



VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

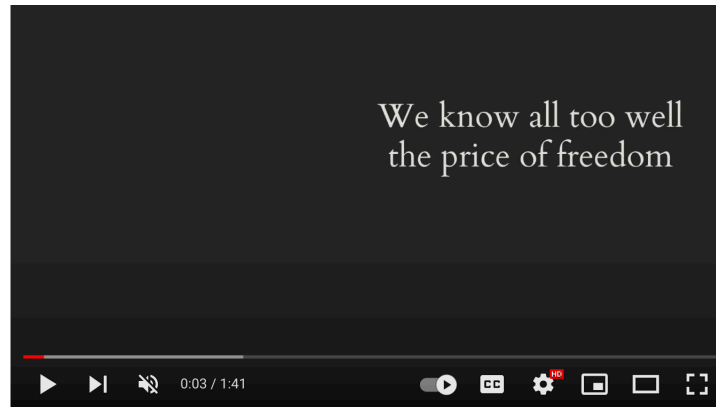
News from the Grassroots

June 2022 Issue 115

Bill of Rights Win!

Richmond Chapter leaders were back at the School Board meeting on June 6 to hear the vote on their Student, Parent, and Caregiver's Bill of Rights, and they won!

They warmly thanked Richmond Public Schools for adopting the bill of rights and committing to share it with RPS families so that all students and caregivers know their rights in school. Many thanks to the Richmond Education Association for supporting this two year campaign.



Brandy Faulkner on the meaning of Juneteenth

In case you missed it, watch this powerful video from New River Valley leader Brandy Faulkner on YouTube or Facebook.

YouTube: VOPVideo

Facebook: VirginiaOrganizing



Portsmouth Mental Health Forum

On June 8, the Portsmouth Chapter held a forum to introduce the Marcus Alert system to the community and discuss the benefits of mindfulness training in public schools.

As leader Jenny Hodge wrote in the Virginian-Pilot, "For the past year and a half, the Portsmouth chapter of Virginia Organizing has been pushing to have these common sense solutions to mental health issues implemented within the city. We hope that the Portsmouth School Board and Portsmouth City Council act to implement mindfulness and the Marcus Alert in schools this year."



A Disaster for Women's Rights and Health Care, especially for People of Color

While our members hold different personal views on the topic of abortion, we all believe that the Supreme Court is dead wrong. The government should not criminalize or limit access to reproductive health care, including abortion. Sex, birth control, abortion, pregnancy – these are all personal health matters that everyone should have the ability to make decisions about for themselves, based on their own beliefs, without interference from politicians or judges. We must respect everyone's right to dignity and privacy in family planning and health care.

We know that attempts to criminalize abortion lead to discrimination against women and pregnant people, especially low-income women, trans people, and women of color. Virginia's health care system already has a shamefully poor record in Black maternal mortality. If decision-makers attempt to further limit access to abortion, Black and immigrant women will be most likely to experience intimidation and denial of needed health care, which could be life-threatening.

Virginia Organizing has been working for many years to dismantle systemic racism and end mass incarceration. We are well aware of the Commonwealth's long history of oppression over the bodies of Black and other marginalized women. We don't want to see Virginia interfere—yet again—in a woman's freedom to make decisions about her own body, especially since these invasive laws are likely to be used to intimidate, criminalize, and threaten the lives of people of color. The Commonwealth must respect the rights and dignity of all Virginians.

On behalf of the State Governing Board, I want to assure you that we will work for safe, legal access to abortion in Virginia.

Del McWhorter

Chairperson

Wytheville's First Juneteenth!

The Wythe County Chapter hosted the first ever Juneteenth celebration in Wytheville on Saturday, June 18 at St. John's Episcopal Church.

More than 100 people stopped by, listened to speakers and music, and bought authentic fresh beignets made by Harold Artison.

The day began with a panel discussion on racism and included historian John Johnson discussing the history of Black-owned businesses in Wytheville.

Many thanks to St. John's, all the presenters, and everyone who came to enjoy the celebration!

Leader Tribute | LaChere Griffin-Denton

LaChere Griffin-Denton is a lifelong resident of Hampton. She got involved in Virginia Organizing because, "I wanted to be more active in government. I saw the way my local community was being treated, and I really didn't like what I was seeing."

Cher joined the Hampton/Newport News Chapter about five years ago when they were working for better public transit in Hampton Roads. The chapter won their campaign when HRT expanded services and bought new electric buses, but Cher feels the situation needs to be monitored. People still don't have public transportation to jobs that are outside of downtown.

This year the chapter is demanding that both cities provide shelter for the unhoused. Cher wants to hold local leaders accountable. "I think they've lost focus on what really matters. They just want to study it and never act on it, and they're not thinking about how to solve the problem."

Cher has written many letters and op-eds to local papers, attends legislative meetings and rallies, and speaks at city council meetings regularly. Last weekend, she also attended the Poor People's Campaign march in Washington. She appreciated the way many of the speakers were directly-affected people. "When you hear a person's story, it's hard to dismiss. The stories make the movement."

Thank you for your dedication to change in your community, Cher!

Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Fredericksburg, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond Area, Suffolk, Washington County, Waynesboro, Wise County, Wythe County

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