



A CALL TO PUBLIC SERVICE

From the Sharing the Helm of the Mountain Series by Philanthropy West Virginia

By U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller, Established Leader

Early in 1977, Southern West Virginia was deluged by rain. Coupled with melting snow, rivers and creeks throughout the coalfields swelled. Valleys flooded, homes washed away and hundreds of people were displaced.

I'd only been Governor for a few days and I wanted to act quickly to help people in these struggling communities. So I opened shelters across the region, expecting an immediate influx of West Virginia families.

But they never came. And it soon dawned on me that the shelters stayed empty for a simple reason: if someone's home washed away, a friend or family took them in. When disaster strikes in West Virginia, communities spring into action. Neighbors help neighbors. West Virginians take care of our own. It's just who we are.

For nearly 50 years, I have had the incredible honor of serving the people of West Virginia and becoming part of our communities. We've shared in tragedy and triumph, setbacks and successes, trying times and shining moments.

We could point to many of those moments as symbolic of the journey we've been on in these past 150 years—and where we're going in the next—but for me, it's always even more about what makes us who we are.

Public service, that deep and personal calling, is hard-wired into our West Virginia DNA. It's in our Appalachian bloodstream. It binds us together when times are tough, and it brings us even closer as we rise above. The future of West Virginia is bright because of our commitment to serving each other; everything else flows from that.

How do we ensure progress and prosperity over the next 150 years? We build on the bedrock foundation of who we are as West Virginians.

We're neighbors. Teachers. Social workers. Food pantry volunteers. Firefighters and police officers. Active duty military members and veterans.

In short, we're all public servants, whether we realize it or not. My hope and prayer for the next 150 years is that we'll keep embracing each other—just as we always have.

And together we'll build a strong future for West Virginia.



A collaborative publication of Philanthropy West Virginia ©