



# SALS JOURNAL

*a quarterly publication of the Southern Appalachian Labor School*

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## AmeriCorps, VISTA, YouthBuild Make a Difference

SALS AmeriCorps Vista & YouthBuild participants, along with the AmeriCorps USA members, collaborated on Make a Difference on Saturday, Oct. 28, under the auspices of the Southern Appalachian Labor School in Beards Fork. Make a Difference Day is a day set aside for volunteers to come together to serve their communities.

The AmeriCorps Vistas made a difference by sponsoring a clothing drive, along with a hot dog and bake sale. They decided to give away clothing because a lot of families throughout Fayette County are in need. Although most items were used, they were able to offer some new clothing.

Clothing was donated by SALS, Vistas, community members and Page Baptist Church. AmeriCorps USA members Debra Spurlock and Jennifer Hamm assisted in helping people with selecting clothing, along with Margaret Black from the community. Vistas helping were Brenda Winter, Nicole Hurley, April Waddell and Vickie Mullins.

Charlene Newkirk, coordinator of School Day Plus/ Starting Points, handed out information packs which included breast cancer awareness information. Children from the School Day Plus Program, along with community kids, assisted by taking pictures and handling the rattle and sign-in sheet; a total of 17 kids helped during the day and a total of 76 people received clothing and bought hot dogs and baked goods.

Local businesses and individuals who helped make the day a success by contributing money, gift certificates and items for the hot dog sale included Tom's Carry Out, A&B Services, A Place to Grow, King Coal Chevrolet, Kentucky Fried Chicken, K-Mart, Dolly Fox, Dr. Diane Ashby, Dave Woods, Scotty Bonds, Dairy Queen, Smitty's Hardware and Frank's Pizza. Everyone at Beards Fork thanks all of these people. A special thanks goes to the community members who donated for the bake sale. Vista April Waddell called on over 50 people and businesses.

Vistas will use proceeds from the hot dog and bake

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## AmeriCorps Funding Helps SALS Housing Projects

SALS Coal Field Housing Project has received AmeriCorps funding from the West Virginia Commission for National and Community Service.

This AmeriCorps project will have its members coordinate and work with a dozen volunteer workcamp groups including various colleges, churches and other organizations. Each of these arrive with 10-20 people throughout the year to work on the rehabilitation of coal camp houses.

AmeriCorps members will also assist in identifying homes and coordinating activities for Group Workcamps scheduled this summer in the Fayette part of the Upper Kanawha Valley Enterprise Community. In its second year in this area, Group Workcamps will bring in 2000 volunteers from all over the country to weatherize and repair 300 low income family homes.

Supplies for the weatherization/repairs will be provided by the Kanawha and Fayette County Commissions, along with the national Group Workcamp organization and other sources. Supplies for several other total home rehabs

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*John David, Jackie Asbury (left front) and former WV First Lady Hova Underwood (center front) on the WV Capitol steps with new AmeriCorps members*

# It's The Electoral System, Stupid!

by Gary Zuckett - Economic, Health & Environmental Justice Coordinator

Who can ignore the irony and unfairness of the November/December election? The whole world was watching us, the bastion of Democracy, elect a president by a couple of hundred votes from one state with lousy ballots. To rub salt in the wound, the winner lost the popular vote by nearly a half a million ballots and the Supreme Court snuffed the counting of uncounted ballots spit out by those notorious punch-card machine counters. Former President Jimmy Carter indicated in a recent public radio interview that an international observation team (many of which he's attended) would probably not certify these results.

Many are offering solutions to this fuzzy voting problem. Here's mine: Proportional Representation in the Electoral College, and Instant Runoff Voting within the states.

## Fair Electoral College Voting:

Maine and Nebraska have figured it out (without the need for a constitutional amendment). Electors to the Electoral College should not be chosen by states in a winner-take-all manner. In these two states the statewide winner gets only two electoral votes. The rest are allotted to the winner of each congressional district (one vote per district). This would result in an electoral vote count that more closely reflects the popular vote even in elections like November's.

In a small state such as West Virginia things wouldn't change much, but large states with significant regional differences could split tickets two or three ways. In addition, candidates could no longer afford to ignore small states or write off states secure in either their own or opponents courts because every Congressional District would be up for grabs. If the 2000 election had been counted in this manner who would have been our next president? I haven't done the math but I'd bet his name wouldn't have a "W" in it.

## Instant Run-Off: No Vote Is "Wasted."

In our winner-take-all system, the winner in a three-way contest can win with less than 50% of the vote. This happened in '92 when the Reform Party grabbed double-digit percentages and Clinton won with only 43% of the popular vote. In many states today it's possible to win multi-candidate elections with 25% or less. This is a Democracy in name only.

What if you could vote for not only your first choice, but a second (and even third) for political candidates? You could if we used Instant Run-Off Voting (IRV). This is how the Parliament in Australia and the President of the Republic of Ireland are elected. It works like this: each voter has only one vote, but ranks candidates in order of preference #1, #2, #3 etc. The counting of the ballots simulates a series of runoff elections. If no candidate receives over 50% in the initial vote, the one with the least number of #1 votes is eliminated and citizens who voted for the eliminated candidate have their #2 choice voted. This "instant runoff" is repeated until someone wins a majority of votes. Thus a (begrudging) mandate is created for the eventual winner, unlike the mess we're faced with now.

Under this system, Ralph Nader (or Denise Giardina) supporters could vote their conscience knowing their votes could still be counted toward a potential victory for their second choice. This would negate the need for Nader "vote swapping" (which I did with a friend of a friend in Texas) and effectively eliminate the "lesser of two evils" argument against voting for third parties. How many #1 votes would Nader or Giardina have gotten under IRV voting? Easily double or triple if people voted their values. Would this send a message to the eventual winner? You can count on it.

Don't look to me as an expert, the Center for Voting and Democracy [www.fairvote.org](http://www.fairvote.org) is a wealth of information on how to upgrade our voting system from an ENIAC (the first vacuum tube computer) to a Pentium IV. Its not rocket science, but since the American Political Science Association uses IRV to select its President, there must be something to it...

Two simple and constitutional reforms of our voting system could put us back on track toward fair and representative elections. If not now, when? If not us, who?



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# Director's Report

By John David

The current issue of Appalachia, the regular publication of the Appalachian Regional Commission, features the SALS YouthBuild Project.

Fayette County became one of the first counties in West Virginia to participate in the HUD Dollar House Program. HUD conveyed a house in eastern Fayette County to the County Commission, which in turn conveyed the house to SALS for \$1 and minor filing costs. The home will be rehabilitated.

