

Timely
Credible
Influential

2011

Annual Report



west virginia
Center on
Budget & Policy

The Team

Staff

Ted Boettner

Executive Director

Renate Pore, Ph.D.

Health Policy and Development Director

Paul Miller

Policy Outreach Director and Research Analyst

Elizabeth Paulhus

Policy Analyst and Graphic Designer

Sean O'Leary

Policy Analyst

Jill Kriesky, Ph.D.

Economist

Linda Frame

Communications and Administrative Director

Stavros Atsas

Summer Intern

Sunny Thomson

Summer Intern

Joe Miller

Webmaster

Board of Directors

Steve White, President

ACT Foundation

Reverend Dennis Sparks, Vice-President

West Virginia Council of Churches

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WVU Department of Public Administration

David Cormier, Ph.D.

WVU Institute for Labor Studies & Research

Kelli Hinkle

West Virginia Alliance for Sustainable Families

Kathy McCormick

Service Employees International Union, District 1199

Reverend James Patterson

Partnership of African American Churches

Margot Saunders

National Consumer Law Center

Making an Impact

In 2011, the Center released 119 publications including 10 major reports, 21 issue briefs, 11 newspaper commentaries, nine Budget Beat issues, and 68 blog posts. The Center also released 13 press releases that helped generate hundreds of media hits. Its online presence expanded through the use of Facebook and Twitter.

Staff made more than 40 presentations to the legislature and across West Virginia on a range of topics, including: the state Earned Income Tax Credit, health care reform, personal property taxes, broadband expansion, the West Virginia Economic Diversification Fund, and the state's budget. Staff also presented to the Senate Government Organization Committee on the creation of a Legislative Fiscal Office. Multiple presentations were made to members of the joint interim Finance Committee who wanted to learn more about severance taxes on natural gas in West Virginia and its surrounding states. In February, Executive Director Ted Boettner presented the Center's analysis of the state budget at the West Virginia Education Association's legislative meeting with Association staff and state legislators.

In May, the Center launched a website called "Sunshine WV" to increase the transparency of the state's government. The site contained data and reports from state agencies such as the Department of Commerce, the Department of Education, and PEIA. Center staff also met with the State Auditor's Office to discuss the need for greater transparency about state agency spending, and the Auditor's Office launched its own site with budget and spending information not long after.

To describe just how far the Center has come in its first four years, **Executive Director Ted Boettner was named one of the most influential business leaders in West Virginia by The State Journal, a statewide business newspaper.** Ted joined the ranks of many business people known in the state for decades.

Working Toward a Shared Prosperity

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization. Our aim is to support public policies that contribute to a shared prosperity for all West Virginians. We study critical issues, share what we learn with the public and policymakers, and work with diverse groups on sound solutions to economic and social problems.

The Center participates in several national networks: the State Fiscal Analysis Initiative, sponsored by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and the Economic Analysis and Research Network, an initiative of the Economic Policy Institute.



723 Kanawha Blvd, Suite 300

Charleston, WV 25301

Tel: 304.720.8682

Fax: 304.720.9696

www.wvpolicy.org



Promoting Sound Solutions

Throughout 2011, many issues that the Center had focused on in previous years required continuing attention. Other policy issues arose during the 2011 Regular Session of the West Virginia Legislature or in the months following, and the Center responded with briefs and reports that provided an analysis of the issue at hand.

Drilling into the Marcellus Shale Boom

The expansion of the natural gas industry due to Marcellus Shale drilling was a dominant issue in West Virginia in 2011. At the end of the year Governor Tomblin signed legislation to regulate the practice, and more debate and study is expected as the industry continues its widespread growth. The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy analyzed the impact of this expansion through two lenses – the role of the state’s severance tax and the need for protecting the state’s budget from the inevitable revenue variations brought in from this nonrenewable resource. In **“Booms and Busts: The Impact of West Virginia’s Energy Economy,”** the Center showed how the state needs to prepare for the day when the Marcellus “gold rush” will end and how an economic diversification trust fund could provide revenue after the eventual production slowdown. A separate analysis, **“Investing in the Future: Making the Severance Tax Stronger for West Virginia,”** found that strengthening the severance tax on the state’s natural resources would not put West Virginia at a competitive disadvantage.

