

Stateline

A Newsletter For West Virginia State Government Employees

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2009 State of the State: Manchin Expresses Confidence



Governor Joe Manchin delivers his 2009 State of the State Address on February 11, 2009. Photo by Steve Rotsch.

Presenting his first State of the State Address since being re-elected, Governor Joe Manchin III began his February 11, 2009 speech by saying he was both honored and humbled by the faith placed in him and his administration.

In a speech with high focus on the economy, Manchin addressed the declining financial picture with hope and confidence, rather than despair.

“We are experiencing a global economic transformation – some even call it a financial meltdown. ... while I am certainly concerned, I am not scared.”

Early in his very first term as Governor, Manchin took steps to make the State financially responsible; a stance he has continued throughout his leadership. He boasted proudly that fiscal discipline and responsible government efforts have permitted the State to pay down pension debt and other unfunded liabilities, saving billions of dollars, and allowed challenges to be turned into opportunities. West Virginia has been able to outperform budget forecasts due to record revenue collections for the past three years. We have been able to avoid adding a \$250 million increase to the 2011 budget by appropriating additional money into our teacher’s retirement debt now.

These factors and more have contributed to a growing confidence for both our citizens and investors. In fact, the Governor states that since 2005, over 200 companies have invested \$8.6 billion here in location and/or expansion. Further, West Virginia increased its 2008 exports by 41 percent over 2007 – a fantastic feat, especially when compared with a national rate of only 12 percent!

And while Governor Manchin plainly cautioned that he expects even tougher times to come, he was also encouraging about West Virginia’s ability to pull through, saying that, “Today we are in a planning mode, not a panic mode.”

While discussing the sadness of recent layoffs, and plant and business closures, he reminded us that because of our State’s positive economic condition, we aren’t facing



February 6, 2009 was a red-letter day for citizens across America as people wore red-colored clothing for National Wear Red Day. This annual event is sponsored by the American Heart Association to support the fight against the #1 killer of women today – heart disease. Above, employees of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services – men and women – show their support for the cause. Photo courtesy of Angela Farha.

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State Agencies Earn *Worksite of the Month* Designations for Wellness

Each month, Pathways to Wellness, a program sponsored by the Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA), selects a *Worksite of the Month*. In January this year, the Department of Health and Human Resources's (DHHR) William R. Sharpe Jr. Hospital in Weston received the honor.

According to the write-up in the Pathways to Wellness newsletter, Sharpe Hospital was applauded for having over 200 participants attend its annual health screening this past October. They also received praise for influencing 130 employees to sign up for *Stepping Stones*, a lifestyle change program.

Sharpe's worksite wellness coordinator is Becky Berlin. Becky works very hard to organize the health screening and promote the program in general by utilizing a bulletin board display and contributing wellness article for the employee newsletter.

Sharpe Hospital isn't the only State entity to receive the *Worksite of the Month* designation. Other offices receiving the honor include:

- ✿ DHHR Summers County Office (February 2009; coordinator Joni Karnes): This office has a very active worksite that boasts over 80% participation at its most recent health screening and the formation of a follow-up program called *The Tone Zone*.
- ✿ Division of Rehabilitation Services Berkeley County Office (December 2008; coordinator Judy Butts): The office boasts a 100% participation rate for its annual health screening, and a 100% completion rate for participants of a behavior change program.
- ✿ Division of Environmental Protection Fayette County Office (May 2008; coordinator Karon Workman): Healthy lifestyles is a priority in the lives of the employees of this office, and Workman has created a fitness area in the office to help with stress and fitness. Through wellness

Visit www.peiapathways.com for more on other Worksites of the Month or to access the Pathways to Wellness online newsletter,



Terry Small, Becky Berlin, and Eric Smith proudly display Sharpe Hospital's Worksite of the Month Award. Photo courtesy of Pathways to Wellness.

efforts, several staff members have discovered health conditions that could easily have gone unnoticed and untreated.

- ✿ DHHR Wood County Office (March 2008; coordinator Beth Eklund): Efforts are made to involve as many of this worksite's employees as possible in wellness programs, and Eklund is always looking for ways to both promote and improve the wellness program.

