



Capital Eye

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Buy a Cool, New
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Guarded Optimism For Some Real Change

by Norm Steenstra, norm@wvcag.org

In the wake of the state's primary election I have cautious hope. 84% of WV-CAG-endorsed candidates won their primary race. More good news is that Mike Callaghan's victory, and thus the honor of facing Congresswoman Shelley Moore Capito, is getting national attention on what has long been considered a "safe" Republican seat in Congress.

Watch the House of Delegates and House of Representatives races this fall. Progressives could "take back" both and finally restore a balance to the rightward drift in our state and nation. If all WV-CAG-endorsed House of Delegate candidates are elected in November we will see a new progressive Speaker of the House in Rick Thompson (D-Wayne).

Victories by Callaghan and Congressman Alan Mollahan could well return the US House to Democratic control. Remember, in both the US House and the House of Delegates it is the speaker who controls the agenda and appoints the Committee Chairs. When Congress is headed by the Democrats we will begin to see some meaningful investigations into how we got into war, what really happened leading up to 9/11, the legality of the disrespect for civil liberties and the incompetency of agencies like FEMA.

There were also some bitter losses. Former Senator Bill Wooton (D-Raleigh) lost his bid for his old seat by just 98 votes out of more than 11,000 cast. Long-time Delegate Tom Louisos lost his primary by just TWO VOTES. Ted Boettner, WV-CAG's Federal Issues Coordinator, lost his Kanawha County House of Delegates race by 273 votes. And long-time friend and member Richie Robb ran a strong challenge against Callaghan but lost by 3,500 votes.

Do everything you can over the next 5 months to work for real change both locally and nationally. We can win in November. We must win in November. Call me if you'd like to get involved.



Did You Know?

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,
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Election Highlights Paper Trail Importance

by Julie Archer, julie@wvcag.org

WV-CAG, working closely with WV Citizens for HAVA and national group Verified Voting, is proud of its role in educating legislators and election officials about the dangers of paperless electronic voting, and even prouder that these efforts resulted in legislation requiring all West Virginia voting machines to provide a voter-verifiable paper ballot. The importance of this requirement in giving voters confidence that their vote will be counted as cast cannot be overstated.

The May 9th primary was not without incident, and the programming and other problems highlight the importance of having a voter-verifiable paper trail. The fact is, even the most rigorous pre-election testing and the most stringent security practices won't eliminate all possible programming errors and security holes. As a result, voting machine manufacturers can't guarantee that machines will always function correctly. However, thanks to our persistence and the foresight of the Legislature and Secretary of State Betty Ireland, West Virginia voters can at least make sure that their vote has been recorded correctly on paper.

About Leap

The mission of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP) is to reduce the multitude of harms resulting from fighting the war on drugs and to lessen the incidence of death, disease, crime and addiction by ultimately ending drug prohibition. The group believes that despite all the money spent to fight the war on drugs, today illicit drugs are cheaper, more potent, and much easier to get than they were 36 years ago when the "war" began. To find out more about LEAP's goals and mission, please visit www.leap.cc. To learn how to get involved on a local level, please call us at 304-346-5891.



Download a free e-book called "How the Wealthy Use the Government to Stay Rich and Get Richer" and learn more about the Corporate Welfare State by visiting www.conservativenannystate.org.

Capito's Mendacity

by Ted Boettner, ted@wvcag.org

In the *Gazette-Mail Voters Guide* (published April 30) US Rep. Shelley Moore Capito commented, "I have consistently opposed privatizing Social Security." You may recall one of CAG's biggest issues (and proudest accomplishments) in 2005 was defeating Bush's plan to privatize Social Security. During this time Rep. Capito never told us that she "opposed privatizing Social Security," despite more than a dozen opportunities to make her position clear. I, along with other members of West Virginians United to Protect Social Security, met with Rep. Capito in June 2005 and she told us that she "hadn't made up her mind on private accounts" and that someone young like me should be in favor of private accounts. We invited her to over a dozen town hall meetings on Social Security "reform" and sent numerous letters seeking her position and never once did she say she "opposed privatizing Social Security."

"You can have wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, or democracy, but you cannot have both."

Justice Louis Brandeis, Supreme Court Justice from 1916 to 1939

Speaking of Politics...

Book Details History of Corruption in WV Politics

West Virginia's political history is the stuff of legend. Now, these stories of corruption have been compiled into one extraordinary 656-page hardback, with more than 160 remarkable photographs.

