

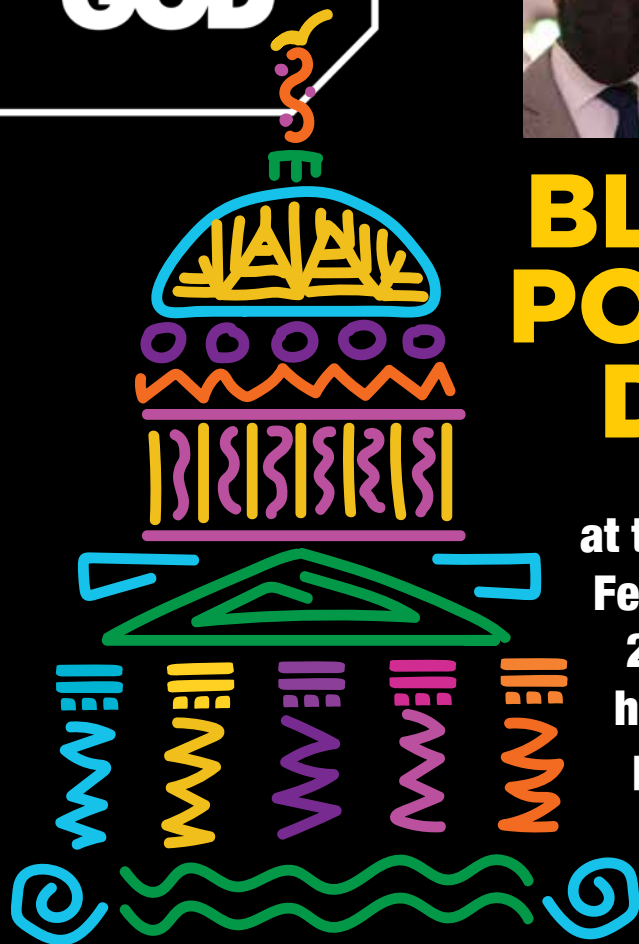
**BLACK
BY
GOD**
THE WEST
VIRGINIAN

**JANUARY 2023
FREE**



BLACK POLICY DAY

**Join us
at the Capitol
February 15
2023 and
help build
political
power**



INSIDE:

**Black Policy
Agenda and West
Virginia Industry
Overview**

**Dr. Mildred
Mitchell-
Bateman was
ahead of her time**



PLUS: Shifting the King Day narrative and MLK Day events

Black By God | The West Virginian
is a developing community-led journalism venture
seeking to fortify our civic infrastructure.



Be a WITNESS

BBG's Folk Reporters Program seeks citizens and civic actors, creators, and collaborators representing a broad base of intergenerational, diverse communities to explore the public meetings from City Councils to Public Service Commission meetings to the West Virginia State Legislature.

Black By God is anxious to develop and distribute content that monitors the West Virginia Legislature and local governments that will contribute to a communal pool of knowledge and speak to Black citizens.

We do this in tandem with Black Policy Day (Feb. 15, 2023) and our February Policy issue.



BBG Folk Reporter
Online Training
Thursday, Jan. 12
7:30-8:30 p.m.
Free
Register on Eventbrite



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DESIGN: HEPCATZ DESIGN

PRINTED AT ECHO-LIT IN CHARLESTON, W.VA.



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subscribing to Black by God.
Thank you!





When allocating funding is a mean, nasty game

Despite cries for help from social service organizations we're getting ... a baseball stadium

By Crystal Good

BBG Publisher

HERE'S THE STORY:

The State of West Virginia paid \$10 million of Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding for a Marshall University baseball stadium, despite the cries of 29 social service organizations in West Virginia who sent a letter to Governor Justice, expressing concern that COVID-19 relief funds from the federal government's CARES Act were not reaching those in need in the state as reported in a *Charleston Gazette-Mail* article by Mike Tony.

HERE'S THE BACKSTORY:

Pastor Matthew Watts is the senior pastor of Grace Bible Church and leader of The Tuesday Morning Group (TMG), a group of ministers and community leaders in Charleston. They have been pushing for significant, publicly-funded research into poverty conditions and for policymakers to use the findings to pass good policy. Pastor Watts has been involved in health equity and education reform for over 13 years.

The TMG has presented multiple solution-driven platforms to the West

Virginia Legislature, governor(s), school board leadership, City of Charleston, and countless community forms, including the vision for a pilot project that would support the 22% Black population of the West Side of Charleston as a template to address poverty, substance abuse and other social determinants of health.

"We are not creating something new," West Virginia Black Voter Impact Initiative Director Dr. Shanequa Smith said, "Pastor Watts and the TMG have been writing and advocating for policies for years. We are seeking to take their hard work and help the community, at large, understand.

In April 2020, at the pandemic's beginning, TMG established a Justice Collaborate to support the TMG Economic Justice, Fairness, and Equity (EJFE) plan. Just one of its many policy plans and pilot projects over the year

This plan was submitted to the Governor's office and West Virginia legislative leadership. The EJFE Plan called for the Governor and state legislative leadership to allocate and set aside 250 million dollars of the remaining American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds to address disparities in African American communities

in health and education, social services workforce, and economic development.

This plan addressed the disparities first identified in 2003 when the West Virginia Legislative Select Committee on Minority Affairs issued its report.

Yet 20 years after the Select Committee's Report issuance, neither the Governor's office nor the West Virginia Legislature has taken substantive action to address any of the disparities outlined in the 2003 Select Committee Report.

The state didn't consider it when allocating CARES funding, either.

In 2021, the state's Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs traveled to each of the 55 counties to discuss pandemic-related challenges, health concerns, prioritizing needs, and pooling resources. The listening sessions allowed nonprofits, local leaders, and community members to share areas of need that could potentially be addressed through federal funding allocations to the state.

Where's that qualitative data now? Has it played any part in determining how federal COVID-19 funding has been spent?

THE GAME:

Before the public learned about the purchase of a baseball field, Governor Justice openly lamented receiving the letter from 29 West Virginia social services organizations, encouraging him to remember marginalized populations when allocating federal COVID-19 funding.

"For crying out loud, I'm not the king," Justice said. "There are federal guidelines that we all have to follow. Absolutely. This is nothing but politics in a situation where we

have a pandemic where people are dying, and we have economic stress beyond belief."

But here we are. When the spending deadline passed on Sept.30, 2022, \$28,375,985 remained in West Virginia's CARES Act cash balance.

West Virginia's budget has a surplus of over \$1.2 billion and another nearly \$750 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds remaining.