WVU-Tech received a WVU-Kellogg Community Partnership Grant which will permit several college classes to work on preparations for the Group Workcamps Project in coordination with the SALS Coalfield Housing AmeriCorps Project and the Upper Kanawha Valley Enterprise Community.

The Group Workcamps Project, which will bring 2000 volunteers to the Upper Kanawha Valley in Kanawha and Fayette Counties in June and July, will be the nation's largest gathering of volunteers. According to SALS Coordinator Jackie Asbury, around 350 homes will be repaired by the volunteers, who will be housed at WVU-Tech, Valley High School in Smithers, and the former East Bank High School.

SALS has taken possession of a new 2001 Ford 15 passenger van. The van was obtained through a grant from USDA Rural Development and contributions from One Valley/BB&T and Columbia Natural Resources.

SALS personnel have attended various conferences and programs. Kathryn South attended a YouthBuild AmeriCorps Educational Award conference in Philadelphia. Jackie Asbury has attended several AmeriCorps conferences, an ACBE meeting in Washington, D.C., and a YouthBuild meeting in New Orleans. Brenda Winter attend an AmeriCorps Learn and Serve program at Pipestem. Vickie Smith has attended various workshops on workers' compensation and safety. April Waddell attended a VISTA collaborative meeting in Pocahontas County and the new VISTA orientation. Jennifer Hamm, Vickie Mullins, Nicole Hurley, April Waddell along with the AmeriCorps Members attended Cross Stream Training at Cedar Lakes near Ripley. John David has attended several of the workshops and conferences noted above. Gary Zuckett has been to many health care rights, tax justice and environmental meetings in Washington, DC and the annual CORA meeting in North Carolina. For his excellent work, Gary also received a special appreciation award from the West Virginia Healthy Kids Coalition.



*Group WorkCamp volunteers repairing home, Summer 2000*

Elbert (J.R.) Williams, YouthBuild Site Supervisor, has passed his contractor's license examination. JR began his SALS career as a vo-tech student and then became an SALS AmeriCorps Member. Later, he was elevated to his current position.

SALS has received its fourth YouthBuild grant. The grant will permit 30 additional youth to earn their GED's and learn construction skills over the next 30 months. In cooperation with SALS Board Members (and WVU Extension Agents) Marcus Wilkes and Robert Massey, SALS is exploring additional programs that would permit adults over age 24 to also participate.

Brenda Winter has accepted the assignment as Senior VISTA Leader. She will coordinate VISTA activities and is working on several grant applications.

SALS has received continuation grants from the Benedum Foundation and the WV Department of Education. In addition, Lowes has donated \$3,000 worth of grass seed to the SALS housing projects. Many thanks to all.

Jennifer Hamm, one of SALS AmeriCorps members was luckily not injured when the SALS van she was driving skidded and rolled over into the creek in December.

The SALS Holiday Gathering was very successful. Over 60 attended and 17 people were involved in food preparation.

R. Massy, SALS Board member and WVU Extension Agent, is conducting careerdevelopment workshops for the YouthBuild participants.

All in all, its been an active and productive year for SALS due to the many dedicated individuals participating in our projects and on the board. A hearty thanks is due to all.

## Writing Class

by Joyce Sneed, GED instructor

Adult Basic Education and YouthBuild students are participating in a writing project sponsored by the WV Department of Education's Adult Basic Division, to develop writing and word processing skills using Microsoft Word 2000. The emphasis will be on job-seeking and job-keeping skills. Students will develop a resume', cover letter, and reference letter. In addition, they'll complete creative writing assignments incorporating graphics and scanned photos. Cameras will be provided in order to illustrate their essays.

## VISTAs Volunteer with Food Drive

SALS AmeriCorps/VISTAs collaborated with WVU-Tech students on their eleventh annual campus food drive. The fall drive began in mid-November and continued until Dec 20th. Mrs. Leftwich, WVU-Tech Bookstore Manager, began this drive in 1990 when she collected over 400 cans of food. Last year, around 1,000 cans were collected and this year's collection totalled 1200!

AmeriCorps/VISTAs were contacted by SALS director, John David (who is also a professor at WVU-Tech) about the food drive. We arranged with Kathy to pick up food and was instructed to deliver it to the Fayette Co. Emergency Food Center.

As we talked with Mrs. Leftwich, we learned that at least one instructor at WVU-Tech encourages students to bring in food by giving 50 bonus points. They are also asked to bring in a new pair of gloves and a hat for a child. Mrs Leftwich believes this is one of the reasons the drive is such a success

## SALS YouthBuild Members Pass Drivers Tests

by Joyce Sneed, GED instructor

Southern Appalachian Labor School students passing their driver's test were Kristin Black, Terry Black, Emily Wroten, and Sarah Taylor. These students realized the importance of having a driver's license, and became aware that without it, employment opportunities were limited.

The ABE/GED class at the Fayette Plateau Vocational-Technical Center assisted the students in studying for their test. These students passed on the first try.

Students were accompanied by Joy Sneed, GED Instructor at the Vocational Center, and were treated to a shopping spree afterward.

## Miners Rally for Healthcare, A Personal Story

by Elizabeth Lindsay, UMWA & WVU-Tech student

*Editor's note: This story was unintentionally omitted from our last issue. However, its still timely as the struggle for Miners Health Rights still continues...*

On May 17th UMWA miners, families and supporters rallied in Washington DC to demand that the government honor its promise of lifetime healthcare to miners. The call to rally had gone out weeks before and I had eagerly anticipated it. It had been far too long since I'd joined my union sisters and brothers in a mass action.

The rally was called to support two pieces of legislation that would shore up health benefits for retirees and widows. The Coal Accountability and Retired Employees Act (CARE 21) would transfer \$172 million in interest from the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund to the UMWA Combined Benefit Fund. A companion bill in the Senate, the Coal Miners and Widows Health Protection Act of 2000, would provide to thousands of miners and widows for another decade. The UMWA Health and Retirement Fund is in serious financial trouble because many companies have gone out of business, filed for bankruptcy protection, or simply closed their unionized operations and ceased to pay into the Funds.

I spent the day before the rally at the home of a friend who is a retired and disabled miner. She and I packed snacks, sunscreen, pillows, drinking water and numerous other "necessities," all the while insisting we would take as little as possible. We tried to sleep but I was far too excited. At 2:30am we put on a pot of coffee and were soon joined by another woman friend who is also a disabled miner. By 3:00am we arrived at the old ball field at Lick Creek where buses would pick us up. To our pleasant surprise, the lot was already crowded. And another former woman miner whom I had not previously met joined us there for the trip. By 3:30am, we had boarded a bus and were underway. I hardly knew anyone else on the bus but it didn't matter-they were my union family and I was thrilled to be with them!

