

Legislative Update  
of West Virginia  
Citizen Action Group

February 21, 2014

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## Snowballing at the Legislature

by Gary Zuckett

It's fitting that the winter Olympics are running concurrently with the Legislative Session. I've often described it as a snowball that keeps gaining size and momentum as it rolls down the mountain until it crashes to a stop at the end of the trail.

We started off this week with Environment Day at the capitol. Lots of green groups set up tables & displays including our [WV Surface Owners Rights Org](#), [Energy Efficient WV](#) and of course WV-CAG. That evening, before the E-Day awards dinner at the Woman's Club, the House Judiciary held the [public hearing](#) that we requested on 4411 – the bill allowing unlimited Marcellus waste in out municipal landfills. Norm and Julie did a great job outlining the defects of this proposal along with about twenty others. Only one [speaker](#) supported the bill and he works for the Drilling Industry.

Judiciary took up [4411](#) this afternoon and passed out an amended version to the full House which we expect will pass it to the Senate next week. Stay tuned...

### Non-Medical Hemp Growing

Compassionate Cannabis for medical use is not moving this year. Our sources say that next year may be the one for the end to this prohibition. However, HB [3011](#) which takes advantage of the new federal Farm Bill language just sailed through second reading and will be up for passage in the House early next week. This will begin the process for industrial hemp farming in our state. Good news for WV farmers!

### Future Fund May Have One

The Senate is set to pass SB [461](#) the Future Fund bill today. It will have a tougher time in the House. Make calls for it next week to your

Delegates. We need to set some of the Natural Gas severance tax aside to benefit future generations who will have to deal with the mess we're leaving them.

### Campaign \$ Disclosure Squeaks out of Committee

HB [4463](#), which would expand the requirement for corporations to disclose money spent to influence elections in WV, barely made it out of Judiciary committee today. Conservatives were trying to talk it to death when Chairman Manchin quickly ended debate and forced a vote in order to get his committee to the floor session over the loud protests of the nay-sayers. Call Delegates with the message that we need to know which fictional corporate persons are trying to buy our elections.

### Crossover Day = Sudden Death for Bills

Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> is the day all bills must be passed out of their respective house of origin. Any which fail to move are considered dead. This is probably a good thing as many suspect bills go down. Unfortunately, many of our bills will suffer the same fate. At least we'll have less legislation (good and bad) to chase around the capitol after that.

### Keep On Matching That Challenge

A Big thanks to all who have sent in memberships and donations in response to the announcement of our major donors challenge. So far you have sent in nearly \$1,000 which will be matched by his generous challenge. Remember, if you are a new member/donor your \$ will be tripled! Click on the "donate" button on this e-mail or visit our web page at [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org). Send checks to 1500 Dixie St. Chas. WV 25311.

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# OCOF Steering Committee and Advocacy Day

by Stephen Smith, Our Children Our Future

Gather with The Our Children Our Future Lobby Team on Thursday, February 27th from 10am-3pm in the Lower Rotunda to strategize for the day which will include press conference, strategy meeting, and plenty of meetings with legislators - more details pending.

Here are the highlights from this week... All of this comes directly thanks to your HARD WORK:

- Budget Cuts (\$980,000 in early childhood cuts) - we've now got over 1,000 petition signatures, and over 2,000 messages sent to legislators on this issue; and two delegations (from AFRN and from Sen. Prezioso's district) visited legislators this week in person; continue to contact Sen. Prezioso and Del. Boggs
- Physical Activity (SB 455) - WIN Passed its major hurdle in



## Fancy Dogs or Needy Kids?

Governor Tomblin's proposed budget includes \$5.1 million for breeding greyhounds... while cutting \$980,000 from early childhood education (FRNs, FRCs, Home-visiting, and child abuse prevention).  
TAKE ACTION: [tinyurl.com/nffpdvz](http://tinyurl.com/nffpdvz)

- Minimum Wage (HB 4283, SB 411) - House version has passed through the full house. Now we are waiting on Senate; call Senators to make sure it doesn't get watered down.
- Future Fund (SB 461) - Will be voted on TODAY in

Senate Education Committee, unanimously! No onto full Senate and House.

Senate, has gotten through Senate Committee (WIN). House is going to be the tough battle.

- Ending Meth Labs (SB 6) - WIN Passed full Senate this week. Onto the House.

Also:

- Affordable Housing and Land Trust (allows cities and counties to undertake land banking activities -

allowing local government to help maintain and transform vacant or dilapidated properties for community development) (SB 579) - WIN Voted out of Judiciary Committee, still needs to pass Full Senate and Full House next week

- Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (HB 4284) - Will be voted on in Senate soon; already voted out of House.
- HB 4191 Tobacco Tax appears might be dead in the water - was postponed twice in House Health Committee.

