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Editorial: Spender?--Pants afire 2

By

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Nobody with any regard for truth would call Gov. Joe Manchin a big-spender.

Legislators routinely describe Manchin as a penny-pincher and a tightwad. They often pass bills to fund programs, then find out later that Manchin wouldn't let the agency spend the money. Last year, West Virginia had a budget surplus when other states were laying off teachers to make ends meet.

This newspaper has called the governor penny wise and pound foolish. Others have praised his budget crimping. Earlier this year, the conservative CATO Institute gave Manchin an A for his money management.

Whatever your opinion of his policies, there is no way to say this guy is a big-spender.

Given all that: Some may have laughed out loud at a big, glossy mailer that landed in state mailboxes this week. It claims Joe Manchin is the latest member of the "Big Spending Hall of Fame."

That is bizarre. Manchin has been so obsessed with reducing state spending, he refuses to let departments hire a new employee if one quits, without direct permission from the governor's office.

Several important state programs are so short-staffed, they are crippled. Medicaid - hobbled by many vacant jobs - has a \$360 million surplus that Manchin insists will be needed in a future rainy day.

The postcard mentions none of this. Instead, it cites Manchin's support for national health care reform and the U.S. stimulus. Under health reform, West Virginia will get hundreds of millions in extra Medicaid funding, plus thousands of health care jobs. Manchin knows that.

As for the stimulus, this newspaper has criticized Manchin's slowness to spend it. We still criticize it. But a big spender, he's not.

This is just one example of the barrage of unaccountable, lying propaganda to which voters are being subjected this year. Thanks to conservatives on the U.S. Supreme Court, large corporations are able to hide in secrecy as they funnel millions into such untrue ads.

Thank heaven, the dishonest television barrage finally will end after Tuesday.