Protecting Medicaid

With health care reform on the horizon until 2014, changes to Medicaid continue to be part of the national debate. In West Virginia, any reductions to Medicaid would affect not only the elderly and disabled, but also more than half of all children in the state. To help policymakers better understand this important safety net, the Center produced **“Medicaid Made Simple,”** which explains the population that relies on Medicaid and how cuts to the program would affect the state’s residents and economy.

Putting OPEB in Perspective

Retiree health care for public employees, or Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), was once again at the forefront of discussions in the Legislature. Since some lawmakers considered it a crisis, the Center aimed to help them step back and look at the true fiscal impact of this liability. **“Mountain or Molehill: Putting OPEB in Perspective in West Virginia”** took a comprehensive look at this complicated issue with the goal of demonstrating that it is a manageable concern, not a crisis.

Helping Families Save Up, Not Spend Down

Not only did the Center work on Medicaid but also analyzed one of the measures that is used to decide who can take part in the program in the first place. In collaboration with the Alliance for Sustainable Families, Center staff wrote **“Save Up, Not Spend Down: Eliminating the Asset Test for Families in Medicaid and TANF.”**

Monitoring the State’s Economy

In 2011, the Center launched a monthly snapshot of working West Virginia called **“Jobs Count”** to report on how the state was recovering from the Great Recession. These brief reports have helped policymakers, the media, and other stakeholders gauge West Virginia’s economic recovery and discover solutions to create more jobs in the Mountain State. For the third year in a row, the Center also put together the **“State of Working West Virginia,”** an analysis of the state’s recovery from the Great Recession. This report provided multiple policy recommendations on how to help low- and moderate-income people struggling with the recession’s impact.

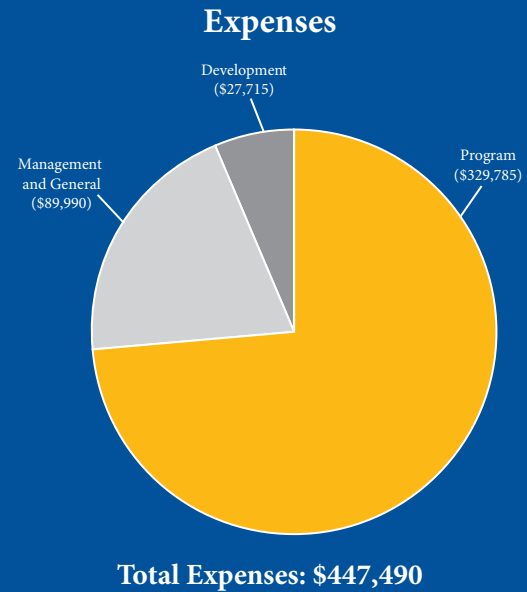
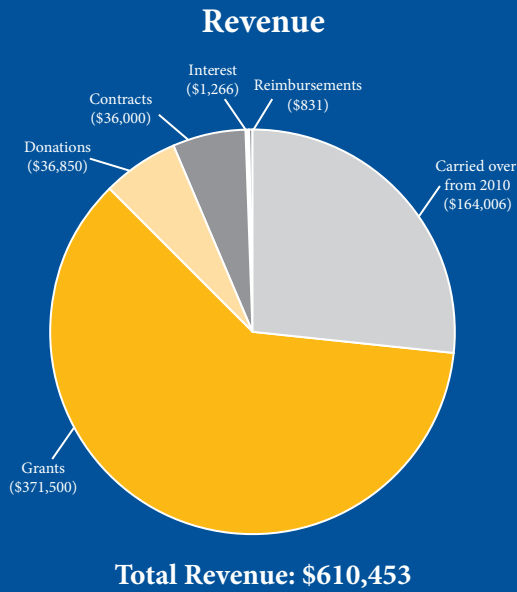
Ensuring Broadband Access to All of West Virginia

Access to reliable and affordable internet is an important component of a community’s economic development. Providing such service in West Virginia has long been a challenge. In 2011, however, the Center helped ensure the reauthorization of the Broadband Deployment Council, which is charged with modernizing and expanding the state’s internet capacity. It also helped to ensure that at least one council member had an interest in consumer protection.

Other 2011 publications are available on the Center’s website at www.wvpolicy.org/publications.htm.



Financial Highlights As of 12/31/2011*



Net Assets at End of Year: \$162,963

* Statement subject to annual audit

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy was thankful to receive continued funding from several foundations during 2011. In addition, generous donations from business and labor organizations provided additional financial security and allowed for long-range fiscal planning.

2010-2011 Funders

W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
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