

# News Release

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## ***Consumer Group Launches Insurance Complaint Hotline*** **Call Toll-Free 1(866) WV-BFAIR**

Charleston, W.Va. – West Virginia consumers who have complaints against their insurance companies can now call a new toll-free hotline number set up by West Virginia Citizen Action Group (WV-CAG). WV-CAG will help callers file the complaints with the West Virginia Insurance Commission. In addition, WV-CAG wants to hear from state residents who have had policies cancelled, have had to pay higher insurance rates because of negative credit reports, or have had trouble finding a new insurance provider. The new number is 1(866)-WV-BFAIR (866-982-3247). For over 29 years WV-CAG has fought for consumer rights.

“Insurance companies are canceling policies with little or no cause. One of the worst examples was a Bluefield man who lost his homeowners insurance because an ice storm toppled two trees in his yard and he had to file claims. It’s ridiculous, this is why homeowners buy insurance. We know that there are many more stories like his statewide,” said CAG executive director Norm Steenstra.

“That’s why we’ve set up this consumer hotline. Every West Virginia resident who has been unjustly dropped by his or her insurance company, has had trouble finding a new insurance provider or has other complaints should call our hotline right away.”

In addition to dropped policies and access problems, the hotline will also take complaints regarding a company’s failure to handle claims within a reasonable time or for substantially less than the claim warrants. Callers can also submit complaints against health insurance companies who have refused to provide medications or treatments prescribed by a doctor or healthcare provider. “Doctors are supposed to make medical decisions for their patients, not insurance company bureaucrats,” Steenstra noted. Consumer complaints will be forwarded to the West Virginia Insurance Commission.

“Insurance companies want to increase their profits by limiting their responsibilities to West Virginia consumers. They want to strip away the most basic consumer protection laws requiring them to deal honestly and fairly with West Virginia policy holders, and they’re doing it by manufacturing an ‘insurance crisis.’ That’s wrong,” said Norm Steenstra, CAG’s executive director.

“There is no real insurance crisis. Yes, insurance rates in West Virginia have gone up over the last couple of years, but rates have gone up all over the country, not just here,” Steenstra said. “It’s the result of the insurance industry cycle and the investment money those companies lost in the weak stock market. It’s not the fault of good laws that protect West Virginia consumers. Anyone who says differently is misleading the public.”

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