We arrived in Washington DC at noon and stepped off the bus into what seemed an ocean of people. Almost immediately we saw a woman miner from Pennsylvania and caught up on the news from her region. Speakers had already begun to address the crowd as we wound through the line to pick up a box lunch. We settled on the lawn to listen. Behind us, people continued to arrive. The crowd cheered when UMWA President Cecil Roberts came to the

*Continued on page Seven*

# Beards Fork Community News

by *Floyd McKnight, President BFCO*

Beards Fork Community Organization (BFCO) has had a very positive year. This doesn't mean that it was all peaches and honey. Last Christmas season BFCO staged it's first Community Christmas Lighting Contest. This was judged by Fayette County Clerk Mr. Kelvin Holiday, Board of Education member Mr. Leon Newman, and another County official who accompanied Mr. Holiday. BFCO served the officials as well as Mr. Holiday's family cake and ice cream.

Other members of the party enjoyed coffee and cookies as well. The youth of the community serenaded the homes of the residents of Beards Fork, including the winners of the Lighting Contest. The winners (1st, 2nd, and 3rd place respectively) were: Mr. & Mrs. Tony Newkirk; Mr. & Mrs. Pat Bowling; and Mr. & Mrs. Jack Trowbridge.

In February, Rev. Douglas Mullins, Assoc. Pastor of Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church, treasurer of BFCO, and Chaplain of Bright Hope Lodge #9 in Montgomery portrayed the late Dr. Martin Luther King at SALS as part of the celebration honoring the great civil rights leader. Every attending enjoyed the presentation. Refreshments were served and games played by both children and adults.

In midsummer Rev. Mullins was in the road again. He and an entourage of supporters began a march from Kincaid to Montgomery, through the blistering heat over the treacherous curves of Deepwater Mountain, dodging traffic along Rt. 61 until their destination was reached. They were greeted by well-wishers of all Faiths. Some of the greeters were: Rev. Earl Jackson (Pastor of Mt Olive Missionary Baptist Church - Beards Fork); Rev. Kenneth Terry (Assoc. Pastor Eagle Central Baptist Church); Pastor Delbert Coles; Pastor Jeff Floyd (Healing Waters); Rev. Terrace Hamm; Leaders of Kincaid and Deepwater Methodist Church; former Montgomery Mayor Jim Higgins; and members of the city council and Mayor Eddie Long of Smithers. In addition, members of the 1st Baptist Churches in Kimberly, Montgomery, London, and Boomer, Mt Zion in Carbondale, St. John's Missionary Baptist Church on Morris Dr., Ebenezer Baptist Church in Handley, and Bethel Baptist Church in Cannelton greeted the marchers. A celebration in song, prayer and a word from the Lord ended this glorious day.

Thanksgiving has come and gone. The lord has blessed us so well and we thank him. Vickie Mullins, SALS AmeriCorps/VISTA and BFCO secretary, celebrated the Homegoing of her father, Mr. Sam Robertson. The Beards Fork and Glen Jean Communities along with SALS and AmeriCorps/VISTA all joined to extend their sympa-

thy to her and her family. Sympathies were also received from California, Pennsylvania, New York, Texas, DC, Maryland, and the Carolinas as well as throughout the Loop Creek area.

The second annual Home Lighting Contest was another success. My prayers were with all of you as I celebrated Christmas and New Year with my children and grandchildren in Albany, New York. Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year - Love Always.



## A Beards Fork Christmas Parade

On December 9th a community parade was held in Beards Fork. It was the inspiration of Charlene Newkirk and came together with the support of Ruby Price, Sandy Grasly, Johnny Watkins, and Kim Barrett.

Many people from the surrounding areas participated in the parade. We had several floats also. A Live Manger scene included Mercedes Newkirk, Sasha Hamm, Meghan Mullins, Samantha Hamm, Nicola Spillman, and was driven by Tony Newkirk Sr. A Winter Wonderland float was staffed by Darcy Moore as Snow White, Sandra Grasty and driven by Wilbert Grastey. Gift boxes included Ruby Price, Johnny Watkins, Cassie Lovejoy, Olivia Grastey, Katie Lovejoy, Tracie Patrick and Charlene Newkirk. JROTC was represented by Daniel Patrick. Valley Boys Basketball's float was driven by player TC Newkirk and carried James Craig and Craig Fitzwilliams. The Valley Rockets Football entry carried Demetrius Foster and was driven by Joann Foster and Joyce Payne.

In addition, Jerry Beavers drove his 1950 Dodge van. James Craig drove his PT cruiser representing A.E.P. A Santa's Workshop included Sanford Manley Sr. Lynn Hardy and Lisa Manley. The children on Santa's Workshop were Xavier Austin, Toney Manley and Lucas Nibert.

Mr. and Mrs. Anthony Price representing Montgomery General Hospital and Mrs. Stanford Manley Sr. rode in SALS van driven by Brenda Winter and Jennifer Hamm. And last but not least Santa and Mrs. Claus were played by Ronald Haskett and Nicole Hurley with Kimberly Barrett and Carmeron Austin as reindeers.

Thanks to all especially Erica Judd, SALS, Beards Fork Community Organization and VISTA for their support. The parade was organized through the Starting Points and School Day plus programs, Charlene Newkirk, coordinator.

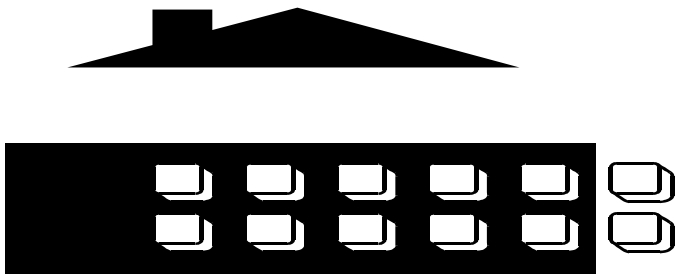
## Mt. Olive Prison Complex Tour

by Joyce Sneed, GED Instructor

On November 14, 2000, a group of YouthBuild members from SALS toured the Mt. Olive Prison complex at Montgomery.

The students were allowed to see the cells, exercise court, library, kitchen and gym. They were also allowed to talk to some of the prisoners.