Can the West Virginia Family Tax Credit Help You?

Governor Joe Manchin is encouraging all citizens to take advantage of all available credits, exemptions, and modifications so help them weather these tough economic times.

In his *From the Governor's Desk* column for February 27, 2009, Manchin cites two credits that could help lower your taxes. We mentioned one of those credits, the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), in the December 2008 issue of *Stateline*. The second possibility, the West Virginia Family Tax Credit (WVFTC), became available to taxpayers in 2007.

The WVFTC can help certain individuals and families reduce or even eliminate their West Virginia personal income tax. If you made less than \$38,300 in tax year 2008, or if your modified gross income is equal to or less than \$2,700 above the federal poverty guideline for 2008, you may qualify.

To learn more about the EITC or the WVFTC, visit www.wvtax.gov. To read Governor Manchin's entire column on this subject, go to www.wvgov.org/sec.aspx?id=43&columnid=416.

A West Virginia Stay Could Be Your Perfect Get-Away!

Getting that itch to plan your summer vacation? Consider one in West Virginia!

The Division of Tourism provides a number of mini websites geared to specific interests like rafting, golf, history, whitewater rafting, and others, including entertainment and nightlife!

Whether you're looking for an action-packed vacation or a tranquil get-away, West Virginia has exactly what you want. With a click of your mouse, you'll find information on events, lodging, and costs.

Give us a look. For complete details, visit www.wvtourism.com.



SPEECH – Continued from Page 1

employee furloughs, cuts to essential government services or education budgets, or tax increases – actions other states are being forced to implement. Unfortunately, the current economic climate isn't going to allow for State employee pay raises at this point in time; however, Manchin did state that he would request the ability to share any additional money we have with teachers, service personnel, and State employees if conditions improve enough.

The topic of energy was prominent in the Governor's speech. Citing that the country NEEDS West Virginia's energy resources, Manchin feels that now is the time for the State to move the world in the direction of new energy development. This means that we must invest in future energy resources, including coal, natural gas, and renewable sources like wind, solar, hydro, and biofuel energy.

To help accomplish this, he is introducing the *Alternative and Renewable Energy Portfolio Act*, which will set a timeframe in which to develop alternative/renewable energy resources. Manchin also discussed other energy topics such as clean coal technology and carbon capturing.

Our miners haven't been forgotten. Manchin was pleased to announce that over 40,000 new self-contained self rescuers are now in place, and that approximately 225 mine shelters have been installed, with more on the way. More inspectors and safety instructors have been hired, and inspections are more vigilant. Foremen and fire bosses are now required to undergo additional training, and shut down procedures have been made easier.

Recalling the Kanawha Valley chemical plant explosion last summer, the Governor called for carrying the lessons learned in mine safety over to our manufacturing plants. For this reason, he is submitting a bill requiring all industrial plants to follow the same reporting procedures for major accidents as those followed by our mines.

On education, Manchin is asking for legislation for the school year to begin five days earlier to allow for easier compliance with the mandated 180 days of instruction that is often not met due to weather and other circumstances. He is proposing to keep children who do not meet third and eighth grade education standards from being moved ahead until those standards are met, if necessary, with help from after-school programs/summer school or in the extreme, by being retained in their current grade for another year. Additionally, he commended the Troops for Teachers program, which channels our veterans into the classroom to share their knowledge, and proposed changes to the State's colleges/universities regarding the "New GI Bill," a program designed help discharged veterans get into college.

Healthcare issues like dental care and affordable insurance for individuals who can't realistically pay for these services, using healthcare technology to improve overall health, and addressing childhood obesity were included in the Governor's remarks, as were other topics of interest such as:

- ❖ Introducing legislation to close a pension double-dipping loophole,
- ❖ Establishing a committee to study modernizing our court system, including the possibility of an intermediate court level, and
- ❖ Fixing the veterans pension system.

Overall, Governor Manchin remains optimistic that we can meet our challenges, improve our economy, and create more jobs.

