

The scourge of prostitution: Who's keeping an eye on local STD rates?

We watch them walk the streets in zombie-like precision. Their eyes may be listless and their bodies tired, but they muster the energy to wave at men who pass by on Bluefield Avenue.

With a wall of windows, our third-floor conference room gives us the perfect view of the debauchery on the street — prostitutes plying their wares, and customers taking them up on their offers.

Initially, we watch in surprise. But as the months pass it becomes routine. We recognize the regular workers, and take note when new women hit the street. We take photos with our cellphones of the Johns picking them up. It's a sad, horrific, yet mesmerizing commentary on the drug abuse plague in southern West Virginia.

In years past, hookers were a somewhat uncommon occurrence in the coalfield counties. The few who worked the area were well known. Journalists knew their names; everyone knew their faces.

Nowadays, not so much. Strangers now tread the concrete sidewalks. We watch them daily and still can't keep track of the myriad of personalities. At one time, Mercer Street in Princeton was known as the place to go for a cheap, half-hour-or-less hookup. In 2015, this option is available just about everywhere in the county.



Samantha Perry

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We know that drugs are the scourge that fuels the problem. Women — or their boyfriends — need money for a fix. They can earn it on the streets.

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We know that drugs are the scourge that fuels the problem. Women — or their boyfriends — need money for a fix. They can earn it on the streets. Undiscerning men will pay the price for a quick thrill.

Meanwhile, a public health threat spreads with each encounter — sexually transmitted diseases.

Hepatitis B and C, syphilis, gonorrhea, chlamydia — pick your poison. All are present in the region, and are being taken home to innocent spouses who are unaware their significant others are catching "cooties" for 40 bucks in a back seat.

How great is this scourge? We at the *Daily Telegraph* would like to know, but therein lies the problem.

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For many years the *Telegraph* had a great working relationship with the Mercer County Health

Department. We worked with them hand-in-hand on stories ranging from STDs to rabies to influenza. If we needed information they provided it, allowing us to get quick, accurate reports to readers.

But things have changed. The previous administrator of the health department retired, and new faces moved in. Now getting data on STDs is not so easy.

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At one time, Mercer was ranked among the top counties in the nation for its high rates of Hepatitis B and C. How does it rank now?

Also, in recent years, Mercer saw an increasing number of syphilis and gonorrhea cases. Is this spike continuing?

Both are good questions. Ones we would like to have answered. But that has proven problematic of late.

For the past several weeks, I have had a *Daily Telegraph* reporter call

and stop by the health department on various occasions in an effort to report on these numbers.

Regrettably, no one seems to have the answers. They have some numbers, but when asked about rankings statewide and nationally, no one seems to know.

This is beyond worrisome. Who, if anyone, is minding the STD rate in Mercer County?

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After yet another failed attempt at gathering these numbers last week, I filed a formal Freedom of Information Act request with the health department. In it, I requested a specific breakdown of STD numbers per month from January to June of this year, and from five and 10 years ago.

The response was a bit surprising. Instead of hard numbers I received a tersely worded response via fax that directed me to go to a website, which, by the way, did not have all the data we requested.

The handwritten response on the fax, from new Mercer County Health Department administrator Susan Kadar, read as follows: "We instructed the BDT previously on how to get this info from the state EPI site. We do not keep compiled info here as it is obtainable there. I am sorry but I do not have the time to do this research for the BDT."

Sincerely, Susan."

Wow. If Mercer County health administrators are not keeping "compiled info" here, who is watching the numbers? Are we counting on officials in Charleston to keep an eye on our rates? There's a leap of faith.

(To view the actual response to the FOIA request, check out this column at bdtonline.com.)

Apparently, no one at our local health department knows if our STD rates are spiking, falling or staying about the same — or if they do, they are not telling the press, who can communicate it to the public.

How scary is the thought — the reality — that our new public health administrator does not "have the time" to keep the citizens informed of the very real health threat from STDs?

Worried about syphilis? Go online. This is your tax dollars at work.

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Meanwhile, the hookers continue to walk the streets. Johns stop. Doors open. In a half hour or less, the women are back on their corners.

What diseases are being spread? If only we knew.

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"In the multitude of my thoughts within me your comforts delight my soul."
(Psalms 94:19 AKJV)

Mercer trailhead

Long-awaited project advancing

Hundreds of visitors are traveling to our region each week to ride the Hatfield-McCoy Trail system. But there still isn't an official visitor center or welcome center in place to properly greet these out-of-town visitors before they enter the trail system. With hope that will be changing soon.

The long-planned trailhead center for Mercer County is finally moving forward, although a couple of key decisions must still be made by a local committee that is composed of county commissioner Gene Buckner, Budd Clapp and Danny Simmons. The trailhead itself was proposed three years ago, and funding for its construction has been secured by the Hatfield-McCoy Trail Authority. But an engineering firm must still be selected for the project, and officials have to come to an agreement on a location. The two sites being considered for the project are Coaldale Mountain along U.S. Route 52 and Simmons River Road past the entrance to Montcalm High School. Buckner says the committee hopes to select an engineering firm at the next board meeting on Aug. 13. He says the committee will decide a site for the trailhead project by November.

