's electioneering communications disclosure law to make it consistent with recent Supreme Court holdings. You probably recall that the law has been subject to repeated challenges in recent elections, some of which are still working their way through the courts. If HB 4647 is adopted by the legislature, these challenges would be moot and entities, including corporations, would be required to disclose information about their political expenditures with the Secretary of State.

The other bill approved by the committee, HB 4646, would require corporations to get shareholder approval before they can use corporate general treasury funds for political expenditures. These bills are now before the full House and are scheduled for a final vote on Monday. Hopefully we'll have more good news for you next week!

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.wvcaag.org

Come to the Big Insurance Protest In DC

by Gary Zuckett, garyz@wvcaag.org

On March 9 the big insurance trade group America's Health Insurance Plans (AHIP) is having its National Policy Forum where members will gather to gloat about how they greased enough political campaign coffers, hired enough well-connected lobbyists, and laundered more than enough money through the national Chamber of Commerce to help stall health care reform (including insurance reform) in its tracks. This is an outrage from an industry that's banking record profits from our pain and sickness.

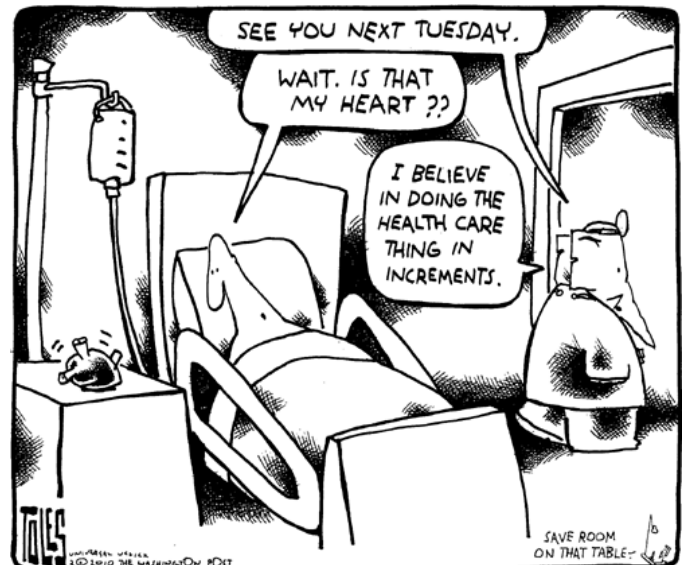
In response, the national leadership of Health Care for America Now and other national labor and social justice organizations are inviting everyone who can make it to come to Washington, DC on that day to protest the role that big insurance has played in trying to kill-off reform and send a message to Congress to finish the job now!

This Rally for Reform is especially timely now that President Obama has held his health care summit where the Party of NO reiterated that the only way it will negotiate on reform is to scrap the whole thing and start over. It also wants the majority party to promise not to use the reconciliation route to bypass the Senate filibuster where reform could pass with a mere majority vote.

Senate rules be damned! Health reform is too important to let a minority in Congress block the majority just because it can (and it puts them in a better position coming into the fall elections if it looks like the Dems can't get anything done). Sometimes liberals are just too nice for their own good. It's time to move on health reform!

Which brings us back to March 9. It's time to take the gloves off and come out swinging against the one industry that, more than any other, is responsible for the national health care mess. We'll be renting several vans and heading to Washington and back on March 9. Join us and show Congress that the American people still back reform and are willing to stand up to big insurance to get it!

Contact Linda@wvcaag.org to get a free ride to Washington, DC next week and be counted among those who stopped big insurance from killing off the health care reform we all so desperately need...



Comprehensive Immigration Reform

by Lisa Diehl, lisadiehl@zoominternet.net

The WV Immigration Reform Coalition held meetings with Senator Rockefeller's staff during the February recess. Five members of the coalition from the Eastern Panhandle met with staff at the senator's Martinsburg office. Four members of the coalition from Charleston met at his office in downtown Charleston. Joining both meetings via video conference was a staff member from Senator Rockefeller's DC office.

