

# VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

## News from the Grassroots

April/May 2018 Issue 78



### Virginia Organizing's Statewide Power Analysis 2018

At the end of April, we met at Massanutta Springs near Harrisonburg for our annual Statewide Power Analysis. For two days an experienced group of leaders, Board members, and staff analyzed the work of the year. We discussed who has power in Virginia and came up with ideas for new campaigns.

On Friday night we reviewed our values and history. How and where did Virginia Organizing get started? What campaigns did we work on locally, statewide, and nationally? Why did we choose to work locally or statewide on each issue? Why have we focused on chapter work in the last few years?

We also heard reports from every chapter about their victories. For example, the Eastern Shore voted to become our newest chapter. The New River Valley won their year-long campaign. They convinced the Montgomery County School Board to adopt a values statement about diversity. The S/A/W Chapter won their two-year campaign with Augusta Health. They convinced the hospital to provide high quality services for the deaf and hard of hearing community.

On Saturday, we held in-depth workshops on our current campaigns. One group focused on climate change. Another reviewed the progress of the school-to-prison pipeline campaign. A third worked on how we could develop more power for immigration reform. The last analyzed the fight for Medicaid expansion and what we should do next for health care reform.

Medicaid expansion could be achieved by now, except that the state Senate can't seem to cross the finish line. Call your state senator and urge them to add Medicaid expansion to the budget in the special session that begins May 14. Virginia needs a budget, and Virginians need health care!

Finally, we talked about the future. What are our plans for civic engagement? How can we expand our work to dismantle racism? What new strategies are called for now? If you want to have your voice heard on these questions, contact us at 434-984-4655.

Thanks to all the leaders who came to Harrisonburg from around the state! Your hard work is building our power for change.

### Leader of the Month

Terry White, "Bean" to his friends, first heard about Virginia Organizing when he saw a flyer in the grocery store. The flyer explained that people who had had their civil rights taken away could apply to the governor to have them restored. He contacted the organizer and started the application process right away.

Soon Bean had joined the South Hampton Road Chapter. He got his voting rights back, registered, and voted. He started attending every event Virginia Organizing offered in the area. If there was a rally, Bean would be there.

At his first rally outside Senator Mark Warner's office, Bean was surprised to find himself part of a group that was invited in to speak with a staff person. Bean wasn't nervous. "I enjoyed myself!" he says, enthusiastically.

Now he helps other returning citizens get their rights back. He works to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, dismantle racism, and fight climate change. He also participates in Medicaid expansion rallies.

Bean knows what it's like to live without health care coverage, and he is receiving treatment for cancer. "Thank God I survived that one," he says. However, the bills have started arriving. First, there was a bill for \$28,000. Then he received one for another \$22,000. "I started laughing."

After a year in the chapter, Bean continues to go to every meeting and every rally. "Count me in," he says. "I don't mind supporting a positive cause."

Thank you for working to create a more just Virginia, Bean!



### Leaders at the Power Analysis





## Welcome to our Newest Organizer: Tony Jones of Suffolk!

Tony Jones joined Virginia Organizing when the Portsmouth Chapter was first getting started. He became the Suffolk Apprentice Organizer in April. A native of Portsmouth, Tony knows firsthand the kinds of discrimination that students of color face in area schools. This experience drew Tony to advocacy for young people as a leader of the chapter. "When I was a volunteer with the Portsmouth Chapter I saw how empowering Virginia Organizing was to people," Tony says. "That made me want to get more involved."



Tony is also the founder of Helping Young People Everywhere (HYPE), a mentoring program. HYPE engages young people to raise their awareness of the consequences of their actions. Tony and his family live in Suffolk now, where he will be developing a community of leaders who can disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, register voters, and work for justice. We're glad to have you on staff, Tony!

## Regional Grassroots Gathering - Portsmouth

Four chapters met to hold a Grassroots Gathering in Portsmouth on April 14. Students also came from Norfolk State University. Eastern Shore's members joined us. Fredericksburg and South Hampton Roads sent their hard working leaders. And, of course, Portsmouth showed up in a big way!

In all, about 50 leaders learned new skills and planned a campaign from scratch. Thanks to Calvary Baptist Church for hosting.

Members said they felt good about working to build power.

"It was amazing to see all the wonderful people coming together to collaborate in leadership and work to educate our communities," said Board member Debra Grant.

Malaika Mitchell of the Eastern Shore agreed. "I thought the gathering was a great opportunity to meet and network with other Virginia Organizing members in the region," she said. "I appreciated the enthusiasm of folks when they talked about the work and what they've accomplished so far. Many of us are working on similar issues like the school-to-prison pipeline. It's nice to know you're not out there alone."

Thank you to all the leaders who made this conference so worthwhile!



## Grassroots Gathering: September 28-30, 2018 Airfield Conference Center, Wakefield, VA

Registration is open now online at our website:

<https://virginia-organizing.org/grassroots2018>



**Please call your state senator and  
tell them to expand Medicaid! The  
Senate will have to produce a  
budget in the special session  
beginning May 14.**

**To find your senator visit  
[whosmyvirginiageneralassembly.gov](http://whosmyvirginiageneralassembly.gov)**



## 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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