

## West Virginia State Obama Meeting March 8, 2008 – Sutton, WV



Grassroots supporters of Senator Barack Obama from all over West Virginia met in Sutton, WV to coordinate our efforts and connect with each other. The weather was cold, with rain turning to snow and everything in between, but it didn't stop the dedicated 50 people that attended our event. Registration began around 10:30 AM at The Mountain Lake Amphitheatre facility and we gathered more of the contact and volunteer information that is so vital to our organization.

Through the facilitation of Trudy Laurenson, the event kicked-off with brief introductions from everyone there, including one reason they are involved in this movement and what they hope to gain from the day. Everyone was included and we had a roaming handheld wireless microphone to make sure everyone was heard. It was great to share all the stories of such a diverse group of people from almost every part of our state.

After being introduced, the floor was opened for people to share what their groups were doing. The most represented regions were Charleston, Huntington, Wheeling, the Eastern Panhandle and the Greenbrier Valley. There were several other people in less populated regions who also told of their efforts. Most of these included public meetings, visibility at local events, voter registration, phone calls and letter writing. Over half the people attending had canvassed in Ohio in the previous weeks, so there were canvassers from most groups. Several good ideas were expressed and everyone was good about sharing the floor, which enabled us to start lunch on time at noon.

The first order of business after lunch was the delegate selection process in West Virginia. Steve Rutledge of the Greenbrier Valley group presented an overview of the process which included the April 12 County Conventions, the State Convention and becoming a National Delegate. The details of this presentation, along with the additions made by others at the meeting

are found here [www.wv4obama.com/Delegate.cfm](http://www.wv4obama.com/Delegate.cfm) . We had a good, enlightening discussion and we agreed on a plan of concerted action:

- We created three groups to represent the 3 congressional districts. Each group has a point person and each county of a group will have a point person. Steve Rutledge has agreed to be the overall point person for the state regarding this.
- The goal is to get a large turnout of Obama supporters to each County Convention in the state (every county!).
- We must identify people who are strong, vocal supporters that wish to go to the State Convention to elect the delegates for the National Convention. We must also identify those people who we want to go to the National Convention (and who can afford to go).
- We also stressed the need to participate in local Democratic Party events to become better know before we all show-up at the County Conventions.

All of these things and more are discussed in detail in the Delegate Info report that will be posted on the web site soon.

The next item on the agenda was preparation for the national campaign. Trudy shared the information we received from Denise Niesman at the national headquarters:

- The national campaign will be needing office space in Charleston and some satellite locations. The details of the office space needs will be posted on the web site soon
- We need to be able to offer housing to the staff and volunteers who will come into our state to help us.
- We need to have committed Election Day help, including the 3 days before the Primary.

Then we moved to communications. Phil Rolleston discussed the online database that we have and which the national campaign used to help in Ohio. He stressed the need to get as many supporters into this database with detailed volunteer and contact info to be ready for PA, KY and our state's primaries. We decided the following:

- The web site being used by the Greenbrier Valley group will become a statewide web site with the address [www.wv4obama.com](http://www.wv4obama.com). The purpose is not to duplicate what is available on [www.mybarackobama.com](http://www.mybarackobama.com) , rather to address our specific information and communication needs.
- Information vital to the groups in our state and the national campaign will be posted on the web site (delegate process, voter registration guidelines, important calendar dates, etc.).
- Point people representing their groups and regions will have access to the database located on the web site and will be responsible for the data management from their area.
- We also will have point people representing each area for communication purposes (these people may or may not be the data entry point people). These people's contact info will be posted on the web site.
- We will make available to everyone who attended this meeting a list of the meeting attendees with contact information.
- Phil Rolleston will host and maintain the web site, and he welcomes help with content info and pictures. Call 304-653-4933 or email [phil@rushrun.com](mailto:phil@rushrun.com) .

The next item on the agenda was local and state wide actions. We talked about visibility actions at local events (ramp and bear dinners, parades, festivals and democratic events, etc). We then moved into canvassing. Evan Mack gave a brief overview of his experiences in VA and OH, and several others shared their stories. We all agreed (over half the people there had canvassing experience) that the first pass of a neighborhood is extremely important. We have a chance then to take the time to actually have a discussion with anyone who wishes to do so. If we start the process here in WV as soon as possible, we can knock on all doors in a neighborhood (including republican voters) and anyone has up until April 22 to register or change their registration to vote for Barack. With the quality information we gather from this first pass, we can follow-up on undecided voters with hand-written letters and then another visit to them on the second pass. If we can get these two passes in before the election day “get out the vote pass”, we can identify people’s concerns, address our message to them, streamline our efforts and knock on a lot of doors. We discussed the national campaign’s desire to use their walk lists and input the info into their database. Denise is promising access to this within two weeks. Our job is to get our volunteer info into our database and to grow our volunteer pool dramatically. Phil Rolleston and Lyle Sattes will continue to press the national campaign for walk lists ASAP.

The canvassing discussion naturally moved into voter registration with the suggestion of registering voters during a canvass. Phil Rolleston agreed to validate with the Secretary of State and the national campaign if this is legal. We will post this info as soon as it is available. It appears that we can register voters wearing Obama gear, in non-governmental settings (not schools, government offices, etc.), as long as we fairly register them regardless of their party affiliation. Steve Rutledge gave an overview of the forms and how to fill them out. We discussed the process of mailing them in and the need to get them processed before the April 22 deadline. We also discussed the need, when registering college voters, to have students vote early (starts April 23) so as to get it done and not have spring break interfere with getting them to vote. All this will be available on the web site ASAP.

After a busy couple of hours, we took a ten minute break to stretch. Then Sue Thorn from the Ohio Valley group did a workshop on community organizing through 1-on-1 relationship techniques. Sue is a Camp Obama trainer and does this work professionally. Using a Power Point presentation with group interaction and a demonstration, she prepared the group to then practice the techniques by pairing up with people we didn’t know. This was a very valuable part of our meeting and is an integral part of what we’re trying to do in building our organization and improving our canvassing abilities. We will also make this Power Point presentation available on the web site. Sue is ready to come to other groups throughout the state for travel expenses and housing. She can be reached by calling 304-242-3807 or email [scthorn@comcast.net](mailto:scthorn@comcast.net).

The formal part of the meeting was wrapped up by Trudy inviting us to comment on how the meeting went and how we might improve the next one. People were very positive and the general feeling was that we got vital information to take back to our communities, we connected and bonded as a group, and we all had concrete things to do when we got home.

We then broke into three groups representing the 3 congressional districts of our state. Each group designated a point person for their district and point people for each county within their district. This info will be posted on the web site also. Lastly, Phil Rolleston helped a few people with technology/communication issues.

It was a wonderful experience to see all of these motivated people, share our stories and knowledge, and to come away with a coordinated plan to deliver West Virginia for the Obama nomination and election in the fall as our next President of the United States of America. Thanks to everyone who participated and for all the work that all of you do everyday to make this movement possible. YES WE CAN !