During both meetings, members of the coalition provided information about the benefits to workers and the economy if we fix the current broken, chaotic system. Comprehensive immigration reform that legalizes undocumented immigrants would help ALL American workers and the U.S. economy. Our current system punishes workers and rewards bad-actor employers by creating a race to the bottom for the worst paying jobs. Comprehensive reform would raise the "wage floor" for the entire U.S. economy—to the benefit of both immigrant and native-born workers. The higher earning power of newly legalized workers would generate \$4.5 to \$5.4 billion in additional net tax revenue over three years.

Reform Immigration FOR America (Ri4a) is planning a major rally on March 21st in Washington, DC called "March for America." This will take place in conjunction with Ecumenical Advocacy Days, a national faith-based conference.

If you are interested in participating in the march, please contact Lisa Diehl at lisadiehl@zoominternet.net or Gary Zuckett at garyz@wvcaq.org

Tired of Slow Internet Access?

by Linda Frame, linda@wvcaq.org

This week a bill that would require telecommunication carriers doing business in West Virginia to provide 100% broadband access by 2013 was introduced in the House (HB 4618) and Senate (SB 694). The bill was on the Senate Judiciary Committee agenda this morning and will be taken up in subcommittee on Monday morning. Our hope is that the bill will quickly be reported out of the subcommittee, make it out of Senate Judiciary and then get on the Senate Finance Committee's agenda in time.

This bill has another key consumer protection component. It would require ALL public utilities to provide better information about quality of service. They would have to provide data on the number and nature of complaints filed with the Public Service Commission regarding installation of service, billing disputes, poor quality of service, outages, customer service, cable rates and more.

Please call members of the Senate Judiciary subcommittee over the weekend to ask them to support SB 694 (the Broadband Access Bill) and ask them to quickly send it back to the full Senate Judiciary Committee. Members are Senator Richard Browning (D-Wyoming) 304-357-7807 (Capitol) or 304-682-4643 (home); Senator Mike Hall (R-Putnam) 304-357-7843 (Capitol) or 304-757-8249 (home); and Senator Jack Yost (D-Brooke) 304-357-7984 (Capitol) or 304-737-2720

(home). Let them know that you want West Virginia to enter the 21st century and join other states with far-reaching broadband access and data on how well (or not) their regulated utilities are performing.

Groups and Legislators Come Out Against Verizon Sale to Frontier

by Linda Frame, linda@wvcaq.org

Opposition to the proposed sale of Verizon to Frontier Communications is growing. Six West Virginia Senators and 65 Delegates have written letters to the Public Service Commission protesting the sale and letters have also been submitted by Attorney General Darrell McGraw, AARP West Virginia, the West Virginia Nurses Association, the West Virginia Troopers Association and more.

Last Saturday's *Charleston Gazette* ran a front-page article <http://www.wvgazette.com/News/201002190601> about Public Service Commission (PSC) staff and the PSC's Consumer Advocate Division (CAD) advising that the sale be rejected outright since Verizon has not submitted the appropriate paperwork. CAD staff went on to say that Frontier does not have the resources to do business properly in West Virginia and that Verizon should have to stick around and clean up the mess it created.

WV-CAG is currently collecting petitions and one was included in a previous newsletter. We need signed petitions returned to us by March 15 so we can present them to the Public Service Commission. Please download your copy at www.wvcaq.org or call 304-346-5891 and we'll send you one.

Thanks!



CAG Fundraiser Just Around the Corner

With all the snow it seems like spring is really far away but it's just around the corner, just like the WV-CAG fundraiser! Join us on Friday, April 16. Tickets are available at just \$30 a person which includes our dinner buffet. We'll also have music, fun and a great silent auction at the Woman's Club on Charleston's East End.

For tickets, please call us at 304-346-5891 or e-mail linda@wvcaq.org. Sponsorships really help fund our program work so if you can afford to donate more we have \$150, \$250 and \$500 sponsorships levels. We hope to see you at the Woman's Club!