The trailhead also is referred to as a visitors center. The new 2,000-square-foot facility will include accommodations and parking where visitors to the trail can park their vehicles and unload their ATVs and equipment before entering the trail system. The facility will also serve as an official welcome center for ATV riders coming

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The visitors to our region who are riding the ATV trails in Mercer, as well as neighboring McDowell County, are more than deserving of an official welcome center.

into the region from Interstate 77, according to Hatfield-McCoy Executive Director Jeff Lusk.

The estimated cost of the visitors center is approximately a half million dollars. Construction on the trailhead center will be funded by a \$500,000 West Virginia Recreational Trails Program grant. Lusk is hoping ground can be broken and construction on the project can begin by next spring.

"We want the site selected, the building designed, the utility layout done and everything ready to go to bid by late fall with the idea of breaking ground and starting construction in the spring," Lusk said. "My hope and expectation is that the whole project would be done by this time next year."

We, too, are hopeful that construction can begin soon on this long-awaited addition to the Hatfield-McCoy Trail. The visitors to our region who are riding the ATV trails in Mercer, as well as neighboring McDowell County, are more than deserving of an official welcome center. The development is a great way to officially welcome riders from across the U.S. to the beautiful mountains of southern West Virginia.

Letters...

Letter inspires GOP contribution

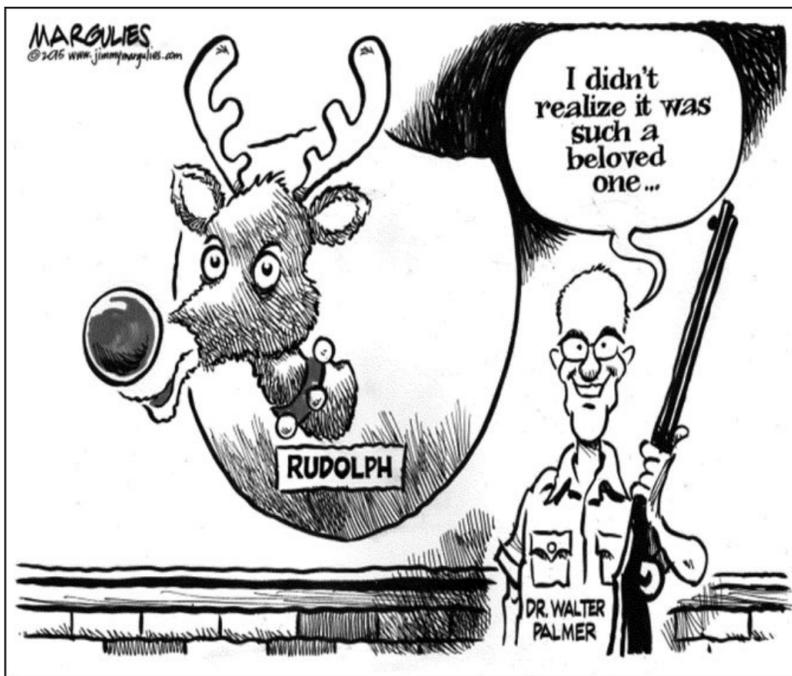
It is often difficult to decide if a frequent letter contributor is serious or only pulling our legs with his political discussions. In the July 29 paper, he discussed the pathetic Republican potential presidential field, particularly demeaning, or perhaps praising, its most noticeable members. He suggests that Mr. Trump is a source of entertainment, and typical of the party that produced one of our great presidents, Richard Nixon, destroyed because he scowled and had a five O'clock shadow, and Joe McCarthy who will forever be hated by liberals for accurately exposing the numerous communists in our government.

Also, the writer mentions the modest and great Vietnam veteran of four months who spent Christmas in Cambodia, without ever having been in Cambodia, suffered a buttock injury from a grenade he threw himself, and more recently helped finalize an agreement that may well "finish" the tiny nation of Israel and precipitate the greatest and perhaps last world conflict.

In any event, Mr. Trump has been quite successful in his business endeavors so far, causing endless envy and spite among liberals, who believe that wealthy people should only be so from giving 30-minute speeches for half a million dollars, pretending to be someone else in a movie, or exchanging favors with their favorite lobbyist. He has been bringing up some politically incorrect and uncomfortable truths that others have been frightened to acknowledge, such as illegal immigration designed to alter national political trends by promoting, with "other people's money," as usual, dependence on government.

Thanks to the writer for reminding me to send a contribution to the campaign of Senator Ted Cruz, who seems to be the rare politician who actually does what he promises and has never, to my knowledge, been proven to be a "congenital liar." This in sharp contrast to the chief Democrat candidate of the moment.

Stephen DeGray
Bluefield, Va.



Presidential race: Trashing civility takes a toll on the nation

WASHINGTON — This is an appeal, plaintive and heartfelt, for couth behavior.

