

January 31, 2017

Austin Caperton, Secretary  
WV Department of Environmental Protection  
601 57<sup>th</sup> Street SE  
Charleston, WV 25304  
Email to: [Austin.Caperton@WV.gov](mailto:Austin.Caperton@WV.gov)

Secretary Caperton,

Initial statements you made to the press about your appointment, your love for West Virginia, and your commitment to protect our environment were encouraging. However your decision to fire the Environmental Advocate raises serious concerns.

The organizations listed below are dismayed to hear that you dismissed Wendy Radcliff. We are also deeply troubled that you would take such action without input from the environmental community and the many citizens who turn to that Office for assistance in dealing with the complex regulatory programs of the agency.

While we understand the Environmental Advocate serves at the will and pleasure of the Secretary, we are confused and frustrated that you saw fit to remove someone who embodies the very heart and soul of the Office. For many who need help to resolve environmental problems or have any number of questions about how to interact with DEP, Wendy is the first point of contact. She's friendly, helpful and competent. She does the agency proud, and is responsive to citizens equally.

We are particularly struck by your hasty dismissal of the person whose service and dedication was highly valued by your immediate predecessor who, during his tenure as DEP Secretary, appointed Wendy to the DEP senior staff and recently acknowledged her contribution in a statement that appeared in the January 27, 2017 *Gazette-Mail* newspaper.

*"I really got to know Wendy well over past few years when she agreed to come back to [the] DEP and serve as our state's environmental advocate," [Randy] Huffman said Friday. "Her enthusiasm and passion for West Virginia is contagious. I appreciate how she understands the nexus between environmental protection and economic growth and how faithfully she supports the role of [the] DEP in that mix. She is selfless in all she does and she makes everyone around her better. I consider her a friend of mine and a friend of West Virginia."*

Transparency is essential to the integrity of your position and public confidence in your agency. We request that you publicly explain the process you will engage in to fulfill your statutory requirements to hire someone for the legally mandated full time position of Environmental Advocate. Ensuring that process will include input from the public is essential. To that end we trust you will honor the tradition of accepting nominations for the position from the environmental community, a tradition begun with the creation of WV DEP and the Office of Environmental Advocate in 1994.

Please direct your response to Gary Zuckett, Executive Director, WV Citizen Action Group and Past President of WV Environmental Council at 304-346-5891 or [garyz@wvcag.org](mailto:garyz@wvcag.org).

Cc: Governor Jim Justice

Ciera Pennington  
President  
West Virginia Environmental Council

Gary Zuckett  
Executive Director  
West Virginia Citizens Action Group

Angie Rosser  
Executive Director  
West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Cynthia D. Ellis, President  
Cindy Rank, Mining Committee  
West Virginia Highlands Conservancy

Chad Cordell  
Coordinator  
and Jim Waggy  
Kanawha Forest Coalition

Natalie Thompson  
Executive Director  
Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition

James Kotcon  
Chair  
West Virginia Chapter Sierra Club

Denise Binion  
Chairperson  
North Central WV Democracy for  
America

Justin Raines  
President  
Glenville State College Environmental  
Organization

Larry V. Thomas  
President  
Allegheny Highlands Alliance

Eve Firor  
Vice President  
Friends of Beautiful Pendleton County

April Keating  
Mountain Lakes Protection Association

Stephen N. Smith  
West Virginia Healthy Kids  
and Families Coalition

Dr. Frank Gilliam  
Biological Sciences  
Marshall University

Judy Azulay  
President  
Indian Creek Watershed Association

Arthur Dodds, Jr.  
President  
Laurel Mountain Preservation Association

Allen Johnson  
Coordinator  
Christians For The Mountains

Beth Little  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Eight Rivers Council

Karen Yarnell  
Chair  
West Virginia Wilderness Coalition

Pam Nixon  
President  
People Concerned About Chemical  
Safety

Margaret Pomponio  
Executive Director  
WV FREE

Laurie Ardison  
Co-Chair  
POWHR (Protect Our Water,  
Heritage, and Rights)

Randi Pokladnik  
Steering Committee Member  
Ohio River Citizens' Alliance

Brent Walls  
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper

Jimmy W. Hall  
Chairman of the Board  
Friends for Environmental Justice

Robin Blakeman  
Steering Committee  
WV Interfaith Power & Light

Pamela Moe  
Bear Creek Consulting  
Kerens, WV

Kirk A Bowers, PE  
Pipelines Program Coordinator  
Virginia Chapter, Sierra Club

Betty L. Wiley  
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Dunkard Creek Watershed Association

Vernon Haltom  
Executive Director  
Coal River Mountain Watch

Brandon Richardson, President  
Brittany Huerta, Secretary  
Kristine Gilkey, Board of Directors  
Headwaters Defense

Angela Cavender  
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Clean Water Task Force  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation of  
Charleston, WV

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The Keeper of the Mountains Foundation

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Helen Gibbins, Board of Directors  
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Virginia

Elaine Wine  
Manager  
Braxton Concerned Americans

John Walkup, Jr.  
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Greenbrier River Watershed Association

William J Hughes  
Wetzel County Action Group

James Shreves  
President  
Friends of the Hughes River Watershed  
Assoc. Inc.

Wayne Woods for  
Doddridge County Watershed Association

David Houser  
Chair, Steering Committee  
The Laurel Mt./ Fellowsville Area Clean  
Watershed Association