In "Don't Buy Another Vote, I Won't Pay for a Landslide," Dr. Allen Loughry II tells the unbelievable tale of West Virginia's history of corruption from its very inception through 2006. The book also provides a unique and specific plan for how reforms in West Virginia could lead to reforms nationally.

It includes a fresh look at the 1960 John F. Kennedy Presidential campaign in West Virginia as well as chapters on Mother Jones and the Hatfields and McCoys. U.S. Senators Robert C. Byrd and John McCain have both written forewords.

To read excerpts, testimonials, the forwards, or learn about Dr. Loughry, visit www.reformwv.com where you can also copies of the book. Save on shipping by selecting the "pick up or hand delivery only" option, requesting your copy be delivered to WV-CAG, and picking up your book here. "Don't Buy Another Vote, I Won't Pay for A Landslide" is scheduled for release on June 18. **Dr. Loughry will also be at WV-CAG on July 7 for our First Friday celebration with copies of his book.**

Bottle Bill Up Against Big Bucks

by Linda Frame, linda@wvcag.org

WV-CAG, as part of the People's Election Reform Coalition, monitors campaign contributions made to our state legislators. During the 2004 election, the beverage industry contributed more than \$89,000 to candidates who went on to win their legislative races for state Senate or House, up 43% from 2002. Coca-Cola's PAC alone contributed \$39,992 and PACs for Pepsi and the Beer Wholesalers gave \$11,750 and \$15,050 respectively. The PAC for the convenience stores (OMEGA) gave \$9,800.

It's safe to predict that as our campaign to bring a Bottle Bill to West Virginia grows, so will campaign contributions from the groups opposed to the legislation. It is SO important that your legislators hear regularly that you support the WV Bottle Bill because they hear from industry lobbyists at the interims and at fundraisers throughout each and every election year. Please stay in touch by visiting www.wvbottlebill.org.

Quick Facts on Bottled Water:

- * Members of the United Nations estimate that if the world took half of what it currently spends on bottled water (\$100 billion annually) and invested it in water infrastructure and treatment, everyone in the world could have access to clean drinking water.
- * But bottled water is cleaner, right? Actually, the U.S. EPA sets more stringent quality standards for tap water than the FDA does for bottled beverages, and roughly 40% of bottled water is actually just tap water.
- * 1.5 billion barrels of oil are consumed each year to produce the plastic for water bottles, enough to fuel 100,000 cars.
- * According to the Container Recycling Institute, only 14 percent of plastic water bottles are recycled.
- * A water bottle in a landfill or lying around as litter will take over 1,000 years to biodegrade. *(Thanks to Chuck Wyrostok for sending in these bullets)!*

Here's what one local activist wrote in to say:

Linda, I wish I could get all of the members of the Legislature in one room so that I could tell them of my experiences as a (what I call) Neighborhood Grassroots Activist for the elimination of litter! Litter is making our state hard to sell; all of the money we spend on business development and marketing is negated by the physical appearance of our highways and cities, which results in companies and industries passing us up. Would you want to locate in a state that doesn't have the political courage to correct this devastating pandemic! Litter shames us all; can't they see that?

Tax Breaks and Heart Aches

by Ted Boettner, ted@wvcag.org



You can safely
assume that
you've created
God in your
own image
when it
turns out that
God hates all
the same
people you
do.
-Anne
Lamott,
writer
(1954-)

On May 10th Congress passed another round of devastating tax cuts that benefit the wealthy. The \$70 billion tax-cut reconciliation bill (H.R. 4297) offers virtually no benefits to a majority of households, but showers high-income households with very large tax cuts. This bill provides households with incomes of \$1 million or more an average tax break of \$42,000. In gross contrast, the more than three-quarters of the nation's households with annual income of \$75,000 or less will receive an average tax cut of \$30 for one year.

According to the Tax Policy Center, there are 481 households (0.1%) in West Virginia that will receive the average tax cut of \$43,000 while 686,285 (82.7%) West Virginia households will receive only \$30 – not even enough to pay for a tank of gas.

The only member of the WV delegation that voted for these aristocratic tax cuts was Rep. Shelley Moore Capito. To make matters worse, about a week later the House of Representatives, with Capito's support, passed a budget plan that would cut funding for domestic "discretionary" (or non-entitlement) programs by \$10.3 billion in 2007 and \$167 billion over five years and would add \$254 billion to the deficit. This plan would also reduce entitlement programs – such as child care, child welfare services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, unemployment insurance, and cash aid for poor seniors and people with disabilities – by \$5.1 billion over the next five years. The budget plan also increases defense spending unrelated to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan by \$16.5 billion in 2007 and \$151 billion over five years.

