

**News release news release news release**

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**Gov's chief of staff, HUD official attend successful West Virginia convention  
Golf, auction, game show, amenities attracts nationwide**

ROANOKE, W.Va. – Gov. Joe Manchin's chief of staff, Larry Puccio; the nation's and state's top regulators of factory-built housing; and an excellent legal discussion highlighted the first convention of the West Virginia Housing Institute Inc.

The three-day gathering in central West Virginia's lake district drew a statewide and nationwide attendance for championship golf, a hotly contested auction, a laughter-punctuated game show, mellow music and superior dining.

Richly endowed with a vast industry support, the convention drew warm responses from the national and state attendees to Stonewall Jackson Lake Resort on a newly created fish-filled lake off Interstate-79 two hours south of Pittsburgh.

Friends providing financial support for the conference included CMH Manufacturing, with Lance Hull and Gregg Dies; Style Crest with Don Mulligan and Cal Olsson; Champion Homes, LaGrange, IN, and Redman-Topeka, IN, with Paul Nemitt; Colony Factory Certified Homes, with Wayne Wright and Doug Klein; Haylor, Freyer and Coon with Larry Checca; West Virginia Housing Development Fund with Joe Hatfield and Elizabeth Eckerson; The Home Show, with Steve Brown; Blevins Inc., with Shane Masters and Mark Toy; American Homes, with Steve Solomon; 21<sup>st</sup> Mortgage, with Jim Reckling and Rusty Schock; US Bank Manufacturing Housing Finance, with Mike Cottle and Chuck Ham; Mortgage South, with Lee Cox; and Horton Homes, with Mike Willard.

“Our double track for the convention: friends and families played hard with everything Stonewall offered, but they also worked hard with the program we provided,” said Co-President Steve Brown, head of The Home Show of Hurricane, W.Va.

“Overwhelmingly excellent were the feedback I heard about the August 9-11 event,” said Co-President Kevin Wilfong, head of Middletown Home Sales of Fairmont, W.Va.. “They repeatedly asked that we double the event next year. And we will.”

Puccio, eyes and ears to Gov. Manchin, cheered the crowd when he told them, “I believe, and the governor believes, there is a tremendous future for manufactured housing.” Puccio knows the industry intimately. He owns the largest appraisal firm in the state and also builds developments. He urged attendees “to find lenders who are hungry and who want your business and underwriters who want your business.”

Housing statistics released just before the conference showed that almost half the new housing in West Virginia through August was factory-built.

Elizabeth A. Cocke, deputy administrator of the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Mitch Woodrum, head of the manufactured housing section of the West Virginia Division of Labor, spoke on regulatory issues.

Woodrum promised a modification of the systems of fines now implemented by the state. In several categories, fines will be reduced to an advisory letter, which will accompany a letter of correction if repairs are necessary. If records remain improperly maintained, a violation may issue.

“We welcome what sounds like some relief to us,” said Brown, who met with state regulators earlier and with the governor’s office to ask for modifications to fines.

Three lawyers presented invaluable information on regulatory reform and how to protect against lawsuits. They were John Teare of Bowles Rice McDavid Graff & Love; and Bryan N. Price of Pullin, Fowler & Flanagan, both of Charleston; and Jason Stemple of Duffield & Lovejoy of Huntington.

Stemple is suing state regulators over housing audits the Institute is challenging.

A fast-paced auction, with sports items, including a hat signed by Jets quarterback Chad Pennington, a model NASCAR car signed by No. 1 Tony Stewart, a West Virginia University football helmet, a football signed by ex-Marshall coach Bobby Pruett, and NASCAR tickets for Richmond; vacation trips; golf clubs; honey; movies; rare money and coins; and a host of other items brought in a substantial sum for the Institute’s political action committee. Judy Ritchie of The Home Shows-Elkins kept it going.

Sandy Sowell of Charleston entertained with a fast-paced game show and Chuck Cantalamessa of Uniontown, Pa., serenaded the groups during dinner.

“The entertainment was outstanding,” Wilfong said.

-30-