Instead of returning this money to the federal government, the Governor's Office transferred it into the Governor's Office Gifts, Grants, and Donations Fund. This fund has typically been budgeted for \$50,000 in recent years, and the \$10 million transfer to Marshall University was its largest expense by far.

The Governor's Office claims that the funds were used to reimburse the state for previously paid COVID-related expenses and are not subject to federal guidelines.

HERE'S THE GAME:

The Tuesday Morning Group, and people like Pastor Watts, do their best to listen to their communities, collect data, and present their case to the government entities that hold the purse strings. In response, they're publicly decried as playing politics.

The Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs went through the motions of community listening sessions but hasn't, to date, shared a single report.

Despite the presence of surpluses in the state budget, which policy analysts attribute to low revenue estimates and federal relief funding,

Continued on page 4

Governor Justice plans to submit another flat budget for fiscal year 2024.

The Tuesday Morning Group supported several bills during previous legislative sessions that BBG reported had previously failed to pass in the legislature, including a bill that would create a state-funded research program to study the root causes of poverty and a bill that would create a state-funded poverty reduction program.

And so we know, despite the mountain of cash our state might be sitting on, ideas from community advocates mean little to the State, no matter the data, the methodology, or the good the policy could do for impacted communities.

State offices meant to represent these same communities are under

no obligation to report the data they're supposed to collect. They can go through the motions, placate us, and move on as if what they learned should not influence policy.

And do you remember reading the letter written by those 29 social service organizations? No? That's because no media outlet published it. Building support is virtually impossible when you can't share the message.

It's a mean-spirited game. It has become flagrant and cruel. For the moment, we have the opportunity to resource and change the trajectory for so many fellow West Virginians—a hand up.

Instead, as Tony's *Gazette-Mail* article concludes with a quote from Pam Garrison, anti-poverty and consumer advocate from Fayette County said, "But we get a ball field."

 **CENTER FOR BLACK CULTURE
AND RESEARCH**

BLACK FILM FESTIVAL SUBMISSIONS OPEN

**SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
FEBRUARY 10, 2023**

*Submit your film,
short film, or documentary to
eric.jordan@mail.wvu.edu*

Dr. Mildred Mitchell-Bateman

The first African American woman to head a West Virginia State Agency, she was prolific and ahead of her time in her field of mental health

Mildred Mitchell-Bateman was born in Brunswick, Georgia. In 1922, the daughter of a minister and a registered nurse. She attended Barber-Scott College in Concord, North Carolina, from 1937 to 1939 and graduated from Johnson C Smith University in Charlotte in 1941. She received an M.D. from the Women's

Continued on page 6

Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1946. While interning in Philadelphia, Mitchell was hired as a staff physician at Lakin State Hospital, the Black hospital for the mentally ill in West Virginia.

Mitchell married Lakin therapist William L Bateman of Parkersburg on Christmas day, 1947. She then left Lakin to study psychiatry and practice medicine privately. Dr. Bateman spent a three-year stint at the Menninger School of Psychiatry in Topeka, Kansas. Dr. Bateman then returned to Lakin as the clinical director in 1955. Three years later, she was promoted to the superintendent of the hospital. In 1960 Bateman was named supervisor of professional services for the state's various psychiatric facilities and staff. In July 1962, the department's director Charles Zellar died, and Bateman was named acting director, the first African American woman to head a West Virginia State Agency.

She advocated placing mentally ill patients in facilities closest to their homes and developing community health centers. She went on to develop a program called the "BREAKING the DISABILITY CYCLE", which gave hope to patients previously labeled untreatable. In 1973 Bateman became the first woman to serve as vice president of the American Psychiatric Association. She went on to be one of four psychiatrists to serve on the President's Commission on Mental Health, resulting in the Mental Health Systems Act being passed in 1980.

In 1977 Governor Jay Rockefeller merged the Department of Mental Health into the larger Department of Health. Dr. Mitchell Bateman became

Dr. Mitchell-Bateman advocated placing mentally ill patients in facilities closest to their homes and developing community health centers. She went on to develop a program called the "BREAKING the DISABILITY CYCLE", which gave hope to patients previously labeled untreatable.

chair of the Psychiatry Department of Marshall University's medical school.

Dr. Mitchell-Bateman's efforts in psychiatry have been touted as the most prolific in the state of West Virginia, being seen as the one who set the field of mental health in the best environs it would ever be—also thought to be way ahead of her time within her practice and field.

She worked closely with community organizations and policymakers to develop programs and initiatives that provide mental health services to those who might otherwise not have access to them. Through her efforts, many individuals who might have otherwise gone without treatment have received the care they need to improve their quality of life.

Learn more on CLIO
theclio.com



Shifting the King Day Narrative

By Rev. Ron English

One year before his assassination, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was asked in an interview by a NBC reporter “what about your Dream?” His response was “my Dream has become a nightmare.”

Yet, his Dream speech remains the tagline for King Day celebrations because it’s convenient. However, two books, one by Dr. Vincent Harding, entitled “The Inconvenient King” and another by Dr. Cornel West “The Radical King” justify a shift in the focus of Dream King celebrations.

Most King Day Celebrations will focus attention on the “Dream King” because it is safe and convenient rather than provide a platform for the “Inconvenient King”.

King’s 1963 speech focused on racial inequity and economic injustice.

Currently, however, it has been abused by causes contrary to his vision and legacy such as efforts of West Virginia legislators to support Critical Race Theory legislation which is likely to be revived in 2023.

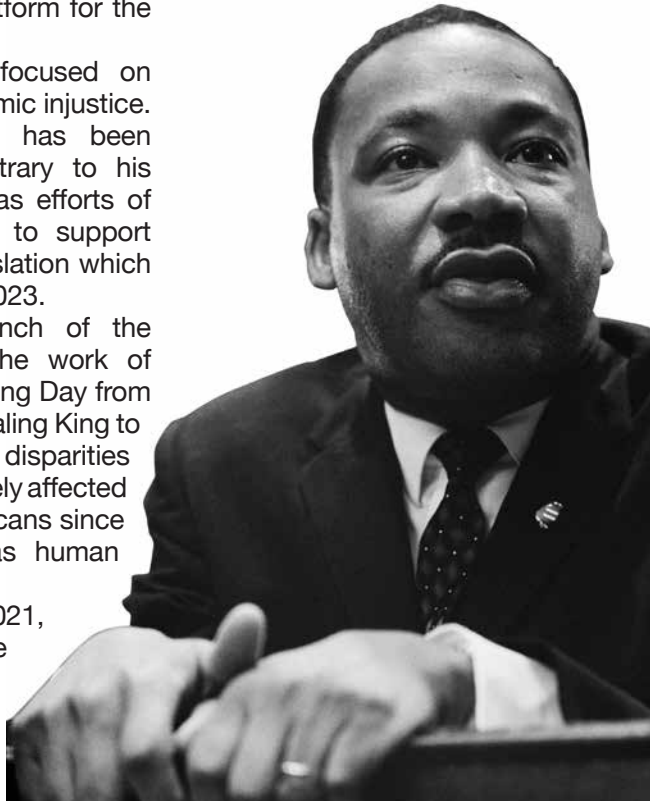
The Charleston branch of the NAACP has engaged the work of shifting the narrative of King Day from the Dream King to the Healing King to address issues of health disparities that have disproportionately affected the lives of African Americans since our ancestors arrived as human cargo on slave ships.

