

Jerry E. Berry - Summers County Democrat of the Year

Hinton, WV, September 18, 2004 - The Summers County Democrat Executive Committee is pleased to announce the selection of Summers County Commissioner, Jerry E. Berry as their choice for Summers County Democrat of the Year.

“We are proud to have unanimously selected Commissioner Berry as our Democrat of the year,” said Curtis Shaver, Chairman of the Committee. “Jerry is a hard worker for the party and has demonstrated an ability to unite people and to positively promote the Democratic Party not only in Summers County, but everywhere he goes,” said Shaver.

A local businessman, Commissioner Berry owns a sawmill, Beech Mountain Timber, Inc., a trucking company, BMT Lumber Express, Inc. and an equipment rental and investment company, JEEM, Inc. Born and raised in Meadow Creek, Jerry now resides on Beech Run in Hinton with his wife, Eva Marie and son, Jordan.

Commissioner Berry provided the following comments:

I am honored by my selection as the 2004 Summers County Democrat of the Year and I am very proud of my involvement with the Democratic Party on a local, state and national level. My party has a rich legacy of serving America; a legacy given to us by Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy and our own Robert C. Byrd; leaders who worked to unite us not divide us; who reassured us that we had nothing to fear but fear itself, who challenged us to ask not what our country could do for us but instead challenged us to do something for our country, and who still to this day inspire us to never forget our freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution.

Throughout our history, the American experience has been closely linked to hope and optimism for the future and a belief that our better days lie ahead of us. The American spirit is not linked to any political party. I hold fast to the firm belief that people from all walks of life and all political ideologies share common dreams for a better life for both themselves and their children. We are not enemies or foes after all; we are all Americans and we are all patriots. The greatest challenge I foresee in our current political climate is this growing trend to attack those who have different political views from you. We in America must look back to our founding principles and reaffirm that our differing views and beliefs are what strengthens us; they are not what weakens us.

A patriot loves ones country and a patriot will defend the rights given to us by the Constitution. I have family, friends and associates who believe differently than I and are of varying political persuasions; from Democrat to Libertarian, from Republican to Independent. I respect them for their views and I consider each one a patriot the same as me.

With that point made clear, I would like to outline why I support the Democratic Party. First and foremost, I am committed to expanding opportunity for all people while also

strengthening families and communities. I hold fast to the belief that a vibrant middle class, strong communities and an informed electorate are the foundation of our democracy.

Furthermore, I believe that all Americans deserve to retire financially secure. For over seventy years, Democrats have worked to make that possible by creating Social Security and Medicare for seniors and fair pensions and health care for Veterans. We must never shirk the duty we have to caring for our seniors.

I believe that access to health care is a universal right, not a luxury for the affluent. Every American and their families have a right to affordable, high quality health care. Unfortunately, this is not reality today when one in six Americans doesn't have health insurance and millions more are under-insured. From middle class workers to senior citizens, Americans are struggling to pay for hospital stays and prescription drugs. I believe America can do better and I believe that the Democratic Party will lead the way on this issue.

As an independent businessman committed to this community, I understand that every day, Americans get up and go to work to provide for their families. These folks are the economic engine of our country and their labors keep the nation strong. Unfortunately, over the past three years, 4.3 million middle class Americans have been forced into poverty and 1.8 million private sector jobs have been lost. Long-term unemployment is at a ten year high. Wages are falling and inflation is increasing. Last year, 6 million workers lost their right to earn overtime pay. We must turn this around. Democrats are fighting to end policies that favor Wall Street at the expense of Main Street. We must end the tax breaks for companies that outsource jobs to China and double the tax cuts for our small businesses and manufacturers who are committed to creating jobs here at home.

I am determined to help ensure that our first responders, our firefighters and our local law enforcement officials have the adequate resources required to keep us safe. We as Democrats are committed to increasing funding for local law enforcement and other emergency responders and we will focus the war on terror to fighting terrorism at home and abroad.

As an avid hunter and fisherman, I love nothing more than being outside in wild and wonderful West Virginia. I firmly believe in the right to bear arms and I am here to tell you that the Democratic Party supports your rights to own guns and hunt to your heart's content. The right to bear arms is guaranteed in our Constitution.

Finally, I believe that education is the foundation of opportunity. An excellent education system gives our people the knowledge and training required to succeed. Democrats believe that we must give schools, students and teachers the resources they need to obtain the results we want. Democrats will also work restore our commitment to higher education as well by making quality education accessible and affordable to every American without regard to socio-economic status or background.

I often think of John F. Kennedy's words, "a rising tide lifts all boats" and remember that we are all in this together. We have to live, worship, work and play together. Barack Obama,

the young optimistic gentleman running for U.S Senate in Illinois summed up how I feel when he spoke at the Democratic National Convention in July:

“In the end, that is God's greatest gift to us, the bedrock of this nation; the belief in things not seen; the belief that there are better days ahead. I believe we can give our middle class relief and provide working families with a road to opportunity. I believe we can provide jobs to the jobless, homes to the homeless, and reclaim young people in cities across America from violence and despair. I believe that as we stand on the crossroads of history, we can make the right choices, and meet the challenges that face us...If there is a child on the south side of Chicago who can't read, that matters to me, even if it's not my child. If there's a senior citizen somewhere who can't pay for their prescription drugs, and has to choose between medicine and the rent, that makes my life poorer, even if it's not my grandparent...It is that fundamental belief, I am my brother's keeper, I am my sister's keeper that makes this country work. It's what allows us to pursue our individual dreams and yet still come together as one American family... “

Jerry E. Berry, recently named 2004 Summers County Democrat of the Year is serving his 1st term on the Summers County Commission and is a member of the Field Staff for the Joe Manchin for Governor 2004 Campaign.