The text and video of the 2009 State of the State Address are available on the Governor's Office website at www.wv.gov/sec.aspx?id=113.

Workers Reminded of Vehicle Use Guidelines

In April 2008, Larry Puccio, Chief of Staff for Governor Joe Manchin, issued guidelines regarding vehicle use for State business.

Employees who travel as part of their jobs are reminded of the following:

Privately owned vehicles (POVs) should be used only when an agency-owned or leased vehicle is not available and employees' travel requirements are infrequent. POVs should also not be used if the cost of reimbursement will exceed \$50 per day unless an agency vehicle is not available and the cost of mileage reimbursement is less than that of commercial travel (airfare, rental car, etc.).

In addition, every consideration should be given to travel alternatives, such as teleconferencing (the Office of Technology can assist with logistics for teleconferencing).

Mon., May 18, 2009 10 A.M. Pipestem Resort State Park

\$60/person, inc. greens fees, cart, cookout, & pre-tourney range balls

Open to current and retired employees of federal/State/city/country government or public education

Rooms 20% off rack rate for Sun. or Mon. if reservations made by May 8.

1-800-CALLWVA

Identify yourself as a tourney participant

Trophies and prizes for both men's & women's divisions

Low Gross & Net Scores (Callaway System)

Closest to Pin/Longest Drive Contest

Optional Skins Game

!!! DOOR PRIZES !!!

How about a practice round? May 17 - \$25 Tee times begin at 1 P.M.

18th ANNUAL PUBLIC EMPLOYEES GOLF TOURNAMENT

Entry Deadline
May 8, 2009

Phil Wiechman, Golf Pro
Pipestem: 466-1800, ext. 474



National Volunteer Week Provides Opportunities for Everyone to Serve

Contributed by Mitzi Miller of the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service.

In tough times, we are often called upon to rise to the occasion and find ways to help ourselves when finances aren't in our favor. Service and volunteerism provide the perfect avenue for organizations with tight budgets, and for individuals looking for ways to expand their job skills, meet new people, and make a difference in their communities.

Volunteer West Virginia, the State's Commission for National and Community Service, encourages all West Virginians to strengthen their communities through service and volunteerism.

National Volunteer Week is April 19 through 25. With our nation's president making a significant call to service this year, there has never been a better reason to get out in our communities and make a difference.

Here are some suggestions for getting involved:

- Check out www.volunteerwv.org to look for a volunteer opportunity in your area. You can search for opportunities based on your interests, geographic location, and dates of availability. If you are an organization looking for volunteers, consider posting your volunteer opportunity on this site as well. More than 2,500 statewide volunteers are currently registered and more than 300 statewide organizations post volunteer opportunities. Volunteers are matched with opportunities that fit their interests and criteria.
- Blog about your volunteer experiences or your outlook on volunteerism on www.volunteerwvblog.org. This site was designed to let West Virginians tell their own personal stories of service.
- Contact Volunteer West Virginia to find out if there are opportunities to volunteer through one of its many programs, including AmeriCorps, Project FLOW (Future Leaders of Watersheds), West Virginia Citizen Corps, or the West Virginia Business Volunteer Council.



For more information about volunteerism, please contact Volunteer West Virginia, the State's Commission for National and Community Service, by visiting www.volunteerwv.org, calling 304-558-0111, or emailing Mitzi Miller at Mitzi.Miller@wv.gov.

You **MUST** Leave the Building ...

It's 38° outside, gray and overcast, with a steady, cold drizzle falling from the sky. It's not a big problem, because you're nested at your desk, inside, shielded from the nasty weather. Soon, however, you hear it. The sound that makes you groan. The fire alarm begins to ring.

Going out into the cold and rain is the last thing you want to do. Besides, that report is due by 2:00. Maybe you'll just "skip" this drill.

As nice as that sounds, **it's wrong!**

State Fire Code requires full evacuation drills, and occupants must follow their building's protocol for evacuation whenever there is an emergency drill.

Emergencies don't always happen in warm, sunny weather; the same holds for drills. When the alarm sounds, leave the building and stay out until the all-clear is given.