Students Attending Were Luis Jackson, Todd Evans, Martha Jeffries, Kenneth Taylor, and Kristen Black. FPVTC ABE/GED STAFF Joyce Sneed and Dorothy Shiloh accompanied the students along with SALS AmeriCorpsVista Brenda Winter.



## Tax Credits for Manufactured Housing

by Vickie Smith, Construction Coordinator

SALS has now acquired a total of four manufactured homes from Carrico Mobile Home sales in Oak Hill. We have acquired these homes with state tax credits. Tax credits also furnished the following: Economy Heating donated the heat system for the first mobile home, Carpet World in Beckley donated the carpet, Fayco lumber donated the trim, Madd Mobile Home Movers has agreed to move the home. Our tax credits and wonderful businesses in the local area that support the Labor School have helped us make it possible for a very deserving family to receive a much needed home.

Our first recipient is very excited and plans on being in her new home by Christmas. Every time I meet with the new home owner, I see excited anticipation. I would like to thank the YouthBuild and all local businesses who have made this a special Holiday Season for this family.

Any individual or business that would like to make a tax credit donation to Southern Appalachian Labor School, so that we can make a difference in our community one family at a time, please call 779-2772 or 469-9936 or send to SALS P.O. Box 127 Kincaid, WV 25119

Merry Christmas to All and a Happy New Year!!!!!!!

## Global Volunteers Keep on Giving

by Brenda Winter, AmeriCorps VISTA

Three Global Volunteers who have a continuing interest in our programs at SALS have generously contributed to our cause. Judy Grant, a GV from California, sent word in October that she wanted to donate money for a new computer and software to help with our GED and literacy programs. Judy saw first hand when she was here how important these programs are to our community youth and adults and she is to be commended for all the help she is making possible.

In February we should know more about when we can complete our computer lab that we have been wanting to set up for the past several years. We have several older computers that need to be updated so they can be of use in our projects.

In October, Patrick and Julie Krenn, Global Volunteers from Minnesota shipped a carton of computer books to help the GED candidates prepare for the world of computers. These books are an important part of our Project to help train youth and adults with computer skills. They also included a text on resume' writing which will fit right into our AmeriCorps and YouthBuild mentoring classes at Page. I set up a class with Robbie Massey from the WVU Extension office who will be discussing resume' writing and interviewing techniques with Members in January. The information in this book will aid us in this endeavor.

Many thanks to these outstanding volunteers whose thoughtfulness is much appreciated by the SALS staff and VISTA'S. WE hope to see the Global Volunteers again soon and show them what their generosity has achieved

## Mark Your Calendars! Worker's Cultural Festival May 19th

West Virginia's Premiere Cultural Artist, Jude Binder, and songwriter/hellraiser Anne Feeney will highlight the SALS Eleventh Annual Worker's Cultural Festival on Saturday, May 19th, 2001 at the SALS Community Center in Beards Fork.

Jude is finishing her long awaited production of "field of Flowers" with Ethil Caffee and will perform a preview script.

SALS is cosponsoring the release of Anne's new CD, "Have You Been to Jail for Justice?" at the Festival in May. CD's can be order by sending \$15.95 to Anne Feeney, 7206 Mich. Ave., Pgh., Pa., 15218. [www.laborheritage.org](http://www.laborheritage.org) will also be marketing Anne's brand of labor songs on line.

## *Miner's Health Care, continued from page four*

podium. He spoke of the sacrifices miners have made down through the long history of our country and our union; of explosions and roof falls, of miners killed and maimed or suffocating from Black Lung Disease. He read a letter from a miner's widow who said she was very sick and unable to make the trip but asked that she be counted present at the rally. When President Roberts moved to count her present, the crowd roared its approval. Tears filled my eyes as I thought of my parents whose health prevented them from making the trip. What would they do if they lose their healthcare?

President Roberts said people had told him the UMWA shouldn't be marching and rallying, that those have gone out of style and no one does that anymore. Roberts responded to that comment, "Bless God, Moses marched. The children of Israel marched. You know, Mother Jones marched. Martin Luther King Jr. marched. Ghandi marched. And United Mine Workers of America has marched here today to tell the people in the building behind me (the Capitol) "KEEP THE PROMISE! SAVE THE COAL ACT!"

Our lunch consumed, we began to wander through the crowd. Signs identified groups of miners from all over the country: here Alabama, there Colorado, then Virginia, and on and on. Many were dressed in the camouflage. Miners from Virginia wore red bandannas around their necks, just as the miners who marched on Blair Mountain in 1921 had done. Some retirees were in wheelchairs or on crutches; many had an arm amputated. The crowd ranged in age from the very old to little children. High school students came from West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and from Castlewood, Virginia, many of them veterans of the strike against Pittston Coal Group.

I was delighted to see women miners from Alabama, Illinois, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia. I was equally pleased to see some of my former co-workers I hadn't seen since the mine closed.

All too soon it was time to board the bus for the long ride home. As darkness fell and my fellow passengers quieted, I sorted through a jumble of impressions and emotions: pride at the numbers of people who had answered the union's call. Pleasure at seeing brothers, sisters and friends. Sorrow at the numbers of miners crippled and maimed. Anger at the companies who heartlessly slash their medical coverage-and at the government that allows them to do it.

The next day my dad asked me if I thought the rally had done any good. I wish I could reassure him. Instead, I answered honestly that I don't know. But we had tried. And we must continue to try. Miners and their families have kept our end of the bargain. It's time for the companies and the government to honor the promise.

## **AmeriCorps Means Business**

*by Jennifer Hamm, AmeriCorps USA*

As new AmeriCorps member I have been very busy. We attended AmeriCorps Cross Stream training at Cedar Lakes where we learned lots of new skills. I took resume' development and a writing class. All in all its been a very busy couple of months. I also attended several meetings and trainings in Charleston and Beckley with USDA and West Virginia Housing Fund. In the near future I will also be trained as a housing counselor for Fayette County.

Learning housing rules and regulations has been a challenge. The greatest challenge of all will be helping as many needy families as possible to have adequate, safe housing in our area. Recently, I have been working to get families homes ready and applications completed for Group WorkCamp. This is a faith-based organization that, for the second year, will be bringing in youth volunteers and supervisors to do weatherization on elderly and low-income families homes in Fayette County. Over 300 families will benefit from this project in June and July.

AmeriCorps and YouthBuild projects are working in five different communities on six coal camp houses that will be made available to low-income families in the future.

AmeriCorps, coordinated by four VISTA members are paring up with YouthBuild students as tutors. This project will help them in an effort to achieve their GED. We are mentoring these students as big brother-big sister projects.