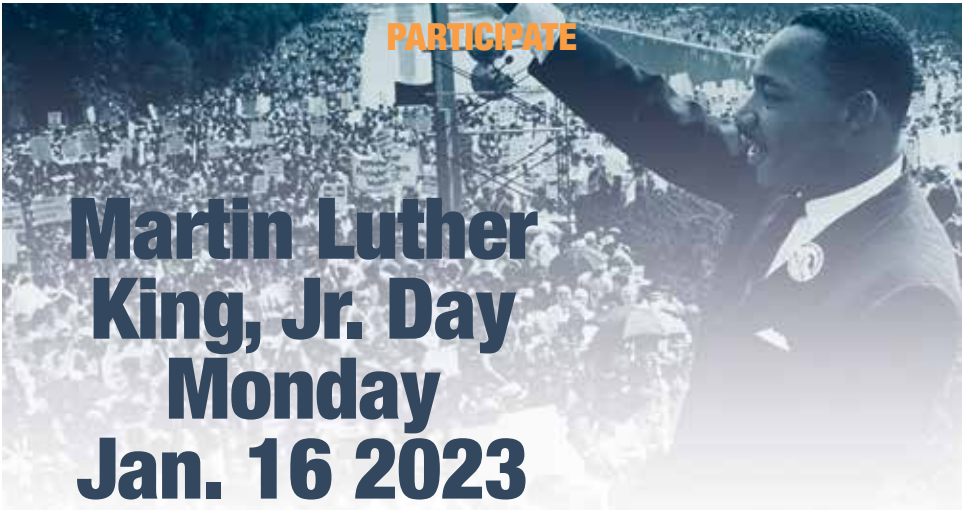
Since December 2021, the NAACP and the Partnership of African American Churches (PAAC) have administered COVID

vaccinations across the state with commendable success. The Healing King focus would overlap two of the “Three Evils of American Society” — racism and economic injustice, that the Inconvenient King addressed in 1967.

MLK Day events will continue to celebrate the Convenient King because it is fashionable and safe. Yet, the voice and vision of the Radical King speaks to the agony of the age in the power of NOW!

Rev. Ron English is President of the Charleston Branch NAACP and former Ministerial Assistant to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.





PARTICIPATE

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Monday Jan. 16 2023

Here are some events scheduled around the state

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Celebration, March and Lunch
Lewisburg**

Greenbrier County Courthouse
Jan. 16, 11 a.m. march begins followed by a community lunch at the Lewisburg United Methodist Church, and a 12:30 p.m. program in the sanctuary. Crystal Good, BBG publisher, well-known poet and advocate for African Americans in Appalachia will be the speaker

MLK Breakfast

Morgantown

Mountainlair Ballroom

Jan. 16, 8-10 a.m.

Featuring keynote speaker author and journalist Eric Deggans

Info: cbc.wvu.edu/events

WVU Center for Black Culture and Research

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Event:
Telling West Virginia's Stories &
Dreams**

Morgantown

Jan 16, 2:-3:30 p.m.

The Community Coalition for Social Justice invites you to explore the

theme of "Telling West Virginia's Stories and Dreams" during the 17th annual Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Celebration. The online event is available on both Facebook and Zoom. You must preregister for the Zoom Event. Free

Info: www.visitmountaineercountry.com/events/martin-luther-king-jr-day-celebration/ or www.ccsjwv.org.

**MLK Jr. Day of Service
National**

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived his life serving others. Following his example, millions of Americans serve on Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. *More info and find a way to volunteer:* www.pointsoflight.org/mlk-jr-day-of-service/

ON SUNDAY, JAN 8, 3:30 p.m.

**Dr. Martin Luther King Birthday
Celebration**

"Keeping the Charge" Rev. Roberta Smith and other speakers.

Brookside Ministry

18419 Deepwater Road

Mt. Carbon, WV 25139



BLACK POLICY DAY FEB. 15, 2023 WEST VIRGINIA STATE CAPITOL

2023 Black Policy Day Agenda and West Virginia Industry Overview

The purpose of Black Policy Day is to build political power at the legislature. Participating in collective civic engagement can increase our shared knowledge and help us interact more strategically with our lawmakers.

The first Black Policy Day (BPD), held in 2022, organically sprouted from the collaborative wisdom and actions of Crystal Good, Black By God (BBG); Katonya Hart, Call to Action for Racial Equality (CARE); and Dr. Shanequa Smith, Black Voter Impact Initiative (BVII) & the Charleston-Institute Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

With the support of organizations such as For West Virginia Future (FWVVF), WV Citizen Action Group (CAG), and the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), these women were able to remind their communities about the power of collective civic engagement! In unity, many citizens of the great state of West Virginia showed their support by gathering at the State Capitol to engage with their representatives.

Deltas Building Democracy Webinars information, PAGE 23





The Social Determinants of Health

The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) are the conditions in our environment that impact our health, functioning, and quality-of-life in our communities and influence how we interact with the world through work, play, and worship. These conditions can also affect how we live, learn, and age.

Our agenda encompasses an inclusive coalition-based movement for restorative action and justice for all communities, especially those communities seeking more involvement in creating a more equitable and unapologetically Black

future. This agenda involves eight major policy areas with each series containing previously introduced or prospective legislation, as well as enacted/unfunded legislation, that would help to restore and strengthen our communities. These areas all

speak to an unmet need, harm that has occurred due to past and current legislation, or the disparate impacts that current policies have on the Black community.

heard and addressed in the state’s policy-making process.



The Black Policy Agenda in West Virginia is a comprehensive set of suggestions to address the social determinants of health in the state’s Black community. The Agenda covers many areas, including criminal justice, economics, education, environment, food, health, housing, and reparations. This is not an exhaustive list but it’s a start. And it will help you follow the 2023 Legislative process as a Folk Reporter.

