

Legislators seek balance on gas drilling

UNEXPECTED hurdles may face autism bill. **Page 2-A.**
BILL REQUIRES magistrates to have degree. **Page 4-B.**
HOUSE DEBATES private-eye bill. **Page 2-D.**

BY DAVID BEARD

The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON — Legislators and interests on all sides of the Marcellus gas drilling issue talked about the challenges ahead during a Wednesday press conference marking Environment Day at the Capitol.

Their comments all addressed maintaining a balance of public safety, environmental protection and economic development.

There are two comprehensive Marcellus shale drilling bills, and a few addressing specific issues, before the Legislature. Acting Senate president Jeff Kessler, D-Marshall, touched on the balance that must be struck. The Legislature must bring all interests to the table to



create wealth and diversify the economy, but not at the expense of safety.

He drew laughs when he said, "I drink water — I drink a lot of it every day. I do not want myself or any of my kids to glow in the dark."

Delegate Tim Manchin, D-Marion, said good regulation must address a number of points:

- Record keeping on what's put in the ground, taken out and disposed of.

- Maintaining an adequate bypass to protect water from contamination.

- An adequate water supply in areas where extraction could be problematic.

- Better notice to surface owners, and owners' participation in decisions on roads and well footprints.

- Fair and adequate compensation.

- Road damage and maintenance.

- Pooling, which can involve taking some people's rights, but reduces the drilling footprint.

Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, said, "I believe that Marcellus drilling is the most important issue for our state right now."

She said it's important that legislation provides funding for well inspectors — there are only 12 now for 59,000 wells. With required annual inspections, each inspector must cover 4,900 wells a year — that averages to 13 a day, seven days a week.

She's also concerned about limits on total dissolved solids. High concentrations can produce massive kills such as the one at Dunkard Creek — which wasn't tied to Marcellus drilling, but stemmed from golden algae thriving on high total dissolved solids (TDS) levels. There is no TDS limit now, she said, and science recom-

SEE **GAS**, 2-A