As an AmeriCorps member I have also been involved with a clothing giveaway collaborated with VISTA volunteers hot dog sale for Make A Difference Day project.

I look forward to what the future holds for me as an AmeriCorps member.

## **Youth Council Meets**

*By Brenda Winter*

On Thursday evening Dec. 7th, I attended a Region One Youth Council Meeting at Tamarack in Beckley. The Youth Council is a committee of the region's Workforce Development Board which replaced JTPA. The focus was to create a manageable organization that represents the needs of youth in the eleven county area of Southern WV. Teams will be formed in each of the eleven counties. They will be responsible for conducting the Service Provider Surveys, youth assesments, identifying services/resources and making reccomendations on what is needed to crate a comprehensive youth service system in their communities

We will hold meetings at SALS and send two

*continued on next page*

representatives to the Regional Youth Council meetings in Beckley once a month. These representatives will bring ideas and suggestions from the county teams to the meetings. Since this was my first meeting, I look forward to learning much more as the year progresses.

## **From the Streets to the Suites, Broad Coalition Elects New Mayor of Huntington**

*by Steve Rutledge, AFSME/WV Rainbow Coalition*

In a stunning display of political muscle, a broad-based coalition of labor, civil rights, students, and working class constituencies trounced Huntington Mayor Jean Dean into retirement and elected David Felinton effective January 2001.

Mayor-Elect Felinton, a 25 yr. old political science graduate student at Marshall University, relied on aggressive grass roots organizing, good old fashioned door knocking and his own good instincts. He stunned the political establishment by winning the mayoral race with the comfortable 1,717 vote margin (8,428 to 6,711) of victory.

He didn't just appeal for organized labor's votes. He joined the picket lines at City Hall put up by AFSCME's city workers and joined in the two big "Street Heat" demonstrations sponsored by the South West District Labor Council earlier this year. These demonstrations were instrumental in successfully getting a 4 year contract for AFSME Local 598's city workers. AFSME and the Labor Council enthusiastically reciprocated and actively supported Felinton in his race to become mayor.

He didn't just appeal to the African American community for their votes. Felinton went to local community centers, senior citizen organizations, and civil rights groups committing himself to study the concept of a civilian police review board which the outgoing mayor refused to consider.

David activated some of the student population at Marshall, getting them first to register and then to campaign for him. He also campaigned heavily in the white working class neighborhoods thus forging as strong and broad coalition as possible between all the citizens of Huntington who had been neglected for so long.

Mayor-Elect Felinton has assembled a broad based advisory team to work with him during the transition to his inauguration. The process of going from "the streets to the suites" can be pretty challenging because a whole new set of problems arises when one is in the seat of power. The forces that helped put David Felinton in office now must follow through and help guide Huntington - West Virginia's

second largest city - into a new, more prosperous, and more importantly, equitable era in which the previously most neglected sectors of the population are given equal consideration with big business interests.

## **Rags to Riches**

*by JR Williams*

As I sit here looking at the house we have been working on for so long I realize how much better we have made this little community. We are currently working on the Williams house at Pax. I am related to most people around the town so I know this family was in bad need of help. Its a wonderful feeling to know you were behind working on this elderly woman's home. This home, like others we have worked on, went from rags to riches.

I have worked with John David and Vickie Smith for almost four years now and have seen many families just like this one. They all really touch my heart. There is a special feeling being involved with this program. I really enjoy every day and I would seriously encourage anyone interested in joining to do so. It really is a gratifying experience. I would like to especially thank Vickie and all the others for the help and tips they gave me to be able to pass my contractors license test. Thanks to everyone!

## **Work on Gauley Bridge House**

*by John Wroten*

We began (when?) with Global Volunteers team of five and five crew members from YouthBuild. We took out the whole inside of the house including ceilings, walls, bath, kitchen and heating system.

Then we replaced parts of the weak floors and reinforced all of the floors throughout the house. On the exterior, we completely replaced the roof, siding, windows and doors in addition to a 10x12 section of rear wall. The only foundation this house had were 6x6 posts. So we braced it with 3-28ft long 2x8s in the front, middle and back and jacked it up. Then we built 12 piers of cinderblocks to replace the wooden post foundation. This involved hauling approximately 600 cinderblocks under the house. The neighbors next door provided electricity and water daily as we worked in the 30-40 degree weather.

We had a total of seven YouthBuild and three AmeriCorps members working on this project. Ron Yellere and John Wroten are site managers. The crew consisted of Daniel David, Michelle Walker, Emily Wroten, Michael Rowe, Peggy Davis. Josh Perringer, and Louis Jackson. The AmeriCorps members are Jay Harvey, Joe Webb and Tom McClung.



## The Buffalo Creek Flood

*by: Mike Robinson, Man, West Virginia*

Coal Mining Companies Have Always Been Known  
For Wanting To Mine More Coal,  
The Welfare Of Miners And Their Families  
Has Never Been Their Goal.

One Coal Company Has Proven This,  
They Let A Dam Give Way,  
It Pushed Its Way Down Buffalo Creek,  
One Cold-Wet February Day.

It Destroyed Homes And Families,  
Its Awesome Power Released,  
It Devastated Everything In Its Path,  
Over One Hundred Were Now Deceased.

As A Reservist On Duty From The Night Before,  
I Started Up The Road,  
The Sight That Fell Upon My Eyes,  
Was That A Bomb Just Did Explode.

Parts Of Homes Were Everywhere,  
The Destruction Was Complete,  
But My Biggest Surprise Was Yet To Come;  
A Body Lay At My Feet.

I'd Seen The Dead In Vietnam,  
But I Chalked That Up To War,  
But The Dead We Recovered On That Day  
Were Practically From Next Door.

Some I'd Known Since Junior High  
Some I'd Seen In Town.  
But Now They'll Be Just Memories  
The Day The Hood Came Down,

In A Final Act Of Irony.  
My Daughter Had Just Been Born,  
Ten Minutes After The Dam Broke Loose,  
On That Saturday Morn

*Editors Note: February is the anniversary of the  
tragedy at Buffalo Creek, WV*

## Fair-Tax Workshop Inspires Local Action

*Reprinted from PatchQuilt, newsletter of the Catholic  
Committee of Appalachia, appalachia@earthlink.net*

*Editors Note: SALS is an active participant in the  
Coalition for WV Families, a co-sponsor of this event.*

John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston was the scene of a workshop on Values-Based Taxation on November 18th, which was attended by persons from Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia.

