

Legislative Session Recap

The 2020 November elections delivered supermajority control to Republicans in the state legislature. The day after the elections, Governor Jim Justice announced that his top priority for the upcoming legislative session would be a repeal of the state's progressive personal income tax, the source of over 40 percent of the state's revenue. The issue dominated a tumultuous legislative session until day 60, when the legislation was dramatically rejected by the House of Delegates in a stunning 0-100 vote.

For the second legislative session in five years, the WVCBP was the statewide leader in protecting the personal income tax – West Virginia's only source of progressive revenue, generating over \$2 billion annually to support vital public services. In protecting the personal income tax, we also protected the state budget and the public services and programs that it funds, including investments in public education, public health, and more. In partnership with organizations representing children, health educators, and community leaders, the WVCBP mobilized a robust coalition that efficiently educated the more than 30 new members of the legislature about how eliminating the state's personal income tax would disproportionately benefit the state's wealthiest households at the expense of low- and middle-income West Virginians and the state's already-underfunded public services. The WVCBP led a months-long campaign combining research, analysis, strategic communications, and advocacy to defeat not only the biggest proposed tax shift in West Virginia history, but the most significant threat to the state's ability to make needed investments in our people through the funding of critical programs and services.



Regarding health care policy during the 2021 legislative session, the WVCBP was proud to support our health care-focused partners in strengthening postpartum care for West Virginia women. HB 2266 extended postpartum care from 60 days to 12 months and raised the income eligibility threshold from 138 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) to 185 percent of FPL. A 2017 study found that an alarming 51 percent of maternal deaths occur postpartum, and that racial disparities compound these effects. By providing necessary coverage to more mothers for longer periods of time, West Virginia has taken a critical step in prioritizing maternal and infant health.

2021 also saw positive steps forward in the criminal law reform space. For years, the WVCBP has been a proud member of the West Virginia Criminal Law Reform Coalition (WVCLRC), a diverse group of stakeholders that is intentional about putting individuals directly impacted by our criminal legal system at the forefront. The WVCBP's primary role in this coalition is to provide timely analysis and advocacy

in support of the group's shared goals. During the 2021 legislative session, the WVCLRC successfully secured passage of legislation to expand juvenile restorative justice programs (HB 2094) and legislation to authorize the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation to establish a reentry and transitional housing program (HB 3304). In addition to providing strategic research and advocacy support, the WVCBP was able to leverage existing relationships in the statehouse to ensure that our personally impacted coalition partners had access to the Capitol and lawmakers throughout the first state legislative session to take place during the pandemic. This support proved crucial in defeating multiple bills that would have been major steps backward in this space, including HB 2257, legislation that sought to create a new form of extended supervision for people convicted of certain drug crimes for up to an additional 10 years beginning after their normal parole or probation supervision ends.

While much of the WVCBP's success during the 2021 legislative session related to defeating legislation detrimental to state revenues, the safety net, and criminal law reform, as an organization, we also managed to move the needle on numerous positive bills that impact West Virginia families. Whether helping to pass bills that build on the success of earlier legislative victories or defeating harmful legislation that would have undone progress from previous years, the WVCBP team successfully advocated for policies that would increase equity and opportunity for all West Virginians.

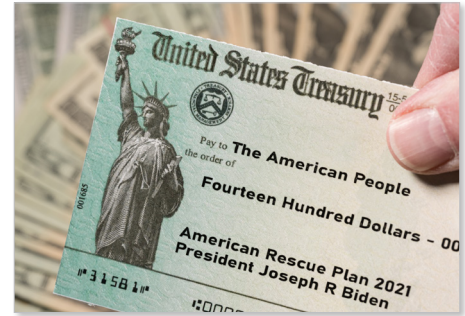
OUR VISION

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

WVCBP IN THE COMMUNITY

American Rescue Plan Act Advocacy

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), 2021 saw a significant influx of federal dollars allocated to state and local governments across the country. In West Virginia, nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars was sent directly to counties and municipalities. The WVCBP led efforts to educate state legislators and local elected officials about the most impactful uses these pandemic relief dollars could be put toward. The WVCBP published a guide on best practices for equitably spending ARPA funds that was seen as a model around the country. Further, we were intentional about regularly emphasizing the importance of collecting meaningful input from community members on how to use ARPA dollars to spur an equitable recovery focused on those most deeply impacted by the health and economic effects of the pandemic.



In response to the WVCBP's efforts, multiple municipalities and counties actively engaged in soliciting input from their communities. In Charleston, for example, there were four in-person meetings held to provide input, in addition to email and text options. City Council and the mayor then made available documents outlining what the public expressed they wanted ARPA funding to support. The WVCBP worked closely with our partners at the WV Food and Farm Coalition and Keep Your Faith Corporation throughout the public input process in 2021 to advocate for a nearly \$1 million commitment of Charleston ARPA dollars to the state's SNAP Stretch program and the establishment of a community grocery store on Charleston's West Side.

Working to Improve Medicaid for Mountaineers

Connecting directly with individuals and families with lived Medicaid experience drove our administrative health advocacy and policy efforts throughout 2021. We worked alongside our colleagues at West Virginians for Affordable Health Care to conduct community engagement and interviews with West Virginians who utilize Medicaid. Engaging with directly impacted West Virginians allowed us to gain a better understanding of their experiences with Medicaid, including barriers that limited or curtailed their health engagement, and helped us devise well-informed policy recommendations, including implementing automatic renewals and a more robust online system. This approach also gave us the opportunity to act as a liaison between impacted communities and decisionmakers. Combined with feedback from direct service providers, administrators, and advocates, as well as quantitative data from various sources, our approach offered us a holistic understanding of the Medicaid program in the Mountain State. The important insights we've gained over the past year will inform the efforts we will pursue in 2022 and beyond.