One key aspect of the Agenda is its focus on addressing systemic barriers that contribute to health disparities among Black West Virginians. This includes policies that aim to reduce incarceration, support small businesses, improve education and protect the environment through access to clean water.

Historically, Black West Virginians have advocated for social and economic justice. Organizations like the Tuesday Morning Group, a diverse coalition of community leaders, activists, and clergy, came together in Charleston to address issues facing the city’s Black community, which has tirelessly fought for education equity.

The Black Policy Agenda builds on this legacy and seeks to ensure that the voices of Black communities are

NOTE: Introduced means a bill was introduced and not passed that means the Governor did not sign these bills into law. We hope these references encourage your further inquiry.

Enacted Legislation Requiring Appropriation (ARPA)

In 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), which provided states with funding to address the economic and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. West Virginia received \$1.3 billion in ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds for the state government and \$677 million for cities, municipalities, and counties. The state has spent approximately half of these funds, with much of it going towards water and sewer infrastructure projects and indirectly towards a cash incentive for a steel production company. The state still has about \$689 million in remaining ARPA funds, which can be used for responding to the health and economic impacts of the pandemic and providing premium pay to essential workers. It is recommended

West Virginia’s ARPA Fiscal Recovery Funds
\$1.3 billion
 for the state government

\$677 million
 for cities, municipalities, and counties.

Continued on page 12

that the remaining funds be spent on the needs of residents and those disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Enacted legislation

- Requesting a study of the high unemployment rate and other socioeconomic problems confronting African Americans

A request for this study was passed in 2002 as House Concurrent Resolution 76.

- Providing procedure for economic development authority to address problems of state minorities This statute was enacted in 2004 as Senate Bill 573

- Creating the Neighborhood Housing and Economic Development Stabilization Program for low income minority neighborhoods

This statute was enacted in 2009 as House Bill 2950

- 2010- SB-2009- Community Development School Pilot Program law.

- Developing special community-based pilot demonstration project to improve at-risk youth outcomes This statute was enacted in 2012 as Senate Bill 611

- Relating to the Herbert Henderson of Minority Affairs to create a Pilot Project to Improve Community and Populations Health by addressing Poverty and other Social Determinants of Health through a comprehensive community development model.

- Requiring the Department of Education to develop a plan based on analyzed data on school discipline This legislation was enacted in 2020 as Senate Bill 723. It requires the Department of Education to compile

and analyzes state-wide school discipline data, to compile a report, to develop and implement a state-wide plan, and to report on the success of the plan



Criminal Justice

The following policy recommendations aim to improve the fairness and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and its disproportionately negative impact on Black West Virginians. While some of these proposals have already been introduced as legislation, others are still under review by the WV Criminal Legal Reform Coalition.

■ Eliminating restrictions on voting rights for formerly incarcerated individuals

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as SB 488 with Senator Bill Hamilton as the lead sponsor.

Reducing incarceration for technical violations of parole and probation.

■ Ensuring that those with long sentences can petition for reconsideration

This would apply to people who've already served many years of their sentence. This legislation doesn't exist, yet.

■ Placing a cap on the number of people held in West Virginia jails

This legislation doesn't exist, yet, but this issue is under review by WV Criminal Law Reform Coalition.



Economics

The following initiatives aim to promote economic opportunity, development, and inclusion for Black West

Virginians, and several of them have already been introduced as legislation.

■ **Establishing a tax credit for businesses that hire women and minorities and help them develop into leadership roles**

This legislation was introduced as HB 2640 in 2022, with Delegate Sean Hornbuckle as the lead sponsor.

■ **Creating a Small Business and Minority Populations Economic and Workforce Development Task Force**

This legislation was introduced as SB 186 in 2022, with Senator Glenn Jeffries as the lead sponsor.

■ **Create a WV Community Development Equity Fund**

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as HB 4783, with Delegate Sean Hornbuckle as the lead sponsor.

■ **Creating a youth advisory council for civic engagement**

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as HB 4812, with Delegate Sean Hornbuckle as the lead sponsor



Education

Black children in West Virginia public schools are suspended at twice the rate of their white classmates, even though they make up a smaller percentage of the overall student population. State lawmakers in West Virginia have tasked the state education department with analyzing data and creating a program to address the use of disciplinary actions by local school officials.. Suspensions from school can have long-term negative impacts on a child’s education and future, including poor grades, dropping out of school, not graduating, committing a crime, or being incarcerated. These trends contribute to the “school-to-prison pipeline,” which disproportionately affects students of color and low-income students.

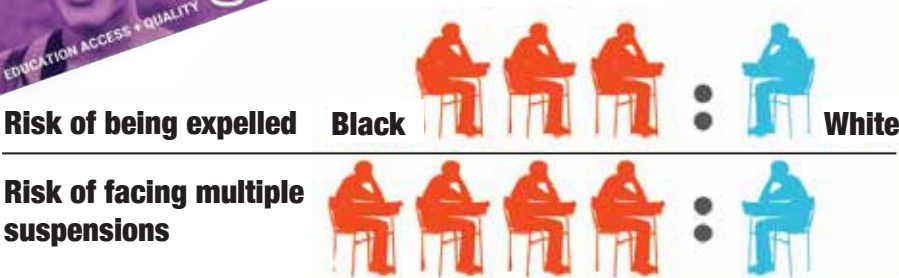
The following initiatives aim to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for Black West Virginians,

Continued on page 14



Racial Disparities in School Discipline

Black students are three to four times more likely than their white peers to be expelled or face multiple suspensions from school.



Source: U.S. Department of Education. Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2009-10; American Institutes for Research, www.air.org

who face disproportionate discipline in state schools.

■ **Considering school suspensions as excused absences**

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as HB 4304, with Delegate Caleb Hanna as the lead sponsor. It would help reduce suspensions' negative impact on academic performance and attendance.

■ **Identifying priorities for broader legislation that would address the disparate impact of school suspensions on Black students**

While more research is needed on this issue, the ACLU has expressed a willingness to write legislation once a priority has been identified.



Environment

Majority-Black communities in the United States bear a disproportionate burden of health risks from industrial pollution, with the cancer risk from industrial air pollution being more than double that of majority-white communities. This disparity is caused by structural imbalances, including racist real estate practices and land use and zoning decisions made by those outside of these communities, which also often lack access to resources such as healthcare and education and face poorer economic prospects. The pollution in these areas not only affects the health of residents living nearby, but also causes property values to decrease, trapping neighborhoods in a cycle of disinvestment.