## To-Do List

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
16	17	18	19	20	21	February 22
	Environmental Lobby Day			Women's Lobby Day		Rain Water Harvesting Workshop
23	24	25	26	27	28	March 1
TPP Discussion	PSC Complaint Workshop			OCOF Advocacy Day		Women in Water H2OMG Fashion Show
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
			Bill Howley's Lobbying Training Parents for Health Community Meeting			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
←-----Mountain Justice Spring Break-----→						

# Activists are Multiplying Thanks to Great Leadership

by Brooke Drake

Citizens Actively Protecting the Environment (CAPE), People Concerned About Chemical Safety, and actively concerned citizens have been coming together to ensure actions are taken about the condition of our state. Leaders from all walks of life are networking with novices unafraid of hard work. Breaking up into smaller work groups has allowed each to focus passionately on their mission.

One group includes Paul Sheridan and CAG's own Cathy Kunkel who are providing free training to [file complaints](#) with the Public Service Commission (PSC). Two options depend on the level of commitment the West Virginia American Water (WVAW) customer would like to expel. An Informal Complaint will be logged and consists of a phone complaint to the PSC after which the customer might receive a return call. A Formal Complaint is more of a commitment because it requires a handwritten statement and opens the possibility of legal follow up in the event a court case is opened against WVAW. Unitarian Universalist Congregation opened their doors for free workshops to teach citizens to file these complaints.

Another group is focusing on the legislative side of the issue. Bill Howley has set up Citizen Lobbying Training Events every Wednesday throughout the session. Hurry to attend his last event on March 5 at 8:30am in the Upper Rotunda. Previous attendees have reported that it was well worth the time as Mr. Howley is very good at what he does and explaining why he does it. An attempt to unite sustainable small businesses is underway by Nancy Ward, and the "[Easy Action of the Day](#)" has become very popular.



Fracktivists gather at E-Day

Please participate to your maximum capacity.

The Rainwater Catching Group is very popular, including a FREE [Harvesting and Water Solutions Workshop](#) at Rock Lake last weekend. The WV Urban Agriculture Conference will be held April 11-12 and includes rain barrel workshops. Contact John Porter at (304) 720-9887 or [john.porter@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:john.porter@mail.wvu.edu) for more information.

Maya Nye of People Concerned About Chemical Safety is leading the Medical Monitoring Group. Vista Liz Brunello and other strong voices plan to promote "Women in Water" Meetings as a space to vent and organize actions. The next event is planned for March 1 and more information will be available at <http://ourwaterwv.org/>.

Another passionate woman, Karen Ireland, is leading the group geared to community organization.

Principles have been established for this group in order to remain focused on the goals of non-political talent seeking in various types of communities. Joining with the [WV Clean Water Hub](#), contacts will be established both locally and outside the county. These liaisons will be tasked with organizing their own meetings with the training provided to plan and host sessions relevant to the people closest to them.

Talks began of forming a group geared toward Mental Health issues pertaining to the water crisis. Further discussion will take place at the next meeting Thursday March 6. Events titled "Roundtable Discussions" are still being held, but might be consolidated into these meetings in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

# Minimum Wage is Moving

by Brooke Drake

The House passed the [bill](#) which would increase minimum wage over the next two years. Formally exempt employers would now be required to pay the same as other similar businesses. The message was received from the House and the bill is now in Senate Finance Committee where a [comparable](#) bill already

sits. Senators Yost, Miller, Cookman, Kessler, Beach and Cann need to know which bill is better. When you call to thank them for supporting our people, point out that the increased tipped employee credit to their employer suggested in 4283 could be better. Senate Bill 411 doesn't change the employee credit at all, but

I DO NOT BELIEVE IN A MINIMUM WAGE.



THERE SHOULD BE NO LIMIT TO HOW LITTLE I PAY MY WORKERS.

NOR DO I BELIEVE IN A MAXIMUM WAGE.



THERE SHOULD BE NO LIMIT TO HOW MUCH I CAN MAKE OFF THEIR WORK.

SEE...



I BELIEVE IN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL.

Mike Keefe INTCOON.COM 2-13-14

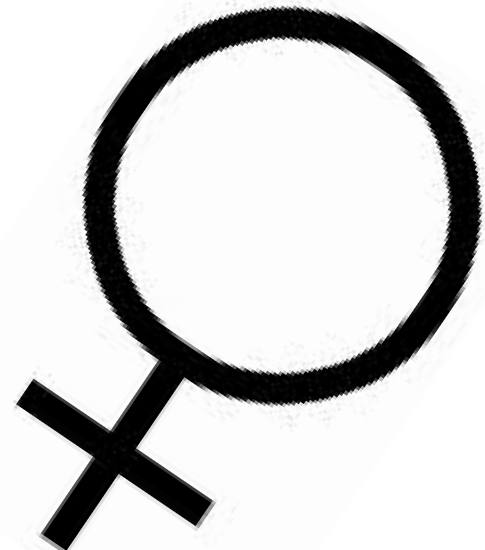
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that option isn't reasonable considering the businesses that are no longer exempt from minimum wage can't be expected to increase server pay, for example, nearly \$4 per hour over night. I do believe a middle ground could be established for this rate so that these servers can also see a raise. While you're on the phone with these Senators, ask them why college students employed part-time are exempt from minimum wage.

