



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

A publication of Bowles Rice LLP

Summer 2018



Success of Federal Tax Reform Can Inspire Change in West Virginia

Senate President Mitch B. Carmichael
West Virginia Senate, R-Jackson County

West Virginia Senate President and Lieutenant Governor Mitch B. Carmichael (R- Jackson, 4th District) is an accomplished businessman with over 25 years of private sector experience in the technology and communications industry.

Senator Carmichael was first elected to the West Virginia Senate in 2012. He was appointed Senate Majority Leader in 2015, the first Republican to hold the position in more than 80 years, and was re-elected in 2016. In January 2017, his fellow senators unanimously elected him to the position of Senate President/ Lieutenant Governor.

Prior to his election to the senate, Carmichael was elected to six consecutive terms in the West Virginia House of Delegates, where he served on the Committees of Finance, Judiciary, Education and Rules.

An honors graduate, Senator Carmichael holds bachelor of business administration degrees in finance and economics from Marshall University. His career in technology has taken him to an executive position with CityNet, a growing, innovative and entrepreneurial technology company based in Bridgeport, West Virginia.

Senator Carmichael is active in many community and charitable organizations, including Epworth United Methodist Church in Ripley, West Virginia.

Just before the turn of the year, President Donald Trump signed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act into law. Although it had its fair share of critics and doomsday scenario predictors, one thing is for certain: our country's economy has seen, in a span of just over six months, the true potential that comes from putting hard-earned money directly into the hands of both job creators and wage earners.

In 2017, the West Virginia Senate made a similar attempt on the state level at this kind of revolutionary tax reform. Like the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, our plan sought to reduce taxes on families and reward the virtue of hard work. Our plan was an aggressive reform package specifically designed to create jobs, opportunity and prosperity for all citizens.

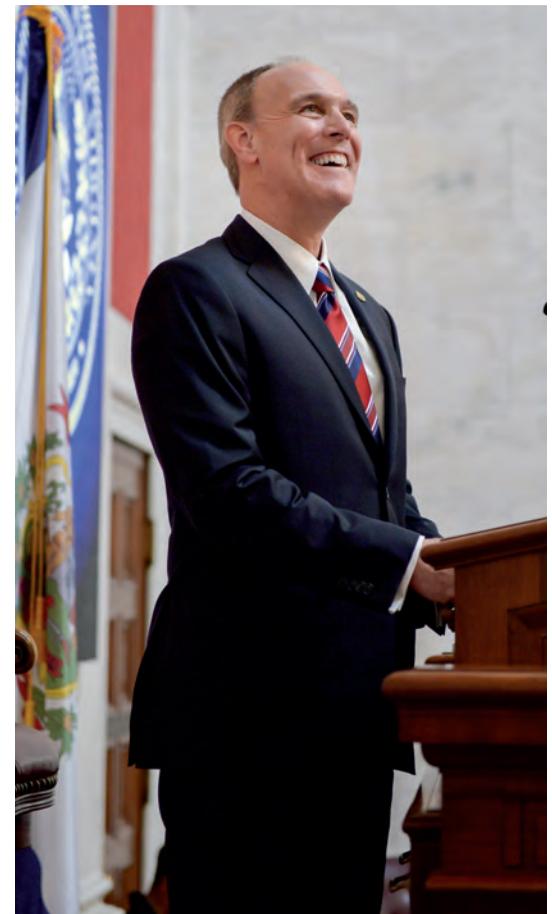
The goal of any comprehensive tax reform legislation, whether state or federal, is to create an environment that is conducive to private-sector investment and increased employment. Its goal should be to allow working families to keep more of their money and spend it as they see fit, not just lose it off the top to bloated government.

This is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. Tax reform efforts have strong bipartisan support, especially when those reform efforts lower the tax rates on the middle class and small businesses, which President Trump's plan does. It just makes common sense.

West Virginians stand to benefit tremendously from the tax relief provided in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. When one combines the federal efforts with the substantial economic turnaround that our state has experienced throughout the previous four years, we have a great number of reasons to feel an energy and an optimism like never before.

The results speak for themselves. West Virginia added 10,000 new jobs last year, and new job postings are way up. In the third quarter of last year, West Virginia led the nation in economic growth. Student achievement and graduation rates are on the rise, tobacco and drug abuse are down and government spending is under control.

Our state finished its fiscal year with a more than \$20 million surplus. In July, teachers, law enforcement officers, school service personnel and all other state employees began receiving an average of a five percent pay raise in their checks.



Senate President Carmichael on opening day, January 10, 2018, of the West Virginia Legislature. Photo Credit - Will Price, Legislative Photography



Senate President Carmichael addressing West Virginia teachers during the teachers' strike on February 24, 2018. Photo Credit - Will Price, Legislative Photography

This is the largest aggregate pay increase in state history. For teachers alone, this equates to approximately \$2,500 more in their paycheck for the year. In addition to the substantial pay raise, teachers and other public employees did not experience an increase in health care premiums. All this was accomplished for West Virginia public employees while virtually every other health care plan in America saw an increase in premiums, co-pays and deductibles.

In the face of great adversity during the 2018 Regular Session of the West Virginia Legislature, we delivered. We found a way to reward, equally and fairly, all of our hard-working state employees, and we did it fully within our means – one of our core principles.

While we have been successful with legal reforms, regulatory reforms and educational reforms, I think we're missing that last component to unlock our full economic potential: complete and total

tax reform. Our Republican majority and trademark of responsible budgeting has done wonders to incentivize growth and opportunity for West Virginia citizens. However, our current tax structure is just not working. We must take bold action to complete this last step to put even more money back into the pockets of working families.

In past years, West Virginia has been ineffectively managed from one fiscal crisis to the next. It appears that West Virginia is now on the right path. Our state has garnered both national and international attention for the remarkable progress that has been achieved. We have abundant natural resources, great geographic location, a growing economy and controlled government spending.

These are achievements we should celebrate, and we must continue to work hard and continue our climb up the economic ladder of success. While there

may be philosophical differences along the route, I believe we're all united in our common goal: progress and opportunity for all. ▽