Residents of southern West Virginia's McDowell County's Keystone — a

predominantly Black town — have struggled for decades of safe drinking water and wastewater challenges. Many in the community have had to collect water from contaminated sources, and others have to haul water for multiple days each month to their home. Some residents are finding creative solutions, such as sun-powered hydropanels, but have faced barriers in getting federal support for these efforts.

In another small West Virginia town, Institute, The Union Carbide plant has been a source of pollution for the largely Black community for decades. The plant is located in a historically Black community and university (WVSU) that was founded by formerly enslaved people and became a center of Black life in an overwhelmingly white state. The pollution from the plant not only affects the health of the residents living nearby, but also causes property values to decrease, trapping neighborhoods in a cycle of disinvestment.

■ **Clean Drinking Water Act of 2022**

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as HB 4055, with Delegate Evan Hansen as the lead sponsor.

■ **Senate Bill 373, containing the Aboveground Storage Tank Act §22-30 and the Public Water Supply Protection Act §22-31** was approved by the 2014 Legislature and signed into law by Governor Earl Ray Tomblin just after the “West Virginia Water Crisis.” The bill required an inventory and registration of aboveground storage tanks, the submittal of spill prevention response plans and certified inspections of tanks. On March 14, 2015, the 2015 Legislature passed Senate Bill 423 to amend

the Aboveground Storage Tank and Public Water Supply Protection Acts. We expect more amendment to be made in 20213 that undermine storage tank regulations.



Food

Food insecurity is a serious issue for many Black West Virginians. According to recent data, around 14% of Black households in the state are food insecure, meaning they struggle to access adequate and nutritious food regularly. Access to nutritious food is a critical social determinant of health. Food insecurity is associated with poorer health outcomes and higher odds of chronic illness.

A number of factors, including poverty, lack of transportation or proximity to healthy food options, and inadequate public assistance programs, contribute to this high rate of food insecurity. Many Black West Virginians have called for the following initiatives to begin addressing this problem:

- **Improving access to healthy food options, such as fresh fruits and vegetables by supporting development of Black-owned grocery stores, SNAP-retail outlets, healthy, and fresh food options for food banks and food pantries in Black neighborhoods**

- **Increasing funding for public assistance programs, such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children), including SNAP double buck and stretch programs**

- **Use of community benefit investment to support healthy food access and healthy food environments in Black communities.**

- **Investment into the WV Agricultural Investment fund to create funds for communities to develop community gardens and be able to grow for food security.**

- **Use of public lands to create community gardens to promote healthy eating**

- **Establishing a food desert produce pilot program**

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as HB 3224, with Delegate Kayla Young as the lead sponsor.



Health

The following initiatives aim to address the unique health challenges faced by Black West Virginians, and they have the potential to make a real and lasting difference.

- **Establishing a pilot program to develop school-based mental health and behavioral health services.**

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as HB 4444, with Delegate Sean Hornbuckle as the lead sponsor.

- **Allowing those above Medicaid expansion eligibility to keep their coverage by paying a small monthly premium based on their income.**

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as HB 3001, with Delegate Evan Worrell as the lead sponsor.

- **Establishing the Minority Health**

Continued on page 16

Advisory Team

This legislation was introduced in 2022 as SB 206, with Senator Stephen Baldwin as the lead sponsor.

■ Increasing access to pre-and postnatal services, including by increasing state funding for home visiting programs

Decades of research show that home visiting can improve healthy child development, help new parents, and even increase a family's economic security.

Improving maternal and infant mortality data collection and quality measures.

While current law requires DHHR to publish data on maternal and infant deaths, it is not readily available to the public, and the data is not disaggregated by race. Partners of Black Voter Impact Initiative (BVI) are working on legislation to require racial and ethnic demographic data to be identified and more readily available to the public.

■ Make it illegal to discriminate based on hair texture or style.

This legislation was introduced as HB 2698 in 2022, with Delegate Danielle Walker as the lead sponsor.



Housing

Despite recent efforts to improve access to affordable housing, many Black families in the state still struggle to find places to live.

One of the key organizations working to address this issue is the West Virginia Community Development Equity Fund (WV CDEF). Founded in 2021, the WV CDEF is a non-profit that

provides grants and loans to help Black families and communities access affordable housing. The organization helps families purchase and maintain homes, and it also helps develop new affordable housing units.

Housing discrimination is another persistent issue in West Virginia, and it disproportionately affects marginalized communities, including people of color, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ individuals. One form of housing discrimination is disparate treatment, which occurs when a person is treated unfairly because of their race, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or other protected characteristic. For example, a landlord may refuse to rent to a person because of their race or religion, or a real estate agent may steer someone away from certain neighborhoods based on their race.

■ Disparate treatment is illegal under the Fair Housing Act and state fair housing laws. The West Virginia Human Rights Commission (WVHRC) is the state agency responsible for enforcing fair housing laws and addressing housing discrimination.

SB 156 introduced on Jan. 12, 2022, to add “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” to the categories covered by the Human Rights Act. This would have prohibited discrimination against LGBTQ+ West Virginians in the workplace and places of public accommodation. The bill also added “age,” “sexual orientation,” and “gender identity” to the categories covered by the Fair Housing Act, which prohibits discrimination in housing.



Reparations

The history of West Virginia is deeply intertwined with the legacy of slavery and racial injustice. Despite being a northern state, West Virginia was founded in 1863 due to a political compromise that allowed the state to remain in the Union while also allowing the continuation of slavery. This history has had lasting impacts on the Black community in West Virginia. As a result, many argue that reparations are necessary to address these past wrongs and bring greater equality and justice for Black West Virginians.

One of the critical reasons that reparations are necessary for West Virginia is the history of segregation and discrimination that Black West Virginians have faced. From the state's early days, Black West Virginians were subjected to segregation in schools, housing, and public facilities. This segregation was often enforced through violence and intimidation, and it profoundly impacted the lives of Black West Virginians, who were denied equal access to education, employment, and other opportunities.

Even after segregation was legally abolished, Black West Virginians faced discrimination and bias in many aspects of their lives. This has led to a wealth gap between Black and white West Virginians. Black West Virginians also experience higher poverty rates and lower educational attainment rates. These disparities are a direct result of the legacy of slavery, wage theft, and racial injustice, and reparations are necessary to address them.

There are several different ways in which reparations could be

implemented in West Virginia.

- **The state could provide financial compensation to Black West Virginians who can demonstrate that they or their ancestors were directly impacted by slavery or racial segregation.**

This could take the form of direct payments, or it could involve investments in education, housing, or other public goods that would benefit Black West Virginians and help close the racial wealth gap.

