



VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

News from the Grassroots

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Virginia Organizing's Chapters Stand Up for Immigrant Rights

All of our chapters are working this month on immigration reform. We want to see Congress pass a clean Dream Act to protect recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals act (DACA) from deportation and make their status something they can count on. We also want to see recipients of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) protected again. We want an end to deportations that tear families apart. Ultimately, we want comprehensive immigration reform that benefits everyone.

We have hosted letter-to-the-editor writing workshops, visited legislators, helped to provide legal workshops to immigrants, and made hundreds of calls to Senator Mark Warner and Senator Tim Kaine.

The Obama era direction to ICE to focus deportation on people convicted of serious crimes made sense. It was an efficient use of resources, and it made our communities safer. Victims of crime and witnesses who happened to be undocumented could cooperate with law enforcement, which led to criminals being arrested. Neighborhoods and schools are safer when everyone knows each other.

That stability, even though it was imperfect, is now gone. Undocumented communities do not have access to any of the protections and services they once did. Every day, people who have been living peacefully in the U.S. for decades, working and obeying the law, are arrested and deported, or they wait in detention centers far from their families.

In February, our Fredericksburg Chapter partnered with other groups to host a town hall with Senator Tim Kaine. Chapter leaders Angel and Jennifer Romero, who are DACA recipients, were on hand to ask Senator Kaine why he did not insist on DACA renewal being included in the budget.

Please keep contacting your members of Congress. When it comes to DACA, most Americans are in agreement that the program should continue. Why can't Congress finish the job?

Legacy Giving

Looking for the silver lining of tax season? While you have all your financial papers covering the kitchen table is the perfect time to make or update your will — and it's much easier than you think.

We've partnered with FreeWill so you can write your will for free in just 25 minutes today and ensure the people and causes you love are taken care of. (You can use the same tools to get started, then find an attorney nearby if you prefer.)

virginia-organizing.org/legacy-giving/

Leader of the Month

Lisa Taylor's parents were from Lynchburg, but she grew up in New York while her father went to Cornell University. She came to live in Lynchburg more recently. Her son has grown up in Lynchburg and attended the Lynchburg City Schools. He's in 9th grade now, but Lisa says there have only been two years in his whole education where she didn't feel he was unfairly targeted as a student of color. For most of his schooling she has been deeply dismayed at the way he was treated, and her son also has reported concern about the lack of dignity and respect in the treatment of children of color in his schools.



Lisa reports that the Lynchburg Schools have made attempts in the past to address the "achievement gap," as it's called, but the problems of racial discrimination in discipline and overuse of suspensions had never been discussed.

Then in 2016 she first encountered the Lynchburg Chapter of Virginia Organizing. "The chapter was just getting started and Haley, the organizer, told me about some of the possible campaigns they might work on. When she mentioned disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, I was 100 percent for that!"

Since joining the chapter, she says her highlights have been attending a bill signing in Richmond for the "Classrooms not Courtrooms" initiative and making a presentation about the school-to-prison pipeline at the Race, Poverty, and Social Justice Conference in Lynchburg in November.

"I really enjoy working with the other members of the chapter, thinking about how to get the message out to the community. We are focused on outreach, and we plan to hold meetings in several different apartment complexes around town where people are trapped in poverty. Those are the kids that are most targeted in school."

Thank you for joining Virginia Organizing, Lisa! Your work is having a big impact.



Medicaid Expansion Rallies all over Virginia!

In February we held rallies in nine locations to urge legislators in the General Assembly to expand Medicaid so that the more than 240,000 Virginians in the coverage gap could start receiving health care. For the first time ever, the House of Delegates included Medicaid Expansion in their budget proposal. We don't know yet what will happen, but it's still possible that Medicaid will start to be available for a lot more people in Virginia soon.



Save the Date!
Grassroots Gathering:
September 28-30, 2018
Airfield Conference Center,
Wakefield, VA



Visits to the General Assembly

Every chapter has sent a delegation to the General Assembly during this session. This picture is of the Danville and Martinsville delegation. Leaders have been able to meet with many of their legislators and sometimes were introduced to the legislature at the opening of the session.



Local Chapters and Areas Served:

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

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