That does not sound like much of a big deal, but, apparently, if you decide to run for president it is not uncommon to discard couth behavior as quickly as a sticky popsicle wrapper.

Being couth is described as having well-mannered, cultured, refined behavior. It should have been learned in kindergarten.

It is not in evidence on the campaign trail this year.

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee likened the pending Iran anti-nuclear arms deal to the Holocaust, suggesting that it would send Israel to the doors of the ovens. This is uncouth. It is not even hyperbole. It is incendiary hooliganism.

It is a strong indication that Huckabee is so desperate for media attention that anything goes. Even many Israelis would be horrified at Huckabee's rhetoric.

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie likes to berate his constituents unmercifully in public forums, including schoolteachers.

His aides used to follow him around to record on video his rantings or his "moments" to post on YouTube.

This is supposed to be "telling it like it is." This is being a bully.

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz has taken to calling Senate Majority Leader Mitch



Ann McFeatters

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Donald Trump does not hesitate to call people 'stupid.' He relishes demeaning other people and other nations.

McConnell, R-Ky., a liar. He thinks this makes him seem "anti-Washington."

It reveals him to be uncouth. Not surprisingly, he is one of the most unpopular members of the Senate.

Donald Trump does not hesitate to call people "stupid." He relishes demeaning other people and other nations. That's what he does.

And, speaking of kindergarten, where bad behavior can spread like lice, the other candidates in the race seem to be doing their best to compete with Trump at his level.

People, what is wrong with civility?

Why are we encouraging this bad behavior?

Why have a majority of the candidates decided that we like this name-calling and constant repudiation of thoughtful, reasoned, intelligent debate? Is it any wonder that Americans are seriously worried about the future of this nation?

The amazing thing is that any decent people are willing to run, risking humiliation and their souls for public office.

It used to be called the politics of personal destruction.

It has escalated far beyond that so that it is destroying who we are.

In this month of county fairs and family reunions, we shudder to think of how many encounters will turn ugly because that is the only kind of behavior we see from most of our political leaders.

How about this for a change?

You listen to me. I listen to you.

We agree that we disagree.

We see if we can find room for compromise.

We say we respect each other's right to his/her own opinion.

We smile.

We shake hands.

We remain friendly.

If the political debates turn ugly, if civility is trashed, let's resolve not to stand for it.

Let us demand that the candidates respect each other and, in consequence, the rest of us.

And now, let's get to those reunions

Ann McFeatters is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service. Readers may send her email at amcfeatters@nationalpress.com. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Chasing a daily news deadline is like living life with an Etch-A-Sketch

If I make mistakes in life, they're my fault. Thank God that through the years, I have had some mentors who have provided me with information that gives the appearance that I know a little bit about local history. In truth, I do not. I had a young boy's interest in Civil War history when I was growing up and enjoyed learning about British civil history in college. I took all the West Virginia history courses WVU had to offer in the '60s and '70s, but there were only two back then.

But newspaper folks don't have time for history. Knowledge to us is like an Etch-a-Sketch image. At the end of each day, we just shake the box and start all over again the next day. Our way of life is superficial. Some of us get to experience life outside a noisy newsroom, but it never lasts very long. We seldom get to stay for the trophy presentations. We split as soon as we know the winners and losers. To paraphrase Scarlet O'Hara: "After all, tomorrow is another" ... deadline.

Thank God I got to know people like Heber Stafford. "A gentleman," my wife, Evonda, said when I told her I had just read his death notice in the paper. "He sat right here when he helped us with that book," she said. "He didn't have to come here to help, but he did." The book was "Bluefield in the 1940s," and I



Bill Archer

dedicated it to Heber, Melvin Grubb and the late Eva Easley — all three of whom knew more about Bluefield than I'll ever know.

I had known Heber for several years, but we started becoming close during the demolition of the old Superior Sterling building in Bluefield. I had written stories about the demolition of the Bluefield Supply Building in the late 1980s, but Heber had picked up a panorama-style camera somewhere and started taking photographs from the Grace United Methodist Church parking lot every week. He loved showing me the weekly progression of the demolition. It was a building that was really sturdy and built to last.

He also loved the church. Heber asked Karl Miller and I to perform for a revival at the church. We were honored and humbled to perform. I was driving down Rogers Street one afternoon and stopped when I

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I was honored to be a guest in the Stafford home many times through the years. Heber's older brother — A.F. 'Red' Stafford — and I had a great time together.

saw Heber working on the door to an out building. He was putting a new lock on it. Someone had broken off the old lock and took the lawn mower and weed eater.

I told him that it was a shame that someone would steal from a church, and he said that locks only keep honest people out. "There's no way to keep a thief out of a locked building," he said. I kept a closer watch on the out building after that and the bigger lock that Heber installed did the trick.

