



## **Libertarian Party of West Virginia Chair: “It’s Time for a Legislature That Trusts West Virginians, Not Bureaucrats”**

*Taylor Richmond, Chair of the Libertarian Party of West Virginia*

As lawmakers return to Charleston for the upcoming legislative session, they face a simple question: Will they continue down the well-worn path of government expansion, or will they finally choose a future rooted in freedom, responsibility, and trust in the people of West Virginia?

The Libertarian Party of West Virginia urges legislators to take bold action this year by embracing a slate of reforms that reduce government’s footprint and empower individuals, families, and businesses. These are priorities, not fringe ideas and include budget reduction and income tax elimination, certificate of need reform, medical freedom in schools, foster care reform, and energy sector regulation reform. These are common-sense steps toward a freer, more prosperous Mountain State.

### **Shrink the Budget and Kill the Income Tax**

Mountaineers have been under a republican supermajority for well over a decade now. Despite the self-avowed principle of less government, they have refused to take any significant actions to do so in West Virginia. They have regularly boasted of a “flat” state budget. ***That flat budget has increased year over year.*** Meanwhile, they have relied on increased tax revenue in other areas to meet their meager steps in fractionally reducing our state income tax. While we keep holding out for a 0% state income tax, we see other states not only eliminate theirs but also begin to eliminate their personal property taxes. Reducing our budget provides room to move more rapidly towards 0%.

Reducing the state budget is not an act of austerity; it is an act of respect. It acknowledges that taxpayers know how to spend their own money better than politicians do. Eliminating the income tax would send a powerful message that West Virginia is open for business, open for innovation, and open for families who want to build a future here rather than flee to states with friendlier tax climates.

### **Certificate of Need Reform: Ending Protectionism in Healthcare**

West Virginia’s Certificate of Need (CON) laws are a textbook example of government overreach. These laws force industry providers to beg the state for permission to expand services, purchase equipment, open new facilities, or even enter the marketplace, all while existing providers can object to their competition. The Cardinal Institute has shown West Virginia to be one of the most burdened states by CON laws.

Last session, we heard that the healthcare industry prevented any discussion on the matter due to issues with federal funding for rural healthcare. If that remains an issue, we urge the legislature to work with our Congressional delegation to address these matters, but address the other industries burdened by these onerous laws. Reforming or eliminating CON laws will unleash innovation and expand access to care, especially in underserved areas.

### **Medical Freedom in Schools**

Parents, not bureaucrats, should make medical decisions for their children. The Libertarian Party of West Virginia supports policies that respect parental autonomy and ensure that families, and not state agencies, have the final say in matters of

health and education. Mountaineer parents should have the freedom to make medical decisions, consult with doctors, and discuss care needs with their children without state intervention. Medical freedom is not a partisan issue; it is a fundamental civil liberty. West Virginia can lead the nation in trusting parents to make informed decisions without coercion or mandates. To that end, the legislature should not wait on the courts to send that message, they should be brave enough to make it themselves.

### **Foster Care Reform**

West Virginia continues to struggle under the heartbreaking burden of having some of the highest rates of children in foster care in the country. Like with every other issue, the solution is not found in more state spending.

We encourage the legislature to listen to current foster families, as well as those who have been denied being a foster care family to understand what roadblocks are making the process difficult. As with other areas where the government tries to make things better and safer, they have over-burdened the process and in their altruistic aims. To that point, we are thankful to the wonderful churches and non-profit organizations in our state are kept of helping lift this burden.

### **Energy Sector Regulation Reform: Let West Virginia Power West Virginia**

Our state is rich in energy resources, yet overregulation continues to stifle innovation, investment, and job creation. Whether it's coal, natural gas, renewables, or emerging technologies, West Virginia should be the best place in America to produce energy, not one of the hardest. Just this week, many families in Mingo County and surrounding areas were met with increased electric bills jumping in price by up to \$200 extra per household with seemingly no explanation.

Reforming energy regulations would allow companies to innovate, diversify, and grow. It would also strengthen our grid, lower costs for consumers, and ensure that West Virginia remains a national leader in energy production. At the same time, billing should be clear, and any fraudulent actors should be held responsible for hurting the people of the Mountain State.

### **A Call for Courage**

These reforms share a common thread: they trust West Virginians to make decisions for themselves. That is the essence of liberty. It is also the foundation of a thriving society.

The Libertarian Party of West Virginia calls on lawmakers of all parties to ***demonstrate courage*** this session. Break with the old habits of bureaucracy and paternalism. Choose freedom. Choose prosperity. Choose to trust the people who call this state home. We will be watching to see what members rise to the occasion, and which will continue to fail our state motto.

West Virginia's future depends on it.

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