Carol Warren of the Justice and Life Office, Diocese of Wheeling/Charleston set the tone for the day in the opening presentation. She pointed out that in a democracy, government is an avenue by which society can act to protect what is important to its citizens and to promote the values they share. Citizens, in turn, have the responsibility to direct the government in its work of assisting and empowering the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, and the unemployed.

Government should also be assisted through taxation to create jobs, establish fair labor regulations, maintain public transportation and various forms of communication, administer and regulate business, and protect the environment. Directing tax dollars toward education and job training are excellent investments in our future. And certainly a portion of our taxes should be used to provide truly adequate support for those needing a safety net.

The tax system itself needs to be periodically evaluated in terms of its effect on the most vulnerable among us. The U.S. Bishops wrote in their 1985 document Economic Justice for All that taxation should raise enough revenue to pay for the public needs of society, and especially to meet the basic needs of the poor. The system should be structured progressively, so that those with greater financial resources pay at a higher rate. Families with income below poverty level are by definition without adequate resources, and should not be burdened by having to pay income taxes.

Sarah Lee spoke about effects of taxation on the African-American community and aired some concerns. Ms. Lee noted that "Rapid Refund" operations often cost low-income people much more than the service is worth-- frequently a substantial portion of the refund. One pastor suggested that tax forms be simplified for people with literacy problems, or that volunteers be made available to help people with the forms.

Ms. Lee stated that the African American community needed more input at the local level. She felt that taxation

*continued on page 14*

# A Layman's Guide To The Supreme Court Decision

by Mark H. Levine, Attorney at Law.

*Dear friends, Please take a few moments and read this excellent piece on the Supreme Court's decision that made Bush "president." Pass it around to all your friends. It's the best thing I've seen. Yours, Michael Moore, mmflint@aol.com www.michaelmoore.com*

Q: I'm not a lawyer and I don't understand the recent Supreme Court decision in Bush v. Gore. Can you explain it to me?

A: Sure. I'm a lawyer. I read it. It says Bush wins, even if Gore got the most votes.

Q: But wait a second. The US Supreme Court has to give a reason, right? A: Right.

Q: So Bush wins because hand-counts are illegal? A: Oh no. Six of the justices (two-thirds majority) believed the hand-counts were legal and should be done.

Q: Oh. So the justices did not believe that the hand-counts would find any legal ballots?

A: Nope. The five conservative justices clearly held (and all nine justices agreed) "that punch card balloting machines can produce an unfortunate number of ballots which are not punched in a clean, complete way by the voter." So there are legal votes that should be counted but can't be.

Q: Oh. Does this have something to do with states' rights? Don't conservatives love that?

A: Generally yes. These five justices, in the past few years, have held that the federal government has no business telling a sovereign state university it can't steal trade secrets just because such stealing is prohibited by law. Nor does the federal government have any business telling a state that it should bar guns in schools. Nor can the federal government use the equal protection clause to force states to take measures to stop violence against women.

Q: Is there an exception in this case?

A: Yes, the Gore exception. States have no rights to have their own state elections when it can result in Gore being elected President. This decision is limited to only this situation.

Q: C'mon. The Supremes didn't really say that. You're exaggerating.

A: Nope. They held "Our consideration is limited to the present circumstances, or the problem of equal protection in election processes generally presents many complexities."

Q: What complexities? A: They don't say.

Q: I'll bet I know the reason. I heard Jim Baker say this. The votes can't be counted because the Florida Supreme Court "changed the rules of the election after it was held." Right? A: Dead wrong. The US Supreme Court made clear that the Florida Supreme Court did not change the rules of the election. But the US Supreme Court found the failure of the Florida Court to change the rules was wrong.

Q: Huh? A: The Legislature declared that the only legal standard for counting vote is "clear intent of the voter." The Florida Court was condemned for not adopting a clearer standard.

Q: I thought the Florida Court was not allowed to change the Legislature's law after the election. A: Right.

Q: So what's the problem?

A: They should have. The US Supreme Court said the Florida Supreme Court should have "adopt[ed] adequate statewide standards for determining what is a legal vote"

Q: I thought only the Legislature could "adopt" new law. A: Right.

Q: So if the Court had adopted new standards, I thought it would have been overturned. A: Right. You're catching on.

Q: If the Court had adopted new standards, it would have been overturned for changing the rules. And if it didn't, it's overturned for not changing the rules. That means that no matter what the Florida Supreme Court did, legal votes could never be counted. A: Right. Next question.

Q: Wait, wait. I thought the problem was "equal protection," that some counties counted votes differently from others. Isn't that a problem?

A: It sure is. Across the nation, we vote in a hodgepodge of systems. Some, like the optical-scanners in largely Republican-leaning counties record 99.7% of the votes. Some, like the punchcard systems in largely Democratic-leaning counties record only 97% of the votes. So approximately 3% of Democratic votes are thrown in the trash can.

Q: Aha! That's a severe equal-protection problem!!!

A: No it's not. The Supreme Court wasn't worried about the 3% of Democratic ballots thrown in the trashcan in Florida. That "complexity" was not a problem.

Q: Was it the butterfly ballots that violated Florida law and tricked more than 20,000 Democrats to vote for Buchanan or Gore and Buchanan.

A: Nope. The Supreme Court has no problem believing that Buchanan got his highest, best support in a precinct consisting of a Jewish old age home with Holocaust survivors, who apparently have changed their mind about Hitler.

Q: Yikes. So what was the serious equal protection problem?

A: The problem was neither the butterfly ballot nor the 3% of Democrats (largely African-American) disenfranchised. The problem is that somewhat less than .005% of the ballots may have

been determined under slightly different standards because judges sworn to uphold the law and doing their best to accomplish the legislative mandate of “clear intent of the voter” may have a slightly different opinion about the voter’s intent.

Q: Hmmm. OK, so if those votes are thrown out, you can still count the votes where everyone agrees the voter’s intent is clear?  
A: Nope.

Q: Why not? A: No time.

Q: No time to count legal votes where everyone, even Republicans, agree the intent is clear? Why not?  
A: Because December 12 was yesterday.

Q: Is December 12 a deadline for counting votes?  
A: No. January 6 is the deadline. In 1960, Hawaii’s votes weren’t counted until January 4.

Q: So why is December 12 important?  
A: December 12 is a deadline by which Congress can’t challenge the results.

Q: What does the Congressional role have to do with the Supreme Court? A: Nothing.

Q: But I thought —  
A: The Florida Supreme Court had earlier held it would like to complete its work by December 12 to make things easier for Congress. The United States Supreme Court is trying to help the Florida Supreme Court out by forcing the Florida court to abide by a deadline that everyone agrees is not binding.

