

Pushing Progressive Policies



A major policy victory was a repeal of the ban on people convicted of drug-related felonies from receiving SNAP benefits. An estimated 15,000 people, many of whom are in recovery from drug addiction, are now eligible for this important food assistance program. West Virginia was one of just three states with this ban. This victory was a combined effort of numerous coalition partners, and part of an overall movement to assist once-incarcerated people with reentry to their families, communities and workplaces. With an intense outreach campaign aimed at lawmakers, editorial boards, community leaders and the public, WVCBP and our partners achieved this success within just one year.

Thanks to our work within the Together for Medicaid Coalition, in March, West Virginia lawmakers passed a bill to raise the Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) while guaranteeing coverage for 60-days postpartum. This policy allowed coverage for hundreds of pregnant women starting July 1. Our report, *Expanding Medicaid Coverage to Low-Income Postpartum Women Can Improve Their Health Outcomes*, helped build momentum as it described the disturbing trend of rising West Virginia maternal mortality rates and the positive impact such legislation has had in other states.

Another huge accomplishment was the defeat of a work reporting requirement for Medicaid recipients, which would have caused between 46,000 to 122,000 adults to lose Medicaid health coverage, as explained in our report *Medicaid Work Requirements: Challenges and Alternatives*. The bill to implement this harmful policy was killed just a week after its introduction when a powerful coalition of health-care advocates, including the WV Hospital Association, embarked upon a massive education campaign of lawmakers and citizens.

Other harmful policy ideas we defeated included:

- **phasing-out the state income tax**
- **eliminating the industrial business property tax**
- **creating a school vouchers program that would have allowed the use of taxpayer dollars for charter school tuition**
- **passing a resolution to create an Article V Constitutional Convention**

At the end of the 2019 Legislative Session, the West Virginia Senate passed a resolution to study the implementation, costs, and benefits of creating a paid family and medical leave insurance program in West Virginia. Access to paid family and medical leave improves outcomes for children and benefits businesses by creating healthier and more productive employees.

OUR VISION

A prosperous West Virginia where everyone has a meaningful and equitable opportunity to thrive.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE & BUILDING CAPACITY IN OUR COMMUNITIES

In January, we officially launched our WVCBP Advisory Committee. Made up of 18 stakeholders and community leaders from across the state, our advisory committee helps ensure our work is grounded and informed by the priorities, needs, and realities of our partners. Its members help develop our research and policy priorities, partner on community engagement and local events, and provide feedback and recommendations on our work.



The 4th-annual SPI was held in July at West Virginia State University with a focus on criminal justice reform with over 40 students in attendance. Panelists and speakers highlighted recent criminal justice reform victories as well as innovative policies that would help even more West Virginians avoid the criminal justice system and improve the reentry process for those coming out of it. Interactive sessions included a re-entry simulation with officials from the U.S Department of Justice.



In August, after the public urging of the WVCBP and our coalition partners, Governor Justice announced that he would form a Census Committee to help ensure that the state gets an accurate number during the 2020 count. Without one, West Virginia stands to lose part of the \$6 billion in federal funds it receives each year, along with one of our three Congressional seats.



In November, attendees of the second-annual Food for All Summit developed a slate of anti-hunger policies to promote to policymakers. These included county summer student feeding programs and increased funding for emergency food assistance organizations. Hosted by the West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition, the WVCBP, and other partners, the Summit gathered advocates from across the state.

Throughout the year, the WVCBP sponsored and participated in community meetings and forums featuring the film *Healing Justice*. Our outreach brought together community partners, judges, lawmakers, faith leaders, and law enforcement to discuss restorative justice and showcased case studies of its impact on criminal justice reform.

It was also a year where our state fiscal analysis brought fact checking to the media and governor's rosy economic narrative that West Virginia was on a strong financial footing.

Our Major Publications

Your Guide to the State Budget

Medicaid Work Requirements: Challenges and Alternatives

Public Money for Private Schools: Education Savings Accounts Can Grow Costly While Doing Little to Improve Education

West Virginia Shale Development Falls Short of Economic Promise

Missed Opportunities: The West Virginia FY 2020 Proposed Budget

Extending Medicaid Coverage to Low-Income Postpartum Women Can Improve Their Health Outcomes

Wage Theft in West Virginia: Solutions for a Hidden Epidemic

Banning the Box in West Virginia: Giving Workers with Criminal Records a Fair Chance



Our staff published 57 blog posts and 18 op-eds and made 48 presentations across the state. Director of Policy Engagement Kelly Allen was quoted in the *Washington Post* on health care coverage and Senior Policy Analyst Sean O'Leary appeared in the *Huffington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* discussing the state's employment numbers. We expanded our social media outreach to include a professionally produced video to show the benefits of increasing the natural gas severance tax. This video was viewed more than 10,000 times.







Staff and coalition partners got in front of the camera to produce Facebook Live videos including the weekly Wonk's World with the folks at the

American Friends Service Committee. In addition, our annual Budget Breakfast was professionally live streamed.

Our research, analysis, grassroots engagement, and government affairs led the charge to defeat Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) during the 2019 Legislative Session. Our strategic digital campaign helped over 160 people send over 400 emails to lawmakers at critical moments during the legislative debate. Our Facebook campaign educating the public about ESAs had a digital reach of over 30,000 with direct engagements of more than 1,900.

Legislative attacks on Medicaid were also stifled due to our outreach. Nearly 300 concerned citizens sent close to 700 emails to the WV House of Delegates opposing Medicaid work reporting requirements in less than 72 hours leading to the bill's defeat. Our single Facebook post on this action reached over 44,000 people and generated 2,146 direct engagements during the same short time period.

Our Social Engagement

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
 FB LIKES	907	1,759	2,119	2,872	3,300
 SUBSCRIBERS	1,503	1,974	2,039	2,521	2,839
 FOLLOWERS	1,131	1,825	2,101	2,515	2,946
 MEDIA HITS	224	164	258	153	90



Expenditures

General Program

\$510,483

Management & General

\$93,173

Fundraising

\$4,198

\$607,854 Total

2019 Funders

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy thankfully acknowledges the following foundations and organizations who financially contributed to its work in 2019:

American Federation of Teachers – WV, Ami Nagle and Associates, Appalachian Community Fund, Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Good News Mountaineer Garage, Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, Hopewell Fund, Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, MAZON, National Association of Social Workers – WV, Solidarity Giving, Sisters Health Foundation, Stoneman Family Foundation, West Virginia Council of Churches, West Virginia Education Association, West Virginians for Affordable Health Care, West Virginia FREE, West Virginia Healthy Kids and Families Coalition, West Virginia School Service Personnel Association, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and WVU Institute for Labor Studies and Research.

West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy

OUR MISSION

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy's mission is to use research and analysis to advance the well-being of West Virginia communities, and to promote and support the essential role of government in improving the quality of life in the state.

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