# Anti-Choice Bill Bad Choice for WV

by Brooke Drake

A blanket ban on abortions is quickly moving through the House, thanks to eleven sponsors who call themselves Democrats. Delegates Perry, Reynolds, Skaff, P. Smith, Pino, Moye, Eldridge, Campbell, Stephens, and Marcum, all considered Democrats in Name Only (DINOs), seem to find it acceptable to force a young girl who was impregnated through rape to carry the pregnancy to term unless she terminates it before twenty weeks passes. Claiming that fetuses feel pain after sixteen weeks that would negatively affect an adult human long-term, [House Bill 4588](#) takes no exceptions into account short of the mother's physical health. West Virginia has a [history](#) of ignoring the Constitution concerning women's rights to choose, forcing the court system to overturn the rulings. It seems these Delegates are just wasting everyone's time yet again. Please consider this next time you enter the voting booth.



# Business with a Conscience

by Norm Steenstra

There aren't many bright spots that have emerged from last month's Elk River mess. Sustained public outrage is certainly one of the positives. A few small business owners impacted by the water quality crisis have banded together and presented a petition to the

legislature. The petition, with more than a hundred area businesses, recommended stronger environmental regulations. Jennifer Burns, one of the organizers and an owner of a small catering company stated to the Charleston Gazette "It's very

important. Our voices need to be heard- the collective voice of small businesses in the nine counties need to be heard." Many WV-CAG members are owners of small businesses. We urge these members to contact

[wv-cape@gmail.com](mailto:wv-cape@gmail.com)

for more information on local business efforts for stronger regulations. Our hope is that WV-CAPE becomes a statewide organization advocating for stronger environmental regulations and enforcement.

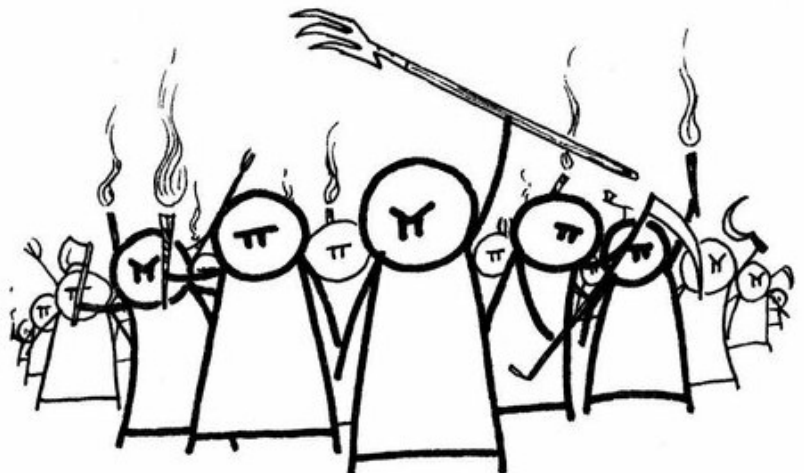


Mike Pushkin entertains the crowd at E-Day

# Spill Victim Aid Dies in Senate

by Norm Steenstra

Senator John Unger's bill to create a compensation fund for victims of the Elk River chemical spill was killed in the Senate Natural Resources Committee. Mainly through the efforts of lobbyists for the West Virginia American Water Company the bill died Thursday. How ironic that we pay the water company and they use part of that money to lobby against welfare of its customers. Unger was quoted in the Charleston Daily Mail "The bill was an attempt to help the victims. That's what we're going to have to do. The State of West Virginia will have to do something like this. I was surprised the WV American Water Company was against that."



West Virginia Citizen Action Group

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*“Action for a change.”*



# Possibly Useful Links

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.wvecouncil.org/>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.wvrivers.org/make-a-difference/Keep-our-drinking-water-safe>
- <sup>3</sup> <http://peopleconcernedaboutmic.com/time-for-action/>
- <sup>4</sup> <http://ourwaterwv.org/>
- <sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/WVCleanWaterHub>
- <sup>6</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/friendsowater14?ref=stream&hc\\_location=stream](https://www.facebook.com/friendsowater14?ref=stream&hc_location=stream)
- <sup>7</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/CAPE-Citizens-Against-a-Poisonous-Environment/235844596588703>
- <sup>8</sup> <http://www.wvgazette.com/Opinion/Editorials/201401230061>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.wvfree.org/>
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.wvgazette.com/News/201401220087>
- <sup>11</sup> <http://www.taf.org/>
- <sup>12</sup> [http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill\\_Status/bills\\_history.cfm?year=2014&sessiontype=RS](http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Status/bills_history.cfm?year=2014&sessiontype=RS)



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Here's my donation of:  \$25  \$50  \$100 Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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**THANKS!**

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