We're Serious About Your Safety!

We all know that today, we live in a different world. The words *caution, training, awareness, safety, preparedness*, and many others have taken on whole new meanings and levels of importance.

Your safety is of the utmost concern, and for this reason, the strengthening of security measures began a long while back. Many security features are in place, including access protocols for buildings, equipment, and authorities; electronic and hands-on surveillance; beefed up password requirements; and reinforcement of emergency procedures. Even so, we are continuing efforts to upgrade and improve whenever and wherever possible.

One area currently being addressed is the updating of our Emergency Preparedness Teams (EPT). Vacant roles in estab-

lished teams are being filled and new teams are being formed where needed. In addition, procedures and training are being visited and revisited.

On March 3, 2009, EPT members from the Capitol Complex attended training on the use of evacuation chairs. Alisha Samples and Terry Hanson of the Charleston Fire Department provided verbal and hands-on instruction to all 45 attendees.

Most were surprised at the efficiency of the chairs and how easy they are to use. They were further surprised by the fact that smaller statured individuals

are able to manage and guide the chairs down steps as easily as larger people. What's the best way you can help in an emergency at work? For starters, read the article that appears to left of this one!



Photo by Matt Brown.

EPT members practice with the evacuation chair.

Outdoor Burning Restrictions in Effect Until May 1

Edited from a press release on the Division of Forestry's website: www.wvforestry.com/Spring%20Fire%20Season%2009.pdf.

Officials at the Division of Forestry remind West Virginia residents that the spring forest fire season began March 1. From that time through April 30, 2009, outdoor burning is restricted to evening hours when cooler temperatures, increased humidity and calmer winds reduce the likelihood of fires spreading.

No outdoor fires will be allowed during the daytime hours of 7 A.M. to 4 P.M. Fires to burn brush or other vegetative debris may only be started after 4 P.M. and must be extinguished by 7 A.M.

Fire Staff Assistant Ben Webster says that since January 1, the State has already had nearly 100 fires that have burned approximately 800 acres.

Museum in the Park Opens Youth Art Month Exhibit

Contributed by Terri Marion of the Division of Culture and History.

Museum in the Park at Chief Logan State Park is celebrating Youth Art Month with an exhibition, *Through a Child's Eyes*, created by participants in its Saturday *Museum Kids* arts and crafts class. The show is free and will remain on display through April. The public is invited to visit the museum and celebrate the children's accomplishments.

In recognition of National Youth Art Month, the museum recently provided disposable cameras to participants of the arts and crafts class and encouraged them to roam throughout Chief Logan State Park, taking photographs of their favorite things. The museum staff then assembled individual photographic collages of each child's work and put them on display.

The exhibit highlights features of the park as only children can see them. From winter landscapes to natural and man-made features of the park, each child's work focuses on their personal interests.

Youth Art Month was established to underscore the importance of including arts experiences in all students' education. Museum in the Park plans a series of exhibits of artistic work by children each year for Youth Art Month and welcomes suggestions on subject matter for future displays.

The *Museum Kids* arts and crafts class is a program offered by the museum that brings artistic and craft-oriented opportunities for children aged four through 14. Projects include painting, three-dimensional art and sculpture, seasonal and historical crafts, and games and puppetry art.

For more information about the Youth Art Month exhibit, *Through a Child's Eyes* or the *Museum Kids* arts and crafts program, contact Elizabeth Williams, site manager for the museum, at (304) 792-7229, or e-mail her at elizabeth.williams@wvculture.org.

The Museum in the Park is a regional cultural center showcasing the best in West Virginia history and the arts. It features changing exhibits and displays of artwork and historical items from the collections of the West Virginia State Museum and the State Archives. One area of the museum is dedicated to local and regional history. It is operated and maintained by the West Virginia Division of Culture and History and is located four miles north of Logan on West Virginia Route 10 in Chief Logan State Park. Museum hours are Wednesday through Saturday 10 A.M. to 6 P.M., and Sunday from 1 to 6 P.M.