I was honored to be a guest in the Stafford home many times through the years. Heber's older brother — A.F. "Red" Stafford — and I had a great time together. He loved jazz, and some times, Karl and I have slipped into a little jazz-styled songs. Red had a playful side, and we both enjoyed a good laugh.

Their sister, Louise, knew as much about baseball as anyone I knew. I like baseball, but Louise

really loved baseball. No time was too late to visit the Stafford's home if there was a baseball game on TV. Louise would watch every minute of left coast games, although she would confess that she didn't care too much for either team.

Back in December of 2000, Russell Crowe, the actor who portrayed John Nash in the movie "A Beautiful Mind," sent his dialect researcher — Judy Dickerson — to Bluefield to research Nash's dialect. I had already provided her with a videotape of Nash during his appearance on CNN's "The Nobel Minds," from November 1994, but Crowe prepares thoroughly for his roles, and Judy had a pair of Ph.D.'s in linguistics and language arts.

I invited Heber, Joe Sanders and Eva Easley to the newspaper office and Judy recorded them in conversation for almost an hour. She also collected a dialect sample from Tom Colley, and she and I drove to Roanoke, Va., where she collected dialect samples from John Nash's sister, Martha. We spent that evening and part of the next day — mostly talking about dialect. John Nash's speech pattern was unique, but she was able to detect some similar tonal patterns in the samples she collected.

We visited Heber at his home for some follow-up sampling, and Judy

met Louise and A.F. I knew Red and Louise had different dialect patterns, and Judy knew it in a few moments.

When we left the Stafford home, Judy said that she thought the Stafford family — two brothers and their sister — who never married and lived their entire lives in the home they were born in — was far more fascinating than the life of a Nobel laureate who battled mental illness. She commented on how rare it is to see siblings who get along so well with each other.

Heber and A.F. traveled around the country on their dad's N&W railroad pass, and saw games with the likes of Babe Ruth playing. They preserved the history they saw, and all three, A.F., Heber and Louise, were eager to share what they knew as historical fact with me — a guy who started each new day with a blank chalk board, and erased it every night.

I was blessed to have been friends with Heber, Louise and A.F. Stafford. Evonda and I both remembered the image of Heber parking his K-Car across the street from our home, and walking to our door. "A gentleman," she said, and I agreed.

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"And when he was at the place, he said to them, Pray that you enter not into temptation."
(Luke 22:40 AKJV)

Traffic signal

Stoplight making intersection safer

Southern West Virginia's mountainous terrain creates challenging road conditions and hazards, and among those conditions are risky intersections. These intersections are even more of a risk when they do not have traffic lights. When there are no lights to stop motorists and let them know when to proceed, they are more inclined to take risks when traffic is heavy and frustrations build.

One such location can be found at the intersection near the entrance of Bluefield State College and Route 52.

Route 52 is a highway that experiences a lot of traffic, particularly in the morning and evening commuting hours. Vehicles ranging from small cars to large tractor-trailers hauling heavy loads go through that intersection every day.

Several weeks ago, this congestion was exacerbated when work to replace the old Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge got underway. Heavy pieces of equipment and large pieces of construction material had to go through the college's entrance and skirt its campus in order to reach the building site. To help control this addition to an already busy highway, the city of Bluefield asked the state Department of Highways to install a temporary traffic light system.

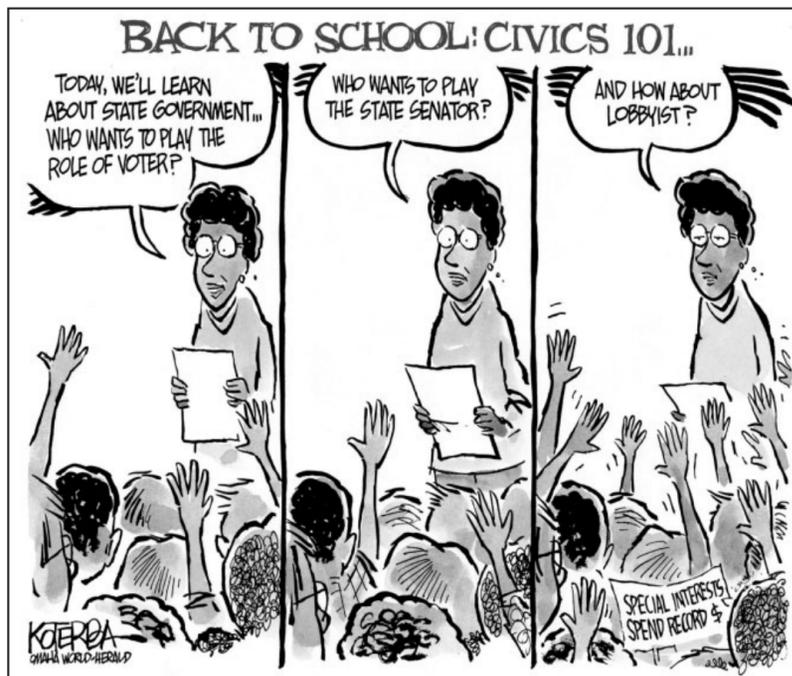
This traffic light has made access to the college and the nearby Tiffany

For example, fewer crashes have been reported since a turn signal was added to traffic lights at the intersection of Route 52 and Route 123 in Brushfork.