Q: But I thought the Florida Court was going to just barely have the votes counted by December 12.  
A: They would have made it, but the five conservative justices stopped the recount last Saturday.

Q: Why?  
A: Justice Scalia said some of the counts may not be legal.

Q: So why not separate the votes into piles, indentations for Gore, hanging chads for Bush, votes that everyone agrees went to one candidate or the other so that we know exactly how Florida voted before determining who won? Then, if some ballots (say, indentations) have to be thrown out, the American people will know right away who won Florida.  
A: Great idea! The US Supreme Court rejected it. They held that such counts would likely to produce election results showing Gore won and Gore’s winning would cause “public acceptance” and that would “cast a cloud” over Bush’s “legitimacy” that would harm “democratic stability.”

Q: In other words, if America knows the truth that Gore won, they won’t accept the US Supreme Court overturning Gore’s victory? A: Yes.

Q: Is that a legal reason to stop recounts? or a political one?  
A: Let’s just say in all of American history and all of American

law, this reason has no basis in law. But that doesn’t stop the five conservatives from creating new law out of thin air.

Q: Aren’t these conservative justices against judicial activism?  
A: Yes, when liberal judges are perceived to have done it.

Q: Well, if the December 12 deadline is not binding, why not count the votes?  
A: The US Supreme Court, after admitting the December 12 deadline is not binding, set December 12 as a binding deadline at 10 p.m. on December 12.

Q: Didn’t the US Supreme Court condemn the Florida Supreme Court for arbitrarily setting a deadline? A: Yes.

Q: But, but — A: Not to worry. The US Supreme Court does not have to follow laws it sets for other courts.

Q: So who caused Florida to miss the December deadline?  
A: The Bush lawyers who first went to court to stop the recount, the mob in Miami that got paid Florida vacations for intimidating officials, and the US Supreme Court for stopping the recount.

Q: So who is punished for this behavior? A: Gore, of course.

Q: Tell me this: Florida’s laws are unconstitutional, right?  
A: Yes

Q: And the laws of 50 states that allow votes to be cast or counted differently are unconstitutional?  
A: Yes. And 33 of those states have the “clear intent of the voter” standard that the US Supreme Court found was illegal in Florida.

Q: Then why aren’t the results of 33 states thrown out?  
A: Um. Because...um.....the Supreme Court doesn’t say...

Q: But if Florida’s certification includes counts expressly declared by the US Supreme Court to be unconstitutional, we don’t know who really won the election there, right?

A: Right. Though a careful analysis by the Miami Herald shows Gore won Florida by about 20,000 votes (excluding the butterfly ballot errors).

Q: So, what do we do, have a re-vote? Throw out the entire state? Count all ballots under a single uniform standard?  
A: No. We just don’t count the votes that favor Gore.

Q: That’s completely bizarre! That sounds like rank political favoritism! Did the justices have any financial interest in the case?

A: Scalia’s two sons are both lawyers working for Bush. Thomas’s wife is collecting applications for people who want to work in the Bush administration.

Q: Why didn’t they recuse themselves?  
A: If either had recused himself, the vote would be 4-4, and the

*Continued on next page...*

Florida Supreme Court decision allowing recounts would have been affirmed.

Q: I can't believe the justices acted in such a blatantly political way.

A: Read the opinions for yourself: [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/supremecourt/00-949\\_dec12.fdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/supremecourt/00-949_dec12.fdf) (December 9 stay stopping the recount), and <http://www.supremecourtus.gov/opinions/00pdf/00-949.pdf> (December 12 final opinion)

A: The guy who got the most votes in the US and in Florida and under our Constitution (Al Gore) will lose to America's second choice who won the all important 5-4 Supreme Court vote.

Q: I thought in a democracy, the guy with the most votes wins.

A: True, in a democracy. But America is not a democracy. In America, in the year 2000, the guy with the most US Supreme Court votes wins.

Q: Is there any way to stop the Supreme Court from doing this again?

A: YES. No federal judge can be confirmed without a vote in the Senate. It takes 60 votes to break a filibuster. If only 41 of the 50 Democratic Senators stand up to Bush and his Supremes and say that they will not approve a single judge appointed by him until a President can be democratically elected in 2004, the judicial reign of terror can end... and one day we can hope to return to the rule of law.

Q: What do I do now?

A: Write or call your senator, reminding him that Gore beat Bush by several hundred thousand votes (three times Kennedy's margin over Nixon) and that you believe that VOTERS rather than JUDGES should determine who wins an election by counting every vote. And to protect our judiciary from overturning the will of the people, you want them to confirm NO NEW JUDGES until 2004 when a president is finally chosen by most of the American people.

## Tennis on The Titanic

By *Howard Zinn*

As the prize of the presidency lurched wildly back and forth in the last days of the year, with the entire nation hypnotized by the spectacle, I had a vision. I saw the Titanic churning through the waters of the North Atlantic toward an iceberg looming in the distance, while passengers and crew were totally concentrated on a tennis game taking place on deck.

It is not just a phenomenon of this particular election. In our election-obsessed culture, everything else going on in the world - war, hunger, official brutality, sickness, the violence of everyday life for huge numbers of people - is swept out of the way, while the media insist we watch every twist and turn of what candidates say and do. Thus, the superficial crowds out the meaningful, and this is very

useful for those who do not want citizens to look beneath the surface of the system. In the shadows, and hidden by the dueling of the candidates (if you can call it a duel when the opponents thrust and lunge with plastic swords) are real issues of race and class, war and peace, which the public is not supposed to think about, as the media experts pontificate endlessly about who is winning, and throw numbers in our faces like handfuls of sand.

For instance, as the Gore-Bush contest rose to a frenzy, the media kept referring to the Hayes-Tilden election of 1876. The education that the public received about this was typical of what passes for history in our schools, our newspapers, our television sets. That is, they learned how the Founding Fathers, in writing the Constitution, gave the state legislators the power to choose Electors, who would then choose the President.

We were told how rival sets of electors were chosen in three states, and how Samuel Tilden, the Democrat, had 250,000 more popular votes than the Republican, Rutherford Hayes, and needed only one more electoral vote to win the Presidency. But when a special commission, with a bare Republican majority, was set up by Congress to decide the dispute, it gave all three states to Hayes and thus made him President.

