



The emerging Chapter in the New River Valley met to plan their local campaign and to prepare for submitting their Chapter petition.



The Portsmouth Chapter gathered for a visioning session to discuss school suspensions and to plan the next campaign at their annual Chapter meeting, one of many held around the state.



The Washington County Chapter of Virginia Organizing and the Appalachian Peace Education Center sponsored a public forum for law enforcement and community members to discuss proactive steps for safety and dignity of all people.

News From the Grassroots

Medicaid Expansion Would Cover Virginians in Every District

Since the U.S. Supreme Court decided in 2012 to uphold the Affordable Care Act (ACA), but make Medicaid expansion in states optional, the Virginia General Assembly has been stalling and delaying coverage for hundreds of thousands of Virginians. One community hospital has closed as a result of the refusal to expand Medicaid, and Virginia has declined billions of dollars in federal funding to support expansion.

Opponents of Medicaid expansion often stated that they did not think the ACA would last and had hopes that the law would be repealed with a new Congress and new President. After years of failed attempts to repeal the ACA, Congressional leadership introduced a replacement plan known as the American Health Care Act. This flawed bill also failed to garner the support of the majority. Most recently, there have been signals from Washington, D.C. that this dangerous bill could be reintroduced with even more harmful provisions.

While future attacks on the ACA cannot be predicted in this political climate, what

we know now is that Congress is divided on this issue, including within the parties. But we still have an opportunity to make health care more accessible for hundreds of thousands of Virginians.

Yet Virginia state lawmakers remain opposed to Medicaid expansion to ensure those that need care can receive it.

In places like Virginia Senator Charles Carrico's district, which includes Lee County where a hospital closed partly due to Virginia's failure to expand Medicaid, 11,000 people would be eligible for expansion according to a report by The Commonwealth Institute available at <http://bit.ly/TCIMedicaid>.

"I don't understand why these politicians are putting the lives of constituents at risk," said Virginia Organizing Chairperson Ladelle McWhorter. "The federal government needs to focus on issues that are actually problems instead of trying to dismantle protections for Americans. Virginia General Assembly leadership is out of excuses and they need to act."

McWhorter's sentiment is shared by many. Christopher Newport University released a poll recently that showed 61 percent of Virginians support Medicaid expansion.

Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe proposed expanding Medicaid again after Congress failed to act on health care, but legislators rejected the proposal. It is unclear what plans the General Assembly has to insure those who currently fall in the Medicaid coverage gap — these individuals do not qualify for current Medicaid based on income, family size, and disability status, but do not earn enough to qualify for health care subsidies on the ACA insurance plans.

Virginia Organizing will continue to organize in support of Medicaid expansion and health care for all people. Be sure to check out our Act Now! page at www.virginia-organizing.org/act-now to get timely action steps each week on various issues.

Important Dates!

April 28-29: Annual Power Analysis Weekend (Please contact your local organizer for more details if you are interested in attending).

May 22: Last day to register to vote in June 3, 2017 primary elections.

September 29-October 1: Save the date for Grassroots Gathering 2017!

Real people. Real change.

Peoples Climate March

The Peoples Climate March is coming to Washington, D.C. (and 250 other cities across the U.S.) on April 29. Organizers of this march want to send a clear message to our federal lawmakers and the current Presidential administration that climate change is real, is harming real people, and needs intervention to ensure protection of our air, land, and water. The U.S. should be leading the way in fighting climate destruction.

Virginia Organizing recently learned that more than 100,000 people have signed up to march on this day. If you'd like to take part in this historic march, you can sign up by visiting www.peoplesclimate.org.

Building Power with Sustainers

Danville Chapter leader Marty Jackson wrote a compelling letter asking all Virginia Organizing supporters to consider making a monthly donation of \$10 or more. Marty wrote:

"As a returning citizen, I've seen what Virginia Organizing can do for individuals trying to participate in our democratic processes — I was able to get my civil rights restored working with Virginia Organizing. But I also know what Virginia Organizing does for communities. Thanks to Virginia Organizing, my community is stronger than it was five years ago, but we still have a lot of work to do.

I became a monthly donor to Virginia Organizing to continue this work and grow our movement and build up our communities."

If you have already become a monthly sustainer, would you consider asking your friends or family members to also support Virginia Organizing in our mission to build more power and create a more just Virginia? Visit www.virginia-organizing.org/donate to make a secure donation online.

Predatory Lenders Turning to Other Options

Just when you thought the proverbial water was safe again, loan sharks are at it again! Payday loan shops are now shifting their business models to provide more long-term installment loans. These loans are still intended to catch people in cycles of debt and carry high interest rates. Fortunately, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is working to clamp down on predatory loans. The final payday rule from the CFPB needs to include both short-term loans and longer-term installment loans. Unfortunately, Congress is still attacking the CFPB and the work the agency does, which makes your participation in fighting for these rules so important. See our action step below to find out how you can help stop predatory lending!

Take Action!

Please call the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau at (855) 830-7880 and tell them that you appreciate Director Cordray's work to limit predatory loans, but we need a strong payday loan rule that includes short-term and long-term installment loans. Ask them to please be sure to include long-term loans in any final rules on payday lending.

Leaders of the Month Jennifer and Angel Romero



Door-to-door canvassing. Agenda preparation. Planning meetings. On March 4, all of their hard work paid off. The immigrant rights workshop was a success! Jennifer and Angel Romero have only been involved in the Fredericksburg

Chapter of Virginia Organizing for a few months, but they have worked tirelessly to protect the rights of undocumented immigrants and build a more just Virginia.

"We met with the Fredericksburg Chapter for the first time in February," they said. "We learned about some of the projects Virginia Organizing is working on, including housing, corruption, immigration, and transportation. This inspired us to get more involved."

With the help of partner organizations Sinova and Lucha Ministries, Jennifer and Angel worked to expand the reach of Virginia Organizing's immigration work into Stafford County by organizing a Know Your Rights Workshop for undocumented immigrants and allies.

"When the day came, we were surprised at the turn-out of the crowd; most of all, how engaged they were with the workshop!"

While they have been involved with other organizing efforts in the past, Angel and Jennifer say that it's the diversity and solidarity of the Fredericksburg Chapter that gives them hope.

"Everyone has a unique perspective, which makes for an environment in which every voice is heard."

Thank you, Jennifer and Angel, for making your voice heard!

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING



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Local Chapters and Areas Served

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville/Albemarle County
Danville
Eastern Shore
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County
Fredericksburg
Lee County
Lynchburg
Martinsville/Henry County
New River Valley
Portsmouth
Richmond
Roanoke
South Hampton Roads
Washington County
On Campus: UMW, UVA, E&H, U of R,
ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

News in Brief

- Virginia Organizing hosted a Commonwealth's Attorney forum in Charlottesville to give voters a chance to meet the candidates for this office and hear their ideas.
- In Southwest Virginia, Virginia Organizing worked with other groups to hold a town hall with U.S. Representative Morgan Griffith, who declined to attend. Virginia Organizing has been calling on Representative Griffith to hold a town hall and meet with constituents in-district for months.
- Emerging Chapters in Lynchburg and New River Valley are making progress and are on track to become the next Chapters of Virginia Organizing!
- The Annual Power Analysis Weekend is April 28-29! Virginia Organizing leaders, Board members, and staff will gather for the weekend to analyze power in Virginia and strategize for success. Every year, key leaders join the State Governing Board and staff to discuss how we can build more power for the people in Virginia in the coming years.

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