- **The state could also promote systemic change that addresses the root causes of racial injustice in West Virginia.**

This could involve initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion in education, housing, and employment, as well as efforts to combat discrimination and bias in these areas. It could also involve investment in infrastructure and community development projects that would benefit Black West Virginians

- **On March 3, 2021, House Bill 2878 was introduced in the West Virginia legislature.**

The bill sought to establish a task force to study and develop reparations for African Americans. The task force would have studied the impact of slavery and discrimination on African Americans in West Virginia and developed reparations proposals. It would have reported its findings and recommendations to the legislature, and any state-level reparation actions taken as a result of this bill would not have replaced any reparations enacted at the federal level.

- **In May 2022, the United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia established the West**

Continued on page 18

Virginia Reparations Fund, which is believed to be the first reparations fund in the state.

The anonymous donor who provided the initial funding for the fund believes that the country cannot heal from the wounds of slavery until the harm done by slavery is acknowledged and efforts are made to make amends. The fund will be used to support projects related to reparations for the African American community in West Virginia, as identified by a steering committee comprising representatives of African American organizations

and individuals. Individuals, congregations, and others can support the fund through annual gifts or by dedicating a percentage of their budget or income to it.

More information on the fund can be found at the United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia's website: www.umfwv.org.

Ultimately, the goal of reparations in West Virginia should be to acknowledge the past's wrongs and take concrete steps to address the ongoing impacts of slavery and segregation. By doing so, we can begin to heal the wounds of the past and work towards a more just and equal future for all West Virginians.



GRAPHIC
BY
AARON HESS

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

West Virginia is located in the Appalachian region of the United States. The state is known for its natural beauty, including the Appalachian Mountains and the Monongahela National Forest. The economy of West Virginia has traditionally been based on coal mining, natural gas production, and timber harvesting.

However, the state has faced significant economic challenges in recent years. The decline of the coal industry leads to job loss and economic downturns throughout the state. As a result, many residents have

been forced to look for work in other industries.

Black West Virginians have historically faced significant barriers to economic opportunity and prosperity. The state has a long history of discrimination

and segregation, which has limited the options available to Black residents. Despite this, many Black West Virginians have made important contributions to the state's economy, particularly in education, healthcare, and the arts.

In recent years, there has been a push to diversify the economy of West Virginia and create more opportunities for Black residents. This includes attracting new businesses and industries to the state and supporting entrepreneurship and small business development.

Additionally, there are initiatives to provide job training and education to help Black West Virginians gain the skills they need to succeed in the workforce.



Agriculture

For many years, Black farmers in West Virginia have struggled to access the same land, capital, and market access as their white counterparts. This has made it difficult for Black farmers to grow and expand their operations, leading to a decline in the number of Black-owned farms in the state but the opportunity to develop and attract Black farmers into and back to West Virginia because of the potential in the high-value agriculture products we can produce here creates various opportunities for businesses to develop around creating a real food sector economy.

Farming may offer an economic opportunity for Black Americans. While the median household income for all Black Americans is \$45,438, the median income for farmers is nearly 25% greater at \$57,081. The median

net worth for farmers is 43 times that of Black households, representing an opportunity for Black Americans to build net worth.

We know the stories of Black coal miners and their migration from other areas to West Virginia for opportunities in the coal rush. Agriculture can create that same level of opportunity around food and agriculture and attract a diverse population to West Virginia.

Organizations in McDowell County, like EDGE (Economic Development Greater East) are building education and awareness around those opportunities, along with offering food producer training in collaboration with Black-owned farms, T & T Organics.

COVID taught us that the food system in the US is broken, and the systems that govern it need to be updated for rural spaces like ours, including Black and marginalized communities.

■ Earmark funds from the West Virginia Agriculture investment fund to:

- Land access through short and long term leases

- Establishment of Black Farmer Land Trust in West Virginia to support Black farmers through land and capital access to grow for community food security and market

- Support for Black farmers cooperatives to grow and sell to West Virginia institutions

- Utilization of forward contracts for Black farmers to grow for institutional compliance with the West Virginia Fresh Food Act

- Investment in educational training programs to support the next generation of Black farmers through engagement in youth agriculture programs

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Tourism

West Virginia has a rich and diverse history, and many people are drawn to the state for its natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and cultural attractions. As a result, tourism is an important industry in the state, providing many opportunities for Black West Virginians to start and grow businesses.

One of the key opportunities in the tourism industry is in the area of hospitality and accommodations. Black entrepreneurs can start and operate hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other accommodations that cater to the many visitors who come to the state each year.

In addition to hospitality, there are opportunities in the food and beverage industry. Black-owned restaurants, cafes, and other food-related businesses can thrive in West Virginia, as tourists and locals always look for new and exciting places to eat and drink.

The West Virginia Department of Tourism offers the ability to create business listings, submit events to the West Virginia Tourism event calendar, public relations assistance such as social media content and photography, brochure distribution, and guidance on creating blog posts!

■ **All of these resources are free and accessible through <https://portal.wvtourism.com/>**

To create a Partner Portal account, go to <https://wvtourism.com/portal-registration/>.

If you are currently looking for funding in Community and Tourism Project Development, Outdoor

Recreation, Land and Water Preservation, Arts, Education, Humanities and Marketing, Historic Preservation, or Housing, check out this Funding & Resource Guide <https://wvtourism.com/wp-content/uploads/2022-Funding-Resource-Guide-web.pdf>

If you have questions about how to get started, contact Brenna Dugan, Partner Communications and Event Specialist, at Brenna.C.Dugan@wv.gov.



Technology/ Entrepreneurship

There are many opportunities for Black West Virginians to start and grow businesses in West Virginia and across the tech industry.

Vantage Ventures is a West Virginia University initiative that helps support and grow technology start-ups in West Virginia and a diverse remote workforce. They provide founders with co-working space, practical and functional support, and a network of local entrepreneurs who can provide financial or advisory assistance. Since its founding in 2019, Vantage Ventures has worked with 29 start-ups and is currently onboarding four more. The organization aims to help West Virginia entrepreneurs like Black By God and companies to grow and scale their businesses.

Vantage Ventures is focused on recruiting a wide range of technology-based businesses to boost the state's economy and provide a stable job and diverse talent pool. <https://vantageventures.io/>



West Virginia Film Industry

According to the Motion Picture Association, in 2020-21, with only eight TV series shooting here (including *Barnwood Builders*, *Mountain Monsters*, and *Underground Marvels*) the industry still generated \$120 million in wages related to 1,980 direct jobs and 3,880 support jobs.

