



## **West Virginia Surface Owners' Rights Organization**

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### **Media Advisory February 5, 2008**

#### **Landowners' group to hold press conference at State Capitol Focus is on protecting landowners from abuses by oil & gas drillers**

WV-SORO will hold a press conference at 10 AM on February 6<sup>th</sup> in the governor's conference room at the Sec of State's office. Attending will be organizers for the group and landowners who want to tell their story. The event will include a presentation & question and answer session on surface owners' rights and a discussion of legislative options for expanding surface owners' rights in West Virginia. The bill's Senate and House sponsors have been invited to attend.

"When it comes to protecting property owners against the abuses of the oil & gas drillers, the playing field is tilted about as far as it can go in favor of the drillers," noted Gary Zuckett, an organizer for the group and Executive Director of WV-CAG. "As it now stands, landowners get a notice in the mail only 15 days before a permit to drill on their property is approved. The landowner can then send in comments to the WV Office of Oil & Gas. Under current law there is very little the state can do to make changes in the locations of roads, well sites and gas lines," Zuckett added, "These are some of the problems that WV-SORO wants to tackle."

Since its formation last summer, WV-SORO lists members from 50 of West Virginia's counties and 19 other states who are still caring for their home places. "We are calling on our members from all over to come to Charleston on Surface Owners' Rights Day, February 6, 2008 to tell their stories, make sure their legislators are informed of the seriousness of this problem, and get them to fix it," said Zuckett. WV-SORO's goal is to get state lawmakers to pass a "Surface Owners' Bill of Rights" to help give landowners more say in the location of wells and access roads and other matters dealing with oil & gas exploration on private property.

WV-SORO has had a presence at the legislature since last summer. During an August special session, the organization helped defeat a bill supported by oil & gas producers and Governor Manchin to let companies off the hook after they were found guilty of shortchanging landowners more than \$133 million in royalty payments. In the *Tawney* case, a Roane County jury also awarded the plaintiffs \$270 million in punitive damages.

**Who:** Dave McMahon, WV-SORO organizers & WV Landowners & bill sponsors  
**What:** Press conference on Landowners Bill of Rights  
**When:** Wednesday February 6<sup>th</sup>, 10AM  
**Where:** Governor's Conference Room, Sec of St Office, State Capitol  
**Contact:** Gary Zuckett (304)-346-5891 or David McMahon (304)-415-4288

Contact information on WV-SORO members willing to share their stories is available upon request.

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