



'TIS THE SEASON FOR FORCED CHARITABLE GIVING

Contrary to what some might think, the annual budget isn't solely devoted to essential services and compensating state employees. Some of the spending plan crafted by the West Virginia Legislature and Governor contains provisions for various charities and nonprofits.¹

While many West Virginians have kind hearts and give to charity freely, some might be surprised to know that their tax dollars are also distributed to charities of the state's selection.

There's no denying that the groups that receive these funds offer valuable services to citizens of West Virginia, but charity doesn't entail "forced giving" distributed by the state. Policymakers fail to consider that the tax money provided to these organizations is less money that residents could keep and give to charities they believe is most worthy of their compassionate giving.

In some cases, the budget directs agencies to give "unexpected" balances to various organizations, but in other instances, the document specifies certain amounts. During the 2019 fiscal year, Mountaineer Challenge Academy, an educational and quasi-military program for troubled youth, received \$4.5 million;² the Hatfield McCoy Recreational Trail received nearly \$200,000;³ and the West Virginia Aids Coalition received \$50,000.⁴ These are just a few examples of where the funding goes.

This is not an attempt to diminish the work that these charities are doing—all are supporting a specific, worthy cause. But the state should allow *citizens* to decide where their charitable giving should be allocated instead of having the government dictate where their hard earned money goes.

¹ West Virginia Legislature. "2018 Regular Session: Enrolled Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 152." Available at http://www.wvlegislature.gov/Bill_Text_HTML/2018_SESSIONS/RS/bills/SB152%20SUB1%20ENR.pdf. Accessed on December 12, 2018.

² Ibid Pg. 52.

³ Ibid Pg. 28.

⁴ Ibid Pg. 47.