Will SORO Bills Be Taken Up in Time?

by Norm Steenstra III, norm@wvsoro.org

It's that time of the Legislative Session when House and/or Senate leadership decide which bills live and which bills die. Bills are due out of House and Senate major committees Monday. Minor committees had to have their bills into major committees or reported to the floor by today. Our Surface Owners' Rights Bills (HB 4408 and SB 529) were not taken up but there is still a chance that House Judiciary will take up HB 4408 in time.

In the Senate Energy, Industry, and Mining Committee, Chairman Green did not put the Surface Owners' Recognition Act on the agenda. This is no surprise, since, after killing our bill last year, the Senator told Beckley news media that he was working with us. He did not put our legislation on the agenda last year and never had any talks with us.

Over in the House, we've had some good news as HB 4513, which would establish requirements for water used in the Marcellus gas well drilling operations, passed with strong support and is headed to House Finance, where it needs to be out by Monday. However, House Judiciary Chairman Miley has still failed to put the Surface Owners' Recognition Act on the agenda. His committee spent 45 minutes on a poorly written bill involving beekeeper legislation (HB 4527) rather than taking up something that could help West Virginians. Had the bill been properly written it might have been good legislation. After all was said and done the bill failed amidst heavy legislative laughter.

Keeping with the theme of bad bills, Chairman Miley added Delegate Ross's awful definition of "Shallow Wells" (HB 2982) to the agenda. It is so bad that Ross is the sole sponsor. As we go to press, this bad bill has not yet been taken up. Maybe Delegate Miley is not paying attention to the heavy drilling going on in Harrison County.

So there is still a chance to have the Surface Owners' Recognition Act pass out of House Judiciary. We believe we have the votes. The key is to get the chairman to take up the bill, rather than waste tax payers' money on topics that the majority of his committee sees as bad choices for the agenda. Please contact Chairman Miley at home this weekend at (304)-848-0102 and ask him to put HB 4408 on the agenda for Monday.

NEWS FLASH: We just heard that SB 369, the Senate's bad shallow well bill, was passed out of the EIM Committee as it met on the Senate floor. The bill was then read a first time and sent to Senate Finance. This is a very sneaky way to move a bill!

For more information year-round about our Surface Owners' Rights Campaign, visit www.wvsoro.org

Recycling Bills Moving

by Linda Frame, linda@wvcag.org

After passing out of both Senate Judiciary and Finance, SB 489 is on first reading in the Senate today. The bill would require "the West Virginia Solid Waste Management Board to conduct a one-time study to determine the recycling rate of each county and the state. The study shall be conducted for the waste stream disposed and recycled in the calendar year 2011 and reported to each county and regional solid waste authority, the Legislature and the Governor by June 30, 2012."

By collecting this data, the state will have a better idea of how close it is to the 50% recycling requirement mandated in the 1991 Recycling Act. The Act required that we achieve that goal by 2010 and this new legislation moves that date to 2014.

SB 398, which would require recycling of certain electronic devices, passed the Senate today. The purpose of this bill is to prohibit disposal of certain electronic devices such as computers, monitors and television sets in landfills. If the bill passes the House, legislation take effect January 1, 2011.

Thanks for your calls on these important pieces of legislation!

Things That Make You Go Huh?

This week at the Capitol a delegate was overheard telling a constituent that controversial bills are not taken up during election years. Hello?..... for the House of Delegates that's 50% of the time!

In a committee meeting, a senator looked out into the public seating area and asked, "Is there anyone here who can tell us what we are supposed to be doing?"

We kid you not. We could not make these things up.

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@wvgov.org

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!

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 16 & 17: 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.

Please take a moment and renew your WV-CAG membership! You can use the form below or donate on our website at www.wvcag.org. It just takes a second via PayPal. We so appreciate your support!



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

Please renew your membership or send a donation.

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Here's my donation of: \$25 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

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

THANKS!

Donate quickly & securely at www.wvcag.org!