This was very interesting and informative about the mechanics of presidential elections and the peculiar circumstances of that one. But it told us nothing about how that "Compromise of 1877" worked out between Republicans and Democrats in private meetings [and] doomed blacks in the South to semi-slavery. It told us nothing about how the armies that once fought the Confederacy would be withdrawn from the South and sent West to drive Indians from their ancestral lands. It told us nothing about how Democrats and Republicans, while fencing with one another in election campaigns, would now join in subjecting working people all over the country to ruthless corporate power, how the United States army would be used to smash the great railroad strikes of 1877.

These were the facts of race and class and Western expansion concealed behind the disputed election of 1877. The pretense in disputed elections is that the great conflict is between the two major parties. The reality is that there is an unannounced war between those parties and large numbers of Americans who are represented by neither party.

The ferocity of the contest for the presidency in the current election conceals the agreement between both parties on fundamentals. Their heated disagreement is about who will preside over maintaining the status quo. Whoever wins, there may be skirmishes between the major parties, but no monumental battles, despite the inflated rhetoric of the campaign. The evidence for this statement lies in eight years of the Clinton-Gore administration,

whose major legislative accomplishments were part of the Republican agenda.

Both Gore and Bush have been in agreement on the continued corporate control of the economy. Neither has had a plan for free national health care, for extensive low-cost housing, for dramatic changes in environmental controls, for a minimum income for all Americans, for a truly progressive income tax to diminish the huge gap between rich and poor. Both have supported the death penalty and the growth of prisons. Both believe in a large military establishment, in land mines and nuclear weapons and the cruel use of sanctions against the people of Cuba and Iraq. Both supported the wars against Panama, Iraq, and Yugoslavia.

Perhaps when the furor dies down over who really won the election, when the tennis match is over and we get over the disappointment that our guy (is he really our guy?) didn't win, we will finally break the hypnotic spell of the game and look around. We may then think about whether the ship is going down and if there are enough lifeboats, and what should we do about all that.

This is not the Titanic. With us, there is still time to change.

Editor's Note: the above article was sent out by micheal albert, of z magazine, to the subscribers of znet updates. see <http://www.zmag.org> for more info

### *AmeriCorps, continued from page one*

will be funded by USDA Housing Preservation Grant funds. Other total rehabs are houses that have been approved by the WV Housing Development Fund and USDA Rural Development for sale to low income families. Supplies for these homes will come from HUD HOME funds.

Finally, AmeriCorps members will be assigned to mentor 12 at-risk high school dropouts who are involved with the construction projects through the YouthBuild program while completing their GED's.

According to Jackie Asbury, Project Director, the focus will be on several basic needs. One is to revitalize and stabilize coal camp communities plagued by run-down and abandoned buildings. A second is to make more homes environmentally safe and efficient. A third is to coordinate human resources, who are volunteering time to come and make a difference. The fourth is the mentoring of youth and the development of life (survival and job) skills, as well as the G.E.D. and an opportunity to seek a new direction in life. The overall focus is to funnel human and financial resources into an on-going community-based process designed to keep getting the job done.

## **SALS - Who We Are**

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**Coordinator: 304-469-9721**

**Director: 304-442-3157**

**[sals@citynet.net](mailto:sals@citynet.net)**

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Joy Snead & Mary Lynn Flint  
**Share Program**

Bob Friley & Floyd McKnight  
**Bookkeeping Team**

Valery Cowley, Ruth Lanham  
Tom Bass

**Make a Difference, continued from page one**

sale to help children in need. All remaining clothing was donated to Sister Clara Lill's used clothing donation center, the Mustard Seed, in East Bank.

A second event was a major trash pickup along WV Rt. 61 between Oak Hill and Kincaid. Site supervisor Ron Yellets coordinated the volunteers, who consisted of: Todd Evans, Joe Webb, Lewis Jackson, Peggy Davis, Michelle Walker, Sarah Lanham Taylor and Kristin Black. All of the volunteers were YouthBuild members with the exception of Webb, who is with the SALS AmeriCorps USA project. The group gathered about 35 bags of trash. Refreshments were provided for these volunteers by Little Caesar's Pizza in Oak Hill.

The third activity involved five SALS AmeriCorps USA project members. They moved a wheelchair ramp that was no longer in use from one home in Powellton to another home in McDunn, where it was needed.

Make a Difference Day at Beards Fork directly benefited 115 people and everyone involved in the activities felt that they truly made a difference in someone's life.

**Fair Tax Workshop, continued from page nine**

policy, like many others, operates on the Golden Rule: "whoever has the gold makes the rules." She suggested that taxes might be used to empower people in public housing as homeowners, so they could then contribute to the tax base through property taxes.

Steve White of the Affiliated Construction Trades Foundation sees the issue as a need for rethinking economic development in term of raising the standard of living of working families. He complained that all too often generous tax incentives are given to companies to lure them into an area, without working out the details of what the community can expect in return.

Often these operations promise to hire local workers,

but then bring in out-of-state workers for their start-up construction. Only a handful of local folks may ever be employed by the company. White suggested that a more reasonable approach to evaluating such incentives' effectiveness would be to judge them on the basis of an increase in per capita income in the state.

Liz McNichol of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, D.C., led the group through a consideration of West Virginia taxation, and how it compares to that of other states. The state's taxes were shown to be quite regressive, with persons having an income below \$17,000 (federal poverty level) paying, on the average, 10.5% of their income in state and local taxes. On the other hand, persons with an income over \$191,000 (the state's highest bracket) paid only 7.9% of their income in taxes.

The food tax was mentioned several times during the day as being one of the most regressive taxes. People often assume that such a tax is fair, because it is the same regardless of who is buying the food. However, if a poor family of four buys food, they will be paying a far greater percentage of their weekly income in taxes than will a well-to-do family of four.

Ms. McNichol spoke about several types of tax policy changes that could help the less fortunate. One would be to enact a state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), similar to the one available at the federal level. This is a refundable credit, so even if a family's income is insufficient to require the payment of income tax, they can still receive the credit. This can boost family income by as much as several thousand dollars.

Another possibility is raising the "no tax floor," the amount of income below which people do not have to pay income tax. Currently in West Virginia, people with income of at least \$10,000 must pay income tax, even though federal poverty level is \$17,200. (Kentucky and West Virginia are two states which tax the poor most heavily.) Those who attended agreed they are eager to work together on such initiatives to make the system more just.



**Yes, in these difficult times I understand the importance of an organization like the Southern Appalachian Labor School. Enclosed is my contribution to keep your essential work on track and moving forward.**

Contributions to SALS are tax deductible: Mail to SALS, POB 127, Kincaid, WV 25119.

**Enclosed is: \_\_\_\$250 \_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$25 Other\$\_\_\_\_\_**

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