Manor community easier and safer. Now drivers simply wait their turn and proceed after other traffic has been stopped by a red light. Drivers obeying the traffic signals are much less inclined to take a risk because they know their turn to pull out will come.

Traffic signals go a long way toward reducing risks at busy intersections. For example, fewer crashes have been reported since a turn signal was added to traffic lights at the intersection of Route 52 and Route 123 in Brushfork.

The temporary traffic light at Route 52 and Bluefield State College could become even more beneficial if it could become a permanent fixture. It has reduced the stress motorists experience while waiting for a break in heavy traffic and reduced the chances for a crash. Local drivers have had time to adjust to the new traffic signal. If the new signal becomes permanent, it could enhance safety both for local drivers and for those visiting the Bluefield area.



Mink, road, Manchin, more

A selection of reader comments from our Facebook page last week:

On the Marine Corps League assembling at the courthouse:

- Wish I had known, I would have been there. Thanks from the bottom of my heart. Mother of a marine — Ramonia K.
- Thanks heroes for your service to our nation — Rhonda H.

On the FBI arresting activists accused of releasing 5,740 mink:

- Omg, really? Those horrible people, releasing mink. (This is sarcasm, people). Doesn't the FBI have better things to do? — Tiffany L.
- Nope they don't. It's the FBI — Sean S.
- Those mink were probably worth a huge amount of money ... — Scott H.

On the third of three brothers earning an Eagle Scout rank:

- Wonderful accomplishment! — Tracy K.
- Congrats on a deserved honor, doing all the work to get this far! That is indeed commitment and integrity! — Karen S.

On a report that the depressed state of the coal industry is delaying work on the Coalfields Expressway:

- Never gonna happen — Dan M.
- We need the coal, we need a president in office that will get the states that mine coal back up and running — Kenneth B.
- Anyone, if they open their eyes, look around, and do their research, can see that America is not better off with this administration ... — Jerri H.
- No, what this state needs is a new industrial base

News and views ...



Log on to our website, www.bdtonline.com, to view news updates throughout the day. Share your opinion with us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/bdtonline

other than coal. The problem is that those who are actively killing coal don't care what happens to the areas dependent on it ... — Joseph L.

- A waste of money period — Chris H.
- It's pretty wild how a road that was built can't get done. The tolls we pay daily on 77 should at least get this done honestly ... — Richard S.
- I guess that excuse is better than none — Nancy E.

On a newborn fawn being rescued after its mother was struck and killed on Interstate 77:

- Aww — Shirley M.
- Miracles do happen — Elaine C.
- How precious. Prays it lives — Sandi L.

On a story about Sen. Joe Manchin leaning toward supporting the Iran deal:

- I hope not — Debbie N.
- Don't do it! — LaVonne C.

- So disappointed in him! I expected better! — Brenda W.

- Good for Joe! — Neal V.
- He is a fence rider. He doesn't know which side he wants to be on — Lillian L.
- Think about it Joe, would it not be better to have war there instead of here? — Larry D.

- Good we need some sanity! — Dave H.
- Big mistake! — Sharon B.

On a story, with surveillance photo, about deputies investigating a theft at a school:

- Is that guy wearing a quilt? — Don Z.
- Wet Blanket Bandits — Scott H.

On an Interstate 81 crash in which one child died and two were injured:

- So sad. God bless this family — Betty I.
- Tragic — Elaine C.
- It's by the grace of God that all did not perish yesterday. I was on I-81 and passed the site of the accident. The vehicle was demolished — Melissa J.

On West Virginia being among states with the biggest drops in gasoline prices:

- Guess that means they were way too high to start with — John M.
- If what I've seen lately is considered a large drop, that's just sad ... — Tiffany L.

On the Bluefield Police Department getting body cameras:

- All officers should be equipped with bodycams. It protects them just as much as it protects the criminals — Joe H.
- It's taken that long? — Bo W.

On a man dying from a snake bite at a Kentucky church service:

- Simple. Play with rattlers you will get bit. Period. No-brainer — David B.

Letters...

Thanks for support of military nights

I want to take this opportunity to thank Senator Bill Cole, Jeff Gray, general manager of the Bluefield Blue Jays, and Jim Holland, general manager of the Princeton Rays, for making the Military Family Appreciation Nights at the ballpark a reality.

Both games were made possible by the corporate sponsorship of Bill Cole Automall, Cole Subaru and Cole Kia. Thanks to the community, organizations, volunteers and sponsors for their support; two great nights to honor our veterans and their families. Special thanks to our veterans, who without their service events such as these would not be possible. Thanks to our two wounded warriors, Army veteran E-5 Signal Core James Mounts and Army Staff Sgt. Will Thompson, for throwing out the first pitch at the games.