"We've seen quite a few fires so far this year despite the snow and rain most of the State has received. Half of those were the direct result of fires where people started to burn debris that later were allowed to escape and burn multiple acres."

Webster says nearly all forest fires in West Virginia can be prevented, especially if residents use common sense. "If an area is extremely dry, wait until rain has fallen before burning outdoors, and never start a fire



Keep Our State Beautiful!

Prevent this from happening. Obey the outdoor burning restrictions.

File photo contributed previously by the Division of Forestry.

on a windy day." He recommends keeping a rake, shovel, and water hose nearby in case the fire does escape, and urges people to call 911 if they can't easily extinguish the escaped blaze. Webster says that any violation of the outdoor burning restrictions, including allowing a fire to escape containment, may result in a misdemeanor charge, a fine of up to \$300, plus liability for costs of fighting the fire and the damage caused by the fire to property.

Other requisites for outdoor burning include clearing a safety strip of at least 10 feet around the burning materials and attending the fire at all times until it is fully extinguished.

For more information about the spring forest fire season, visit the Division of Forestry's website at www.wvforestry.com.

Significant Revisions to Federal Laws Take Place

Several noteworthy revisions to major federal laws affecting employment were recently implemented.

Significant amendments to the *Family and Medical Leave Act* became effective on January 16, 2009. The amendments implemented the new military family leave provisions enacted in January, 2008; made numerous changes to the notice and certification requirements; and added several new forms. The Division of Personnel (DOP) is updating the *Parental Leave/Family and Medical Leave* Interpretive Bulletin and related forms.

Also, the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has issued a notice regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act which became effective January 1, 2009. Significant changes include:

- ❖ A revised definition of the term *disability*,
- ❖ An expanded definition of the term *major life activity*,
- ❖ A determination that most mitigating measures are no longer given consideration when determining if an individual is disabled, and
- ❖ An emphasis that the term *disability* should be interpreted broadly.

Finally, on April 3, 2009, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) will be posting a revised I-9 Form on its website. The revised regulations include an informational copy of the new form. In the interim, employers may continue to use the June 5, 2007 version of the form. The Handbook for Employers, Instructions for Completing the Form I-9, will be revised and made available on the USCIS site in the near future.

Extensive information about all of these changes can be found on the websites of the agencies involved. Links may be found at the DOP website (www.state.wv.us/admin/personnel/default.htm) or you can call Employee Relations at 304-558-3950, ext. 57209.

Pencil In ...

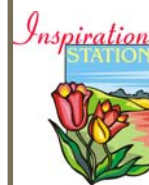


VOTE FOR BRAD!

Governor Manchin is encouraging everyone to vote for West Virginian Brad Paisley as the Academy of Country Music Awards Entertainer of the Year. You can cast your vote up through the last hour of the broadcast on April 5 at www.cbs.com/specials/acma/



In April, West Virginia Public Broadcasting's program, *The Law Works*, discusses how legislation evolves, the jury selection process, employee performance evaluations, and whether the practice of law is a profession or a trade. The program airs on Thursdays at 8:30 P.M. You'll find more information at PBS: www.wvpubcast.org/lawworks.aspx.



I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden.

Ruth Stout
Gardening Expert

It's that time of year again...
so hop on over or even run...
We're having an Easter Party
that will be lots of fun!
We'll see the Easter Bunny and eat good food
now all our party needs is you!

Please join
Governor Joe Manchin III
and
First Lady Gayle C. Manchin
For the
2009 Easter Egg Drop


Saturday, April 11th
1 p.m. - 3 p.m.
at the State Capitol Grounds

Eggs and prizes for the kids!
Refreshments for all!

1:00 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. Festivities
Petting Zoo - Puppet Show - Clowns - Craft Projects
And a special visit from the Easter Bunny
2:45 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. Easter Egg Drop
Ages 3 - 6 and Ages 7 - 10

Call (304) 558-3588 for tickets in advance
or
pick up your tickets at the Cultural Center Reception Desk between
9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. the day of the event.

RAIN OR SHINE

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