



## WV Citizen Action Group 2011 Public Policy Priorities

### Health Care

**Support for and Implementation of the Affordable Care Act** – The law that was passed was a compromise and needs improved, not repealed. Now we must follow through with implementation of this very complex legislation and at the same time repel efforts to block or repeal essential components. State lawmakers and agencies such as the Insurance Commission must now work to develop the state's Health Insurance Exchange with the capacity to cover hundreds of thousands of West Virginians who have never had health insurance into this new system. We must develop a consumer-driven state exchange and maximize the drawdown of federal funding. WV-CAG will continue to work with both state and national partners to achieve these goals.

### Environment

**Expand Rights and Protections for West Virginia Surface Owners** – In West Virginia, the people who own the land often own only the surface, not the minerals buried underneath and our current surface owner protection laws are few and ineffective. The tripling of oil and gas well permits in recent years has brought to a head the need for changes to give surface owners more help enforcing their common law rights and to ensure good stewardship of the land. These needed changes include earlier notice to the surface owner that the driller is coming; pre-permit incentives for the driller to work with the surface owner in planning where and how well sites and access roads will be built; and improvements to damage compensation procedures and awards. (See [www.wvsoro.org](http://www.wvsoro.org))

**Regulation of Marcellus Shale Development** – Conventional natural gas drilling and production is a major industrial activity with a host of serious environmental consequences. Effects can range from water contamination, air quality degradation, and safety concerns associated with heavy truck traffic. However, development of the Marcellus Shale uses new processes, such as horizontal drilling and large volume fracturing, that exponentially increase surface disturbance, water use and waste disposal problems. Significant regulatory improvements are needed to protect public health and the environment. These include policies that ensure that water supplies are not depleted or contaminated; an overhaul to the process for hiring inspectors; and additional funding for more inspectors to enforce the law. (See [www.wvsoro.org](http://www.wvsoro.org))

**Bottle Bill** – Already in place in 11 other states, this legislation would place a fully refundable deposit on beverage containers to increase recycling, reduce landfill tonnage, decrease litter and save taxpayers money. In addition, a WV Bottle Bill would create jobs by providing incentives for existing recyclers and new business to collect and process empty beverage containers. (See [www.wvbottlebill.org](http://www.wvbottlebill.org))

### Energy Efficiency & Conservation

**Energy Efficiency policies would save consumers money and create new jobs** – According to an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) study on Energy Efficiency, policies to stimulate investment in energy efficiency would create more than 15,000 net new jobs per year in the region within five years and an average of 60,000 net new jobs per year from 2020 to 2030. These policies would also lead to annual consumer energy bill savings of more than \$27 billion by 2030. **Energy Efficiency Resource Standards (EERS)** that set annual targets for energy demand reduction in West Virginia are a good start.

**Energy Efficient Building Codes** protect residents from high energy bills. They also help drive innovation and the deployment of new building technologies. Since buildings last for decades, these codes are essential to achieving long-term energy efficiency goals and saving on energy bills for the life of the structure

WV-CAG is building a new statewide coalition, Energy Efficient West Virginia (EEWV), to address public policy issues around energy usage called.

## **Election Reform**

Ensuring that elections are fair free and transparent is critical to restoring the public's trust of government and increasing the voice and participation of average citizens in the electoral process. WV-CAG is working to further these goals by supporting the following policies:

**Publicly Financed, Voter-Owned Elections** – In 2012, the Supreme Court Public Campaign Financing Pilot Project will provide Supreme Court candidates and sitting justices with an alternative to funding their campaigns with money from special interests and attorneys whose cases they may later decide. Public financing will increase the diversity of candidates, and will allow qualified individuals to run who find the current system cost prohibitive. **Securing additional funding for the pilot project is a top priority.** Although the legislature dedicated \$3 million in 2010, this will likely not be enough and insufficient funding will deter candidates from participating and derail the pilot project. Over the next year, we will be focusing our efforts on ensuring that the pilot is as successful as possible and work to make it permanent. Then we would like to see it expanded to include candidates for other offices, especially the state legislature. This would help ensure that legislators feel free to represent the interests of the citizens and help remove special interest money from the election process, along with real or perceived conflicts of interest. (See [www.wvoter-owned.org](http://www.wvoter-owned.org))

**Post *Citizens United* Reforms** - Earlier this year, in *Citizens United v. FEC*, the US Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment allows the use of corporate money in elections, opening the flood gates for the unencumbered corporate political spending in our elections. In the wake of *Citizens United*, we support measures that require full disclosure of political expenditures by independent groups and that provide shareholder accountability. This will help rein in corporate election spending, which is having a corrupting influence on our democratic process. This transparency will enable the electorate to make informed decisions and give proper weight to different speakers and messages. In addition, requiring shareholder approval for corporate political expenditures protects the interests of shareholders and ensures that their own First Amendment interests are being acknowledged.

**Same Day Registration & Voting** would increase voter registration and participation by allowing citizens to both register **and** vote during West Virginia's early voting period. A growing number of states adopting same-day registration (SDR) and studies have shown that voter participation is 10 to 12 percent higher in presidential election years in states that have SDR.

**Election Integrity** - Since the 1990s, West Virginia has taken regulation of elections more seriously, and has even adopted measures to ensure that in the age of electronic voting we have a secure way to cast our votes and verify our election results. Unfortunately, we took a step backward last year when the legislature authorized a pilot program to allow our troops and other overseas voters to cast their ballots over the internet. We recognize that our military men and women serving overseas face voting challenges not experienced by those of us at home. However, we concur with the computer technologists and security experts that it is inappropriate to "enfranchise" voters by providing them with a system that may allow their votes to be lost or stolen without detection. While the motivation is laudable, in light of the recent hacking of Washington, DC's online voting system, West Virginia should follow the District's example and put our systems to a public test before rushing to expand internet voting. The way to respect and support our troops overseas is to respect their right to vote on a system at least as verifiable and recount-able as the one being used by us here at home. They should not have to use a second-class voting system.

***For more information on West Virginia Citizen Action Group (WV-CAG), visit [www.wvcag.org](http://www.wvcag.org).***