To the media, WVVA, WVNS, WOAY, the Bluefield Daily Telegraph, Little Buddy Radio, The Willie, Craig Hammond, Star 95, Mark Warner, and Alpha Media for the coverage and promotion of the events, and to Virginia Eagle for the Military Welcome Banner. Thanks to Bluefield State College, the town of Bluefield, Va., K&K Music and Bill Cole Automall for running the event on their marquees.

To vendors, the West Virginia National Guard

for the humvees at both events, and Sgt. Singh, CW3 Cook, Sgt. Vance, Tina Cook and to all National Guard personnel, the Beckley VA, Bonita and Gavin for their support, the Princeton Marine Corps recruiting office, and Kelli Embrescia, SSVF coordinator.

Thanks to the Montcalm JROTC, under the direction of Sgt. Major Dorsey and Sgt. Major Baylor, for the Presentation of Colors, Pastor W.D. Hasty, Craig Stout, Mel and Stephen Saunders and Mackenzie Phipps. Thanks to the cities of Bluefield, Princeton and the town of Bluefield, Va., (mayors Cole, Ealy and Harris) for proclaiming July 11 and July 18 Military Family Appreciation Night at the Ballpark.

To the Princeton Rescue Squad for tables and chairs, and volunteers Doris and Norris Kantor, George McGonagle, Elise Bowling, Kathy Kirk and all the personnel at both ballparks, thank you. Three military organizations benefited from the games this year: the Military Family Support Center, American Legion Riley Vest Post 9 and Always Free Honor Flight. What special nights! Thanks to all our veterans for their service!

Marie Blackwell
Bluefield

Going Rogue, Part XI: The EPA will break the law to do what is right

The Environmental Protection Agency, long behaving as a narrowly focused ideological organization instead of as a servant of the people, may finally have messed up sufficiently to bring itself down, or at the very least to have earned a significant degree of restriction to its slash-and-burn approach to fossil fuel energy production.



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The EPA, like all federal agencies, is duty-bound to enthusiastically adhere to only one ideology, and that is the one outlined by the U.S. Constitution.

Causing misery to thousands of honest, hard-working people who have lost jobs and businesses, suffered downturns in their business and/or paid heavy fines because of the agency's dogmatic focus on imposing unwarranted restrictions on behaviors the agency dislikes, the EPA has been caught in an incestuous relationship with organizations that advocate the same ideology as agency bureaucrats.

The work of the Environment & Energy Legal Institute (EELI) reveals that the EPA has secretly colluded with environmental activists to drive the Obama administration's manic global warming agenda. The organization's report reveals "records showing illegal activities by EPA staff, conspiring with certain environmental group lobbyists to draft EPA's greenhouse gas rules behind the scenes and outside of public view."

As reported by The Daily Caller News Foundation's Michael Bastasch, who quoted Chris Horner, an EELI senior attorney, "These

emails, which EPA forced us to litigate to obtain, prove beyond any doubt that EPA conducted its campaign to impose the global warming agenda unlawfully, making the rules themselves unlawful." Mr. Horner says the EPA's rules were made in collusion with environmental groups, including the radical Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), thereby excluding the public from the process, and are therefore unlawful.

EELI says the EPA wrote the Clean Power Plan and other agency rules with an "unalterably closed mind" centered on an anti-fossil fuel agenda. The EPA's behavior and the NRDC's perspective perfectly fit the dictionary definition of the idiom: an impractical idealist, an often blindly partisan advocate or adherent of a particular ideology.

A 2014 EELI report focused on emails released through a Freedom of Information Act request that showed coordination between EPA

employees and environmentalists that discussed the Keystone XL pipeline and clean coal technology. The EELI asserts that the records show "the influence on EPA by pressure groups, the same groups from which EPA obtained numerous senior officials," and that these activists helped to craft the EPA's Clean Power Plan (CPP) that regulates carbon dioxide emissions from existing power plants.

The *New York Times* found similar connections last year: "Indisputable, however, is that the Natural Resources Defense Council was far ahead of the EPA in drafting the architecture of the proposed regulation."

Analyzing the EPA's strategy, Mr. Horner commented: "The issue is solely whether Congress will stop EPA from unlawfully winning by losing, which is to say, using sham rulemaking to metastasize its desired harms before the typical timeline of litigation allows for inter-

vention. The public needs to consider this illegality and cynical lawlessness when the president stands up with the EPA administrator ... to lecture us all about how they're just doing the right thing."

Question: If the EPA and the Obama administration are doing the right thing, why did they feel compelled to break the law?

The EPA is expected to finalize the CPP this week, and may already have done so by now. According to comments from the White House, this new version of the plan is even stronger than last year's proposal, which was objectionable enough to prompt several states to file suit opposing the rule, and to outrage some labor unions.

