



Vertical Visions LLC
PO Box 934
Bridgeport, WV 26330 USA
Phone: (304) 203-8500

Email: jbelle@vertical-visions.com
Website: www.vertical-visions.com
Bridge Day Website: www.bridgeday.info

02 March 2005

Senator Jay Rockefeller
405 Capitol Street, Suite 508
Charleston, WV 25301-1749

Dear Senator Rockefeller,

Are you familiar with BASE jumping and Bridge Day at the New River Gorge Bridge in Fayetteville, West Virginia? It just so happens that I'm a seasoned BASE jumper as well as the official BASE Jumping Coordinator for Bridge Day since 2003. In a nutshell, I organize the parachuting portion of Bridge Day by bringing in the 450+ jumpers from around the world. Did you know that each year jumpers travel from as far away as Norway and China just to make a single legal parachute jump from our magnificent bridge? Unfortunately, we are only permitted to jump for six hours each year and I need your help in extending our jumping window.

I grew up in Morgantown, went to college at WVU for mechanical engineering, and now currently work in the [redacted] as a senior engineer designing enclosures for military projects. Despite what many people think, I'm not crazy and neither are my fellow parachutists. Rather, I'd like others to look at me as someone who enjoys life more than the average person. Most people can only dream about things like BASE jumping – others consider it as a lifestyle.

Parachutists are allocated only six (6) hours a year to jump from the New River Gorge Bridge and parachutists are the main attraction at Bridge Day. Over 250,000 people have attended Bridge Day during that small six hour window in past years. Why do West Virginia and the local communities simply wave goodbye to all these



spectators (and their tax dollars) after six hours? West Virginia's largest single day festival is TOO short, and thousands of parachutists from around the world would like to see the jumping window extended. At Bridge Day 2004, I estimate that nearly 30 jumpers were unable to jump due to bad weather. Some of them traveled from foreign countries to make their first BASE jump. A larger jumping window would permit safer jumps to be made while increasing tax dollars to West Virginia. We've already got the support from numerous local businesses, the Fayette County Chamber of Commerce, and the hundreds of jumpers that spend hundreds of thousand of dollars each Bridge Day weekend.

At the direction of the Bridge Day Commission and their DOH representative Mr. Elmer Hess, I recently sent a proposal to Mr. Jim Lagos with the WV DOH requesting an extension of the jumping window. My plan called for normal jumping on Bridge Day for the traditional six hours with the addition of two full days of jumping preceding Bridge Day. With 450+ jumpers from around the world, we'd like to have more days to guarantee better weather and increased safety. We would jump from the catwalk *underneath* the bridge on the two days preceding Bridge Day. Jumping from the catwalk has been done for many years and does not affect traffic on the bridge. We can easily and successfully implement this plan for Bridge Day 2005 with DOH approval. We are very willing to pay for any costs incurred by the DOH and follow any and all rules they may impose upon us. Unfortunately, Mr. Lagos denied my proposal and mentioned to me via telephone that "there's nothing I can do or say to change his mind." I am currently appealing Mr. Lagos' decision, at his direction, to his boss – Mr. Paul Mattox, DOH Commissioner in Charleston. You can view a copy of my proposal to the DOH at: www.bridgeday.info/legal365.php

I'm asking for your help in extending our jumping window at the New River Gorge Bridge. West Virginia's largest one day festival exists purely because of BASE jumpers. It's a win-win situation for jumpers, local businesses, and WV tax dollars by extending the jumping window. My staff can easily manage and control all aspects of jumping from the catwalk such as security, safety, coordination, and water rescue. At this time, I won't even mention making it legal year 'round, as is done at other bridges like the Perrine Bridge in Twin Falls, Idaho. Ironically, Twin Falls has benefited from the increase in tourism and tax dollars as the direct result of legal BASE jumping from the 486' bridge.

If you're looking for a guaranteed method to increase tourism and tax dollars to the Fayetteville area, please help us expand legal parachuting at the New River Gorge Bridge. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

If you have the chance to stop by and see us at Bridge Day on October 15, 2004, we'd love to show you our method of making 250,000 people smile and enjoy a day in West Virginia. If you can't make it, Bridge Day will be on live TV throughout West Virginia, Kentucky, and Ohio again this year and we would be honored to hang a banner of your choosing at our jumper exit ramp. Your banner would be seen on live TV at 1,000,000+ households. I've included a Bridge Day 2004 DVD to give you a feel for the event.

Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Jason Bell
Bridge Day 2005 BASE Jumping Coordinator
BASE #428, USPA D-16725