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Contact: Sarah Halstead, President  
Create WV Board of Directors  
1-619-865-5132, sarah@createwv.org

## **MODERATORS SIGN ON TO QUESTION NEXT GOVERNOR**

### **Citizens to pose questions from wide variety of West Virginians**

*Create WV's April 5 event designed to curb political rhetoric, gut business-as-usual-power plays. Focus is on candidates' understanding and expansion of new, 21st Century jobs and policies to encourage innovation and investment.*

CHARLESTON, WV -- Create WV, a volunteer-led organization known for designing lively, highly engaging public events focused on forward-thinking business development strategies, entrepreneurship and community revitalization, has chosen five citizens representing education, women, tele-commuters, minorities, young adults, tech entrepreneurs, energy, ethics, community health, and community/economic development to present questions to the four candidates for governor.

The Create West Virginia Gubernatorial Roundtable is offered in partnership with the University of Charleston, and will be from 7 p.m. through 9 p.m., Tuesday, April 5 at the University of Charleston's Geary Auditorium.

Sarah Forbes, Dr. Dan Foster, Ankur Kumar, Logan Spears and Dr. Ed Welch will present questions to candidates Booth Goodwin and Sen. Jeff Kessler, who will attend in person. Candidates Sen. Bill Cole and Jim Justice have declined to attend in person, but will receive the same questions and are invited to answer in writing.

Questions are from organization leaders and citizens from all over the state. Conversation will cover a broad range of issues that experts unanimously consider essential to economic survival.

"This is an executive level job interview conducted by a diverse group of people who thoroughly understand innovation," says Sarah Halstead, board president of Create West Virginia. "Our event is designed to inform voters and candidates regardless of political party affiliation. We don't aim to simply put voters in control, we aim to put better informed voters in control of the conversation. Our hosts, however polite, won't offer any candidate a 'pass.' The questions we're posing to all four candidates are serious, deeply considered questions that require equally serious, deeply considered, responses. "We're offering an intensely focused, candid, open conversation with candidates. With our social media component, and

interactive live stream of the entire event, we are reducing the barriers to participation. Everyone will have an opportunity to judge for themselves what these candidates know about creating new jobs in promising industries. We'll learn what each knows, and doesn't know, about 21st century opportunities upon which our state is uniquely positioned to expand. Voters need to know what each of these men will do to attract and retain the new job and opportunity makers. Our questions will reveal how they each will approach our state's difficult issues."

An innovation economy, Halstead explains, is one based on knowledge, technology, entrepreneurship, and an attitude of creating solutions to problems through invention and improving systems and products. "A broad definition is the application of innovation to expand opportunities and improve quality of life," Halstead says.

The five host interviewers were selected from a field of 36 West Virginians nominated by the Create West Virginia planning team in conjunction with board members.

**Sarah Forbes**, is a Randolph County wife and mother. She has worked with other scientists and engineers around the globe and has previously published work on clean energy technology deployment. Her experience includes invited lectures at technical conferences and universities, interaction with the media and testimony before US Congress.

**Dr. Dan Foster** is a retired surgeon and former state senator who is now an administrative physician at CAMC and president of the board of directors of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care.

**Ankur Kumar** is a full-time industrial engineering student at West Virginia University, an event coordinator, a free-lance web designer, and avid outdoor recreationist. He recently co-launched SendParachute.com, a web/mobile app designed to connect citizens to legislators. He is a native of Charleston.

**Logan Spears** is the founder of Syntropy, a business software company in Morgantown, West Virginia. He has worked extensively in the oil and gas industry. He is currently co-instructing a course on mobile app development at WVU.

**Dr. Ed Welch**, president of the University of Charleston, holds degrees from the Boston University School of Theology and the Boston University Graduate School. Welch studied international relations at the London School of Economics, and higher education administration at the Harvard Institute of Educational Management. His Ph.D is in social ethics.

**Martha Groves Pugh**, a native of Richwood, West Virginia, and counsel in the law firm of McDermott Will & Emery LLP based in Washington, D.C., will co-facilitate the event with Create WV board leadership. Pugh has extensive experience with new market tax credits in both the context of transactions and legislative efforts related to new market tax credits. She is highly regarded for her consulting with energy industry companies on tax accounting issues such as repairs, placed-in-service, depreciation and contract restructuring issues,

contribution in aid of construction issues and corporate and partnership issues involved in restructurings.

The event will be live-streamed from the 962-seat Geary Auditorium on the campus of the University of Charleston. People can view or participate remotely with smart phones, tablets, or computers that are connected to the Internet. Watch parties in communities around the state and online will be announced on [CreateWV.org](http://CreateWV.org) and on [www.facebook.com/createwestvirginia](http://www.facebook.com/createwestvirginia).

Each candidate has been invited to make a five-minute introductory presentation outlining his approach to stimulating the economy within the pillars of entrepreneurship, education, diversity, quality of place, and technology. The roundtable segment hosted by the five citizens immediately follows. Questions from the live audience and online participants will be moderated and included throughout the event.

“We are taking full advantage of technology to bring this direct conversation with the candidates to the people of West Virginia,” Halstead says. “The people now have ways and means to communicate with those who seek to hold positions of leadership and authority. If their candidates are not responsive, or respond with evasive, incomplete, inadequate answers, that should send a clear message to voters.”

The event will be free and open to the public. Details are updated at [CreateWV.org](http://CreateWV.org). Organizers recommend that all people RSVP online at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wv-gubernatorial-roundtable-tickets-21823028265>.

*Create West Virginia is a 501 (c) (3) community and economic development organization which has produced eight statewide innovation economy training conferences beginning in 2007. The organization is dedicated to helping West Virginians learn about and prepare for new jobs and opportunities.*

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