In 2022, with Covid (mostly) in the rear-view and a new film tax credit in play, the state of West Virginia ramped up its film and TV production action with dozens of productions, including everything from Kamau Bell's *United Shades of America* and a host of documentary and indie feature work to a handful of studio feature films including *Christmas At The Greenbrier*.

As the fiscal year 2023 continues, the new West Virginia Film Office (embedded in the Department of Economic Development) is helping even more productions do work in the Mountain State. And you can be involved.

■ Get work on films and productions:

Register to be part of the state's largest list of skilled actors and crew members — and also support services (catering, lodging, rentals, etc.). You'll also receive updates about upcoming projects. Click on this link to submit your information for free https://wv.reel-scout.com/crew_registration.aspx?type=C&cl=C

■ Put in your locations:

Do you have a farm, a wedding venue, a funky restaurant, a barbershop, a salon, a boutique hotel,

or an apocalyptic abandoned building that would make a cool zombie film location? There is no cost to add your locations to our directory. Be sure and see our photography tips before you take pics.

https://wv.reel-scout.com/loc_add.aspx

Also, if you're filming a production in West Virginia or are curious about doing so, please contact us at <https://share.hsforms.com/13LgiMUHLTGOB--oyV9PWYw1iilq> to submit information about your project and we will contact you to assist anyway that we can.

Go online at <https://westvirginia.gov/wvfilm/> and check out this video at <https://youtu.be/MMageME4NSk>



Representation in the Resource Economy

The history of Black people in West Virginia's resource economy stretches back to the early days of the state's history. From coal mining to timber harvesting, Black West Virginians have played a crucial role in developing the state's natural resources.

In the early 20th century, many Black West Virginians worked as coal miners, providing the labor that fueled the state's growing economy. Despite facing discrimination and segregation, Black coal miners played a vital role in the state's economy.

In addition to coal mining, Black West Virginians also worked in the state's timber industry. Many Black families owned and operated small logging businesses, providing the timber used to build homes and other

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structures throughout the state.

In 2020 leading civil rights leaders in the US, including Rev. Jesse Jackson and National Urban League President Marc Morial, called on the oil and gas industry to increase the representation of women and people of color, particularly in leadership positions.

The call to action came in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd and was directed at the Interstate Natural Gas Association of America, a trade group representing natural gas transportation companies. The oil and gas industry has historically had a lower representation of women and people of color compared to the overall workforce, with African Americans being particularly underrepresented. Rev. Jackson and Morial also called for trade groups to ensure affordable access to natural gas, especially for communities of color, and have expressed opposition to a swift move away from natural gas, which is the cleanest fossil fuel but still contributes to climate change.

the creative economy is driven by three key factors: talent, technology, and tolerance. West Virginia can tap into the creative economy and drive economic growth by attracting and retaining talented individuals, investing in technology and innovation, and fostering a culture of tolerance and inclusivity.

■ **The creative economy has the potential to be a powerful engine of economic growth and development in West Virginia if the state's policymakers and community leaders focused on several key strategies to promote the creative economy, including**

Supporting the growth of small businesses and entrepreneurship through business incubators, financing programs, and training programs.

Investing in education and workforce development.

Promoting cultural and creative industries through grants, tax incentives, and marketing campaigns



Creative Economy

Richard Florida is a renowned urban studies theorist and economist who has written extensively about the role of creativity and innovation in driving economic growth and development. His work has mainly influenced urban planning, and urban leaders worldwide have adopted his ideas.

Florida's ideas have also been applied in West Virginia, where policymakers and community leaders have sought to promote the creative economy to stimulate economic growth and diversification. According to Florida,



Although Black Policy Day is an event held on Feb. 15th, 2023, Black Policy Day is every day!





Deltas Building Democracy

WEBINARS

Through 2023

Black Policy Day Agenda

The Deltas Building Democracy through the 2023 Black Policy Agenda will focus on providing education and actions to build up our civic engagement. The 2023 Black Policy Agenda Framework mirrors the Social Determinants of Health which the conditions in our environments that impact how and where we live, learn, work, play, worship, and age. These factors affect the health, functioning, and quality-of-life experienced in our communities and influence how we interact with the world around us.

**The webinar will be hosted every
Tuesday night in January starting Jan. 10**

Tuesday January 10, 2023 at 7pm – Education and Environment

Tuesday January 17, 2023 at 7pm – Criminal Justice and Economics

Tuesday January 24, 2023 at 7pm – Food and Health

Tuesday January 31, 2023 at 7pm – Housing and Reparations

SEE AD ON BACK PAGE FOR MORE INFORMATION





PHOTOS BY LEESHIA LEE AND KYLE VASS

First Black Policy Day: Feb. 11, 2022

Last year, 13 organizations pulled together resources to support Katonya Hart, Dr. Shanequa Smith, and Crystal Good in bringing together more than 85 local leaders, students, organizers, folk reporters and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. members from across the state to learn and take action on the issues most impacting Black lives here in West Virginia. The work continues as we seek to pass supportive legislation and to halt legislation that harms us.





FOR WEST VIRGINIA'S FUTURE INVITES YOU TO BREAKFAST

**Black Policy Day is coming to the Capitol
February 15, 2023.**

**Join us for breakfast at the Culture Center from
7:30a.m., followed by a series of activities and
speakers related to the Black policy framework.**

**Topics to be covered include: Criminal Justice,
Economics, Education, Environment, Food, Health,
and Housing.**

**After breakfast, we will meet legislators to discuss
the Black Policy Agenda.**

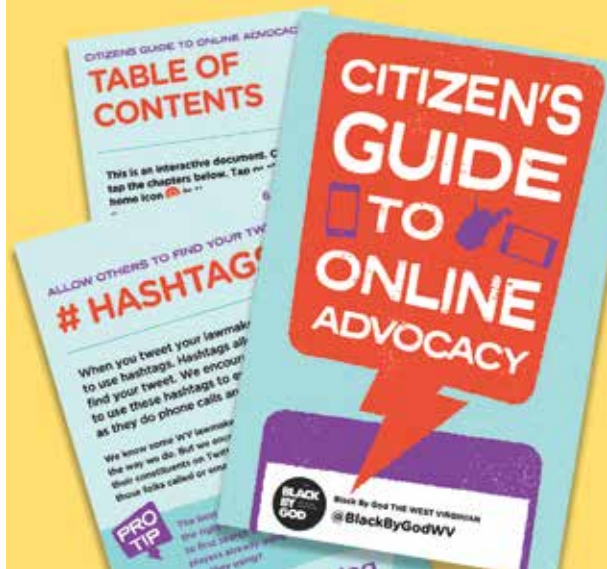


**Buy
tickets
for
breakfast
here**

**This event will be livestreamed on our Givebutter page:
<https://givebutter.com/BPD2023>**

BECOME AN ONLINE ADVOCATE!

