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# GUEST COMMENTARY

## MIR sends thanks to legislators

BY BARB HOWE

Mountaineers for Integrity and Responsibility wishes to thank our legislators for all their support in passing Senate Bill 373 that includes changes to the composition of the WVU Board of Governors.

Last spring, in the midst of the Heather Bresch scandal, the Daily Athenaeum reported that Steve Goodwin, then chair of WVU's BOG, said, "The law prescribes how the university is administered — it is by the Board of Governors; if they [the faculty] don't like that, the only way to change that is to change the law." MIR formed shortly thereafter and, with a sizable majority of the WVU community and colleagues in the state, wanted — and advocated for — an improved BOG.

MIR members started meeting with our local legislators, starting with Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, who set up a meeting with all our legislators (Delegates Bob Beach, Charlene Marshall, Alex Shook and Sen. Mike Oliverio) and the chairs of the House of Delegates and Senate education committees (Delegate Mary Poling and Sen. Bob Plymale). We discussed our goals, including more faculty and staff representation, more diversity among BOG members and lifting the cap on out-of-state board members. Roy Nutter, WVU's representative to the Advisory Council of Faculty, took our requests to the ACF, which includes representatives from all the public institutions of higher education, and got their support. The WVU Faculty Senate also endorsed our plans.

We then met with the WVU Staff Council, who endorsed our plans with the proviso of equal faculty and staff representation. Thanks to Paul Martinelli, who represents WVU on the Advisory Council of Classified Employees, the ACCE endorsed the staff council version on behalf of the staff at all public institutions of higher education. Gov. Joe Manchin invited MIR representatives to meet with him, his

staff and Chancellor Brian Nolan of the Higher Education Policy Commission in December. MIR representatives also discussed our plans with WVU's interim President C. Peter Magrath and BOG member Dr. Charles Vest, and, thanks to WVEA@WVU co-chairs Ted Vehse and Mark Kemp-Rye, with the West Virginia Education Association executive committee.

Fleischauer introduced legislation to address concerns about the composition of the BOG in the House, with co-sponsorship from all our delegates. Oliverio then introduced the same legislation in the Senate. Beach served on the subcommittee that considered the legislation in the House Education Committee, and Marshall served on the Finance Committee that had to consider the bill. Oliverio served on the Senate Education Committee, so we were fortunate to have these people in key positions, as well as the support of Poling and Plymale. The WVEA's David Haney and Dale Lee monitored the legislation for us in Charleston.

We are well aware that the Legislature had an enormous agenda this year and that it sometimes can take years to get a bill passed. The education committees had particularly difficult issues to address, and there were many places where this legislation could have dropped off the agenda. We did not get everything we wanted — i.e., there is no additional staff representation — but the changes we did get are important. Fleischauer and Oliverio have already talked to the governor about signing this bill, and we look forward to hearing that he has done so.

WVU has changed since last spring, thanks to the hard work and dedication of many people. We deeply appreciate the BOG's service and expertise this year, as well as that of Dr. Magrath. We trust that SB373 will ensure that future BOGs will include even more varied perspectives to strengthen the university and that faculty and staff will continue to communicate productively with the BOG and our legislators.

Finally, we would not have succeeded without the media's vigorous, in-depth and honest reporting of issues facing WVU and higher education in West Virginia.

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