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## WVDA to Honor Auctioneers for Years of Service

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**Charleston, WV** - West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt will present plaques to four auctioneers celebrating a combined 233 years of service on Tuesday, April 3<sup>rd</sup>. The awards will be presented at a dinner honoring the gentleman hosted at the State Fair Grounds of West Virginia in Lewisburg. The event will begin at 5:00 p.m. in the Gus R. Douglas Building.

“Auctioneers provide a vital service to our citizens. From helping settle estates to raising monies for charities, auctioneers help thousands of West Virginians every year,” Leonhardt said. “It is truly extraordinary that several of these gentlemen have been providing auctioneering services for over fifty years.”

Randy Burdette, 53, has been in the auctioneering industry for 27 years. He previously served as the Executive Director of the West Virginia Auctioneers Association, retiring in 2007. Burdette is currently a pastor at Flat Mountain Missionary Baptist Church in Alderson, WV.

Kenneth Baker, 72, is pastor at Grace Baptist Church in White Sulphur Springs, WV. He began as a self-taught auctioneer at the Caldwell Stockyards at the age of 12. He has been in the auctioneering business for the last 60 years.

Kermit Morgan, 78, has 65 years of auctioneering experience participating in his first auction at age 13. In 1979, he entered the World Livestock Auctioneering Contest and placed in the top 15 out of 100 contestants.

Paul “Buddy” Light, 90, auctioned his first item, a Ford Model T, at 9 years old. Years later, Light worked at the Beckley Livestock Market and eventually started his own markets in Alderson and Caldwell, WV. He decided not to renew his auctioneering license this year after 81 years in the industry.



“These gentlemen are a shining example of what the next generation should strive for in their lives,” said Leonhardt. “They all have one thing in common. They found a passion for auctioneering at a young age and combined that passion with hard work to forge successful careers.”

Auctioneers have been licensed and regulated by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture since 1974. Several of the auctioneers predate the implementation of regulations and licenses on the industry.

*The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.*