There is no real democracy when the public is not actively participating in the legislative process.



That's why we're calling upon you to speak loudly through your online platforms to ensure your representatives will hear how their policy decisions will impact your life — now and in the future.

FIND IT AT
BLACKBYGOD.ORG



THE HUB
West Virginia
Community Development Hub

wvhub.org



Citizen Lobbyist (*n*); someone who communicates with an elected representative to educate them about their lived experience and the issues that affect their lives

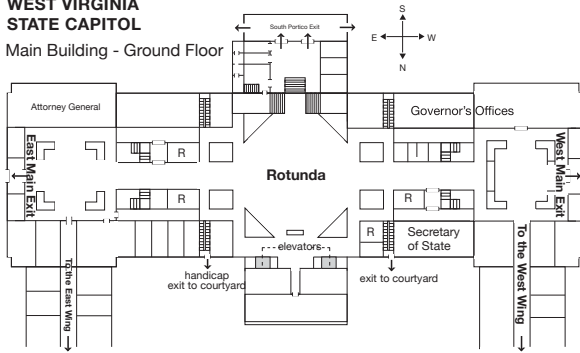
Sign up to receive the WV Citizen Lobbyist Handbook and updates from the WV Community Development Hub



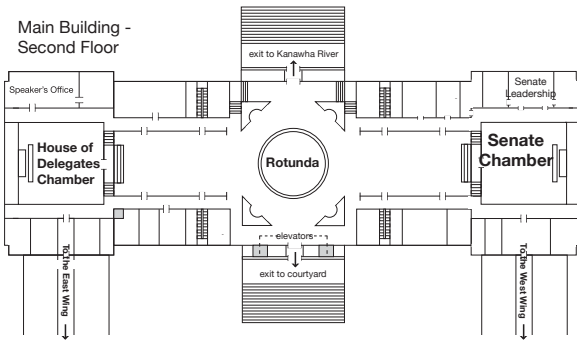
GETTING AROUND THE CAPITOL

WEST VIRGINIA STATE CAPITOL

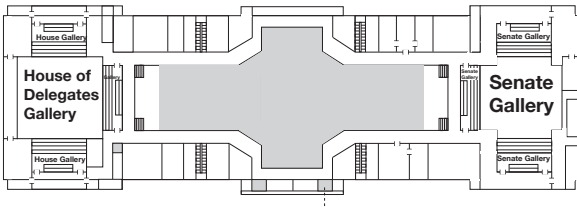
Main Building - Ground Floor



Main Building - Second Floor



Main Building - Third Floor



State Capitol Information

■ Building Hours

The Capitol is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Saturday 12 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Sunday and Holidays.

■ Capitol Maps

Planning a visit to the state capitol? Download a Capitol map to help you navigate its grand halls at wvlegislature.gov

■ Access to Galleries

All citizens are welcome to observe legislative floor sessions from any of the three galleries located in each chamber.

■ Capitol Tours

State Capitol tours, and tours of the Governor's Mansion are available for guests, school groups, etc., by calling Capitol Tours & Information — (304) 558-4839

■ Accessibility

All public entrances to the State Capitol are wheel chair accessible.

■ Dispensary

The Dispensary is located on the

main level near the Rotunda.

■ Food

The Capitol Complex Food Court is located in the basement of the main capitol building.

■ Shuttle Service

Shuttle service is provided between the Capitol Complex and the Laidley Field parking area in three shifts, a morning shift, a midday shift and an afternoon shift.

MORE INFO: wvlegislature.gov

YOU ARE INVITED TO ACTT AND

*Amplify Our Voices
for Respectful Care*



ACTT WORKSHOPS

Beginning January 25, 2022, ACTT Workshops will be held virtually every 4th Wednesday at 7 pm ET.

Add these dates to your calendar and view more details on our website: www.bcfsm.org

HOW TO ACTT:

Ask Questions Until You Understand the Answers

Claim Your Space

Trust Your Body

Tell Your Story

Your tax deductible contribution to BCFSM will help expand our capacity to spread the ACTT advocacy toolkit nationwide with the On-Demand ACTT Facilitator Training to be launched during Black Maternal Health Week April 11-17, 2023.

Your support will help Black birthing families receive care with the respect and dignity that all people deserve.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT ACTT:

"ACTT is **POWERFUL** and potentially **LIFESAVING!**"
-Sekeita Lewis-Johnson, DNP, FNP-BC, IBCLC

READ US ONLINE

BLACKBYGOD
THE WEST VIRGINIAN

Black By God is a community-led news organization based in West Virginia that aims to provide a more nuanced portrayal of the Black Experience in the Appalachian region. We seek to center Black stories and life in all their manifestations in West Virginia and Appalachia, providing coverage in four categories: civics, community, culture, and coin.

blackbygod.org

SUBMIT

BBG Story Ideas, Tips & Announcements

What stories do you think we should be covering? TELL US! Fill out this form or email info@blackbygod.org



PRESENTED BY DELTAS BUILDING DEMOCRACY

ALL WEBINARS BEGIN AT 7:00 PM

LEARNING & ACTION WEBINARS

This webinar series is defined by the Black Policy Agenda's Social Determinants of Health, which impact how and where we live, learn, work, play, worship, and age. These factors affect the health, functioning, and quality-of-life experienced in our communities and influence how we interact with the world around us.

JANUARY

10

EDUCATION & ENVIRONMENT

We'll discuss the broader legislation to address the disparate impact of school suspensions on Black and minority student and share information on environmental concerns that affect our communities.

JANUARY

17

CRIMINAL JUSTICE & ECONOMICS

This webinar will address how the criminal justice system impacts the rights of formerly and currently incarcerated individuals, and we'll share resources for Black and minority business owners.

JANUARY

24

FOOD & HEALTH

We'll share resources for improving minority health and nutrition, discuss how communities are combatting food deserts, and address the impact of pre- and post-natal care and risks surrounding maternal and infant mortality.

JANUARY

31

HOUSING & REPARATIONS

This webinar will cover housing discrimination concerning Black and minority populations and the future of reparations in West Virginia.



Register at bit.ly/3WAHleM or scan the QR code!
With questions, email Dr. Shanequa Smith at bviiwv@gmail.com