Advocating for Paid Leave for All

Throughout 2021, the WVCBP was a lead partner in a coalition to raise awareness and urgency around the need for a federal paid leave policy. Despite being one of the most popular policy issues across partisan lines, the United States is one of the only developed countries that does not guarantee paid leave for workers, and only a handful of states have passed legislation to provide paid leave benefits.

Through our Paid Leave Works for WV campaign, we identified impacted West Virginians who did not have access to paid time off when they needed it the most — to bond with a new child, care for an ill family member, or manage their own serious illness. Through a series of four picnics around the state, we raised awareness, built community, educated advocates, and secured media coverage about the critical need for paid leave as a family support beneficial to our workforce and economy. State and local elected officials attended each picnic to learn more from their impacted constituents about the need for paid leave. Impacted West Virginians also met with members of our federal delegation, including US Senator Shelley Moore Capito, to share their stories.



While we did not successfully secure paid leave in 2021, more West Virginians are engaged in urging their elected officials to prioritize this important issue and the campaign will continue.



MOBILIZING MOUNTAINEERS AROUND CRIMINAL LAW REFORM

Throughout 2021, the WVCBP continued its involvement as a leading partner of the West Virginia Criminal Law Reform Coalition. In addition to providing ongoing research and advocacy support to serve the group's shared legislative goals, the WVCBP played an essential role in organizing and executing the coalition's two major 2021 convenings.

The first of these convenings took place in January and was held entirely online due to pandemic-related health concerns. This virtual event spanned four days and focused on highlighting how poverty intersects with the criminal law system all across the spectrum of one's legal system-involvement. We offered sessions that explored not only how poverty can exacerbate hardships experienced during sentencing and incarceration periods, but also how poverty can put one at heightened risk of arrest to begin with due to the criminalization of social issues such as homelessness and substance use disorder, and how poverty serves as a significant barrier to successful reentry once a person is released from prison or jail.

While the primary goal of the January convening was to build public awareness and knowledge of the many economic injustices ingrained into our criminal legal system, the coalition's second convening - held in December - sought to translate that education into action. We invited all attendees from the January event, as well as countless others, to join the coalition in our advocacy at the West Virginia Capitol. We offered three webinars leading up to the convening where we outlined the issues we intended to tackle in the upcoming state legislative session, as well as a citizen lobbying and storytelling training to prepare attendees to speak with their legislators. The event culminated with a Smart Justice Advocacy Day at the Capitol, where we held a press conference outlining the coalition's legislative priorities and participants had the opportunity to meet with their legislators to discuss our reform goals.

Collectively, the two convenings were attended by hundreds of West Virginians, as well as people from across the country. And importantly, the December convening created space for justice-impacted West Virginians to directly advocate for policy change informed by their own life experiences. As the coalition grows over time, leadership will continue to prioritize putting the expertise of those with lived legal system experience at the forefront, where it belongs.

OUR MAJOR PUBLICATIONS



- State of Working West Virginia 2021: Labor, Race, and Solidarity
- Emerging Stronger from the Pandemic: A Blueprint for an Equitable Economic Recovery in West Virginia
- Medicaid in the Mountain State: A Health and Economic Necessity
- The State of Reentry and Barriers for Returning Citizens in West Virginia
- Saving Lives and Saving Money: The Case for Harm Reduction in Kanawha County, WV
- The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic in West Virginia in 2020
- American Rescue Plan Act's Education Funds Can Address Inequity in West Virginia's Public Schools
- Pay More, Get Less: The West Virginia FY 2022 Budget Proposal
- Overcrowded and Overburdened: West Virginia Counties Struggle to Pay Regional Jail Bills



	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
FB LIKES	1,759	2,119	2,872	3,300	3,701	3,961
SUBSCRIBERS	1,974	2,039	2,521	2,839	4,434	3,954
FOLLOWERS	1,825	2,101	2,515	2,946	3,404	3,836
MEDIA HITS	164	258	153	90	153	263



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.



Staff Retreat to Blackwater Falls State Park, Tucker County, WV

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**Call to Action for
Racial Inequality**

Food for All

Health Care for All WV

**Legislative Action Team
for Children and Families**

Paid Leave Works for WV

Race Matters

**West Virginia Criminal
Law Reform Coalition**

**West Virginia Tax and
Budget Coalition**

**West Virginians Together
for Medicaid**

WV United

Expenditures

General Program

\$942,485

Management & General

\$34,286

Fundraising

\$1,295

\$978,066 Total

2021 Funders

The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy thankfully acknowledges the following foundations and organizations who financially contributed to its work in 2021:

- Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation
- Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation
- Stoneman Family Foundation
- Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
- West Virginians for Affordable Health Care
- Vera Institute of Justice
- MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Sisters Health Foundation
- Robin Hood Foundation
- Hopewell Fund
- Paid Leave for All/Sixteen Thirty Fund
- Heinz Endowments
- Economic Policy Institute
- ACLU of West Virginia
- American Friends Service Committee - Charleston
- Cabin Creek Health Systems
- National Association of Social Workers - West Virginia Chapter
- Planned Parenthood South Atlantic
- West Virginia Association of Counties
- West Virginia Citizen Action Education Fund
- West Virginia Council of Churches
- West Virginia Education Association



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State Priorities
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