

Democratic women host the Manchins, Rockefeller

By CHRIS HUNTEMANN

MARTINSBURG — The big names among West Virginia Democrats were in attendance Friday night at a dinner held at the Holiday Inn on Foxcroft Avenue.

The event was hosted by the Berkeley County Democratic Women's Club and Gov. Joe Manchin and U.S. Sen. Jay Rockefeller were among those on hand. The event also played host to Democratic candidates from across the state who are running for office this year.

After introductions by John Fink, chairman of the Berkeley County Democratic Executive Committee and Erica Epperson, president of the Berkeley County Democratic Women's Club, First Lady of W.Va. Gayle Manchin spoke to the audience and talked about the upcoming election.

"This is the most important election we may ever vote in," she said.

The First Lady then passed the microphone to her husband, who addressed the crowd. Manchin noted that the state is currently experiencing the lowest sustained unemployment in its history.

"We're in the best shape we have been in in a long time," he said. Manchin also stressed the importance of the upcoming election.

"It is time to change the management in Washington," he said. Manchin also talked about how he wanted residents to be proud of their state.

"We shouldn't take a back seat to anyone," he said.

Rockefeller said he wanted people at the event to feel the enthusiasm in the Democratic party.

"I look forward to the inevitability of a Democratic victory in November," he said.

Rockefeller is supporting Sen. Barack Obama, D.-Ill., in the current Democratic presidential primary.

Among the state and local candidates at the event was John Perdue, who is seeking his fourth term as state treasurer and is running unopposed. Perdue said he wants to continue working with the current administration to continue the job he has done.

"In my opinion we have the best agencies in the state," he said.

Natalie Tennant is running for Secretary of State after losing a close race in 2004. Tennant said she wanted to share some of her ideas with the crowd and wants to continue working to offer progressive ideas.

"We need people to have confidence in the voting system," she said.

West Virginia Young Democrats president Rod Snyder said the event demonstrated the amount of excitement within the Democratic Party.

"We have the best candidates on the local, state and national (level)," he said. He added that the Democratic Party has registered more young people than ever in the state's history.

Manchin shared Snyder's feelings regarding the level of excitement throughout the state.

"There is a lot of enthusiasm and for the first time Democrats and Independents can vote in this primary," he said. "There is just a lot going on."

Epperson summed up her feelings about the Democratic party during her opening remarks.

"Our party is alive and well and ready to move into the next century," she said.