Even before this stronger version of the plan had been developed, United Mine Workers of America president Cecil Roberts said the CPP would result in tens of thousands of union members losing their jobs. Doing the right thing "will lead to long-term and irreversible job losses for thousands of coal miners, electrical workers, utility workers, boilermakers, railroad workers and others without achieving any significant reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions," Mr. Roberts said in a statement. In addition to the thousands who have already lost their jobs, he estimates that the rule will cause 75,000 job losses in the coal sector by 2020, rising to 152,000 by 2035.

Apparently unconcerned with the thousands of American workers whose lives will be turned upside-down, an EPA spokesperson said, "The Clean Power Plan follows our clear legal authority under the Clean Air Act," adding that, "The supreme court has decided multiple times that EPA has an obligation to regulate greenhouse gases," without apparent concern for the repercussions.

The EPA, like all federal agencies, is duty-bound to enthusiastically adhere to only one ideology, and that is the one outlined by the U.S. Constitution.

The EPA, or any federal agency, may properly seek input from any individual or organization, but they may not take information or advice exclusively from one side without providing the opportunity for opposing points of view and data to be provided, and to objectively consider all points of view to arrive at a fair and sensible conclusion.

Out-of-control actions by agencies of the federal government are much too frequent, and repercussions for this inappropriate, intolerable and sometimes-illegal behavior are nearly non-existent. A number of people should be fired, and a few deserve to be indicted.

Don't hold your breath.

James H. "Smokey" Shott, a resident of Bluefield, Va., is a *Daily Telegraph* columnist.

Bluefield Daily Telegraph

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 Sports Editor.....Brian Woodson

Senior Editor.....Bill Archer
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"But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that does serve."

(Luke 22:26 AKJV)

Unprecedented

A dark day for coal industry

In another day of despair for the historic coalfields of southern West Virginia and Southwest Virginia, unfortunate developments on the local, state and national level converged Monday to create an even greater challenge for the embattled industry.

The coal-related headlines — both bad and good — included:

- President Barack Obama — continuing his reprehensible five-year-old war on coal — announces even steeper emission cuts from coal-fired U.S. power plants than previously expected, while also renewing his push for wind and solar energy to replace coal. Under the revised rules announced Monday by Obama, power plants will have to attain an even lower level of carbon dioxide emissions to be in compliance. Obama's proposal from last year set the target as a 30 percent nationwide cut by 2030. The revamped plan calls for a 32 percent cut in the same time period. Never mind the fact that coal is still responsible for 30 percent of our nation's electricity generation. It's also important to remember that there simply aren't enough wind turbines and solar panels out there to keep the lights on in America once we stop mining coal.

- Alpha Natural Resources, a company that employs 4,870 coal miners in West Virginia and 1,380 in Virginia, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, the fourth big coal producer to file for bankruptcy protection within the last two years. The company said Monday was still a normal day of operation for coal miners at Alpha mines in Tazewell, McDowell and Buchanan counties.

- Opponents, including West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey, announced plans Monday to sue to stop the rule. Morrisey said the final rule announced Monday blatantly disregards the rule of law and will severely harm West Virginia and the U.S. economy.

- The National Mining Association also asked the EPA Monday to put the rule on hold while the legal challenges play out.

- U.S. Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, R-W.Va., chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee's Clean Air and Nuclear Safety Subcommittee, announced the markup of the ARENA Act, an alternative to Obama's job-killing "Clean Power Plan." Capito said Monday that the full committee will consider her alternative plan this week.

- U.S. Rep. Evan Jenkins, R-W.Va., called Monday upon Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin to stand with other governors and refuse to file state plans with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

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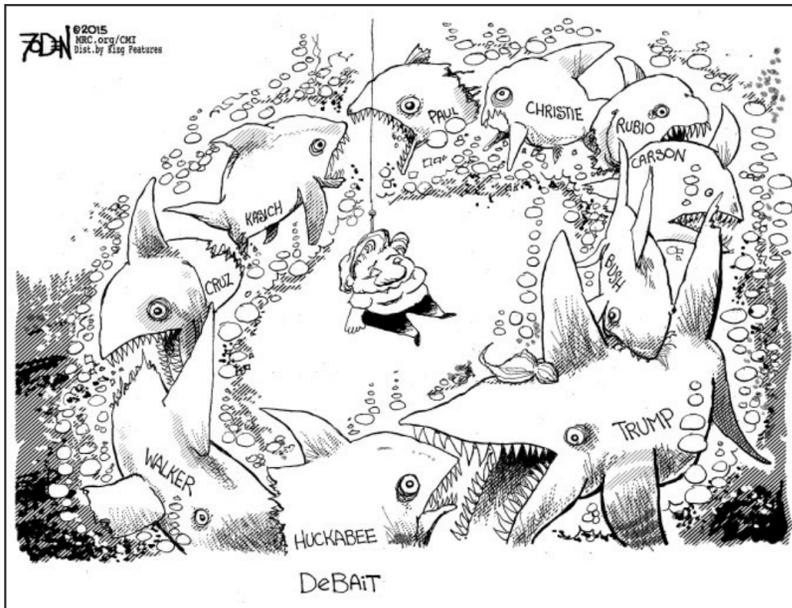
and participate in the EPA's "Clean Power Plan" rules. Members of the West Virginia Coal Association also are calling upon Tomblin to do the same. But Tomblin, a Democrat who comes from the coalfields of southern West Virginia, remains inexplicably non-committal to this request. Instead, his spokesman Chris Stadelman tells the *Daily Telegraph*, "There has been no decision made on how West Virginia will respond to the EPA Clean Power Plan mandate. Gov. Tomblin is committed to doing what is best for the residents of the Mountain State." Well that's a no-brainer. Join the other governors in challenging this administration and the EPA that is responsible for the loss of thousands of West Virginia coal mining jobs.