The next tax cut on the chopping block is repealing the estate tax. On April 14 the House of Representatives voted to repeal the estate tax. In a somewhat surprising move, Rep. Nick Joe Rahall, along with Capito, voted in favor of repealing the estate tax. In 2003, only 89 of the 21,299 decedents in West Virginia had estate tax liability – 99.8 percent of decedents paid no estate tax. If the estate tax is repealed, vital programs like Head Start, Medicaid, and education funding would be dramatically reduced in West Virginia. This bill will be up for passage in the Senate in early June.

Citizens' Hearing on Part D

by Gary Zuckett, garyz@wvcag.org

West Virginians United, a coalition WV-CAG helped organize to promote progressive issues, is holding a “citizens’ hearing” on the embattled Medicare Part D prescription drug program next week in Cross Lanes (details below). Senators Byrd and Rockefeller and Reps. Shelley Moore Capito and Nick Rahall and their staff have been invited to receive testimony from seniors, people with disabilities, and experts on Part D at the Cross Lanes Unity Apts. activity room. We’ll also show a short video produced by the national health care consumers group, Families USA, and narrated by former CBS Newsman Walter Cronkite, entitled “The Problems with the Medicare Drug Program – and How to Fix Them.” We’ll then ask Members of Congress (or their reps) to take a firm position on our national coalition’s plan to fix Part D:

Americans United Plan to Fix Part D

- √ Reduce the cost of prescription drugs by requiring Medicare to negotiate lower prices from drug companies.
- √ Close the “donut hole” (the gap in coverage for annual costs between \$2,250 and \$5,100) which will result in millions of seniors being denied coverage each year while they still pay monthly premiums
- √ Allow seniors the choice of obtaining their prescription drug plan directly from Medicare—instead of from a private insurance company.
- √ Prohibit insurance companies from dropping drugs after a plan starts if people are prohibited from switching plans.
- √ Re-open Part D enrollment and waive the late enrollment penalty until Part D is fixed.

Both Senators Rockefeller and Byrd are sending representatives to attend the event. No word yet from Rep. Capito. State Delegate Don Perdue, Chair of the WV House Health and Human Resources Committee, will also participate.

Please attend the citizens’ hearing on May 31st, 3PM, at the Cross Lanes Unity Apts, 101 Unity Lane, Cross Lanes, WV (phone 304-776-8474). Copies of the Cronkite Part D Disaster DVD will be available for a small handling fee. For more details and/or directions to the event, please call us at 304-346-5891.

Important Events

June 2 & July 7

WV-CAG Office

Come to First Friday when WV-CAG hosts an alternative to "Happy Hour." Join us for light snacks, stimulating conversations and an opportunity to meet fellow WV-CAG members. First Fridays are free but please BYOB.

June 2

Air America in Huntington

Air America's Ed Schultz will broadcast live from Marshall University's Student Center's Don Morris Room, 3-6 p.m, hosted by the SW District Labor Council and WRVC Radio. Tickets \$20 for the public and \$5 for Marshall students. The event is part of a weekend long labor political conference with seminars on organizing, labor issues, etc. Other guest speakers include Governor Manchin, Congressman Rahall, Mayor Felinton, State Party Chairman Nick Casey, Commissioner Bias, and several national labor leaders. Everything takes place at Marshall's Student Center. Call 523-2353 to RSVP and for more info.



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!

Help Grow Citizen Action!



You, our members, are an essential part of the “Action” in Citizen Action. We appreciate your support through your membership contributions and action alerts. Now we need a different kind of Action. We’ve begun a campaign to “triple” our membership by the end of Summer! To grow, we must get new people involved in supporting the many projects at CAG designed to better our state, our lives and environment.

Help Expand WV’s Progressive Network!

Please take a few minutes to send us 3 or more names of folks who share your values and who may want to become Citizen Action members. We’ll send them a complimentary issue of *Capital Eye* and invite them to join. Help us reach the goal of more citizen involvement in the affairs of our state and communities!

Call 304/346-5891 (or toll-free 866-WVB-FAIR), fax 304/346-8981, or e-mail marge@wvcag.org with your contacts. Thanks for your help to build the progressive movement in WV!

Name _____
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