



## **Preserve our State Parks and Forests – Reject HB 4408**

### **HB 4408 lifts limits for privately-owned facilities and operations in our state parks and forests.**

- Currently, private leasing for recreation and concession is limited to 6 state parks (Chief Logan, Beech Fork, Tomlinson Run, Stonewall Jackson, Lost River, and Canaan Valley Resort). Leases are allowed for 10 years and can be renewed at the end of the term for another 10 years.
- HB 4408 expands private leasing to all state parks and forests, and extends lease terms to 50 years.

### **HB 4408 could drastically change the management and character of our state parks and forests.**

- All of our state parks and forests could be tied up in 50-year leases held by private developers.
- There are no guardrails limiting the types of private development. Casinos and amusement parks could be built on our state lands.
- The DNR Director has sole authority in determining what kind of private development is advantageous, without required economic or environmental assessments, and with limited public input.
- Our state parks are seeing dramatic increases in visitation with the amenities they already provide. People are visiting our parks and forest for their outstanding natural qualities – scenic beauty, wooded trails, quiet streams, wildlife viewing, and relaxation in a natural setting. HB 4408 could undermine the enjoyment of popular existing recreational activities.

### **HB 4408 presents financial risks to the state.**

- West Virginia has built many state trails with federal funds that come with restrictions, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund. Certain types of development may cause the state to have to forfeit or pay back those funds.
- If private investors go bankrupt or abandon their lease, the state could be left to clean up these unfinished or failed projects. We should take note of Stonewall Resort State Park, where private investor bonds defaulted and West Virginia taxpayers had to step in.

### **HB 4408 could raise the costs for visiting and recreating on state public lands.**

- Private investors are profit-driven. Added costs will be imposed on visitors to make their profits.
- Average West Virginians could be priced out of being able to enjoy our state parks and forests.