- West Virginia Senate President Bill Cole, R-Mercer, said Monday that the new Republican majority in Charleston passed HB 2004 in 2014, a measure which requires legislative approval before any plan can be submitted to the federal government to comply with the rules issued Monday by Obama. As Senate President, Cole said he and other lawmakers will utilize the new legislation to protect West Virginia.

The current challenges facing coal, and the region's historic coalfields, are clearly unprecedented. Yes, coal is facing a myriad of challenges right now that extend beyond Washington, including intense competition from natural gas, an oversupply in the global coal market, and slumping markets for thermal and met coal. But the greatest challenge is coming from crippling government regulations coming out of Washington.

Never before have we seen such an anti-coal administration in Washington. This is a president who promised to bankrupt coal-fired power plants while on the campaign trail, and he is certainly doing everything in his power to live up to that campaign promise. But even more frustrating are those lawmakers — mostly Democrats — who continue to blindly follow this administration's war on coal, helping to kill thousands of jobs in the process.

Can coal still rebound? We hope so. But Monday was certainly not a good day.



Alpha restructures for the future

By KEVIN S. CRUTCHFIELD

Chairman and CEO, Alpha Natural Resources

Commentary...

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Clearly, this has been more than just another cycle in the sector, and we will continue to adjust our operating footprint to market and customer demand.

A well-known phrase in coal communities, particularly during a down market, is that coal is cyclical. Several generations of miners have used these words to describe the highs and lows of our sector — as well as the sometimes vast divide between those extremes.

Right now, we're undoubtedly experiencing a historic low in the coal industry, but this time, we can't merely attribute the challenges our industry is facing to coal's cyclical nature. Unfortunately, the current landscape is far more complex.

I believe there's been more change in the industry in the past three years than the last three decades combined. A host of economic, competitive and regulatory factors have converged to impose incredible stress upon our industry.

More than 43 bankruptcies have been initiated by U.S. coal companies since early 2012. That's an average of one bankruptcy per month over that time period. Though striking and unfortunate, these statistics are indicative of the transformational changes occurring in the industry.

These challenges have also taken an unmistakable toll on our business at Alpha Natural Resources. On Aug. 3, Alpha and certain of its affiliates filed Chapter 11 bankruptcy petitions to restructure our finances and operations. News like this is understandably met with concern and uncertainty about what it means for individual employees and their families, retirees, the many organizations with which we have working relationships, and the broader communities in which we operate. So,

let me make a couple of things clear.

First, we are open for business. We intend to keep mining and supplying coal as we move through this process, which means we will continue employing hard-working coal operators and support personnel. Since the announcement, we have been actively engaged in discussions with employees, customers and many other stakeholders, reiterating our intention to continue operating and providing jobs for thousands of people across the enterprise. Most importantly, Alpha remains committed — as always — to safety, environmental stewardship and Running Right.

We remain a member of the communities in which we operate. While our charitable giving program has been temporarily suspended as we navigate these extremely challenged markets, we value the relationships we have forged in the communities where our affiliated employees live and work, raise their children, worship, and contribute their own time and energy to local causes and events.

Though the days and months ahead will inevitably be tough, the decision to take this path was a strategic one, and it came after many months of thorough, deliberative analysis to evaluate the advantages, drawbacks, implications and outcomes of taking this action. We believe restructuring is the best option at this time for our organization, and we fully intend to emerge from

this process as an agile company, with a diversified resource base and better positioned for the future.

Alpha is not alone in this struggle. No coal company has been immune from the market and regulatory pressures of the last several years. As coal counties know all too well, the ripple effect from this downturn also seems unending, with virtually every small business, community center and gas station feeling the pinch along with us.

Clearly, this has been more than just another cycle in the sector, and we will continue to adjust our operating footprint to market and customer demand.

But as our industry works through its current challenges, I believe there's also transformational opportunity for companies willing to take proactive, strategic action. In my view, the coal industry must go through significant restructuring and consolidation to find success within the sector's contracted market share, but success can — and will — be found.

By providing affordable power and steel for infrastructure, coal continues to fuel progress around the globe. We produce a valuable resource that has driven economic growth in this region and will continue to play an arguably reduced, but still significant, role far into the future. We intend for Alpha to be a part of that future and we appreciate your patience and support as we work together toward that goal.