



News from the Grassroots

September 2022 Issue 118



Darrius Johnson from the Southside Chapters reported their accomplishments and goals during the September 10 mass meeting.

Grassroots Gathering 2022 - Going Strong!

There's one week left of workshops.

Tonight, September 29 at 5:30 p.m. learn how to do 1:1's for your chapter and at 7 p.m. learn more about Environmental Justice.

Next week:

- **Fighting for Mental Health and Criminal Justice Reform**
- **Self Care in Community Organizing**
- **400 Years of Racism and Resistance in Virginia**

On Saturday, October 8 from 9-12 we will have our final mass meeting with panel discussions from chapter leaders about their issue campaigns and keynote speakers.

ASL and Spanish interpretation will be provided at the mass meetings and workshops.

Campaign Update

The Fredericksburg Chapter is celebrating progress in their campaign to demand better working conditions for custodial workers in Stafford County. ABM, the corporation the public schools used to outsource their cleaning services, has withdrawn their contract with the public schools.

Leader Pat Smith published a letter in the Free Lance-Star to say, "We celebrate the cancellation of the contract [with] ABM. Any new contract needs thoughtful review, including listening to the lived experiences of the workers. At Virginia Organizing, we think the best solutions to resolve issues is to hire workers directly through the county, so that compensation packages are visible, and exploitation and retaliation can no longer thrive. Better working conditions will only exist if the Board of Education has ongoing oversight."



Anti-pipeline Win!

Thanks to all the leaders who have sent their photo petitions!

Anti-pipeline organizing has been so effective that Senator Tim Kaine said he would vote against the continuing resolution to fund the government if it included Manchin's side deal to fast track the Mountain Valley Pipeline (MVP).

As a result on Tuesday Senator Manchin withdrew his proposal. The work to stop the MVP won't be done until the companies involved have been forced to clean up the harm they've done. "Permitting reform," which just means forcing through fossil fuel infrastructure with less oversight, will also be brought back in later legislation.

But this is still a major victory that shows how powerful we can be when we organize together.

Media Conference with U.S. Rep. Donald McEachin in Richmond

The Richmond Chapter organized a media conference on September 1 with Congressman McEachin and several partner groups.

They thanked him for his work to support the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and asked him to help stop the side deal Sen. Joe Manchin has tried to push through to force the Mountain Valley Pipeline to be built. Rep. McEachin came out against the side deal last week.

The IRA includes many vital changes we all have been working on for years: increased taxes on the largest corporations, Medicare negotiating drug prices, and funding for environmental justice.

Many thanks to the Richmond Health Brigade, which hosted the conference.



Preserve Giles County | Featured Community Partner

"You can just take pictures for posterity."

That was the answer the citizens of the village of Newport, VA got when they asked how they were supposed to preserve the history of their village if the Mountain Valley Pipeline were to tear through it.

Newport is located in Giles County, a beautiful rural county nestled in the mountains straddling the New River Valley. It is the home of historic farms, bucolic covered bridges, and quaint towns. It also bears the unfortunate distinction of being the place where the Mountain Valley Pipeline is trying to cross into the state from West Virginia.

Donna Pitt of Giles County got the bad news that the impending pipeline would be routed through her property in 2014. Her initial reaction was fury. "Incredulous fury," she says. She grew up in Rappahannock County, and was raised by parents who were ahead of their time in their practice of environmentalist principles on their family farm. Pitt immediately helped start Preserve Giles County to oppose the pipeline and the hydraulic fracking that it sustains.

Preserve Giles County is just one of several on-the-ground organizations that are part of POWHR (Protect Our Water, Heritage, and Rights), a coalition which also has a Joint Plan of Work with Virginia Organizing and which has recently gained national attention for its mobilization against Sen. Joe Manchin's "side deal" to the Inflation Reduction Act, a deal that would have mandated the completion of the pipeline.

Preserve Giles County's piece of the work is multifaceted, resisting the progress of the pipeline through on-site monitoring of the right-of-way, water testing, participating in legal challenges, and in everyday working to "delay, obstruct, bring suit, challenge the authority and power of [permitting agencies], and cost MVP as much as we possibly can in hopes of discouraging investors." In other words, the pipeline resisters of Giles County are fighting like the very survival of their community and way of life is at stake.

Read more on our website!

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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Waynesboro Petition in the News

The Waynesboro Chapter has been gathering signatures to support their tenant rights campaign. Kayla Brooks of WHSV interviewed chapter leader Nora Scott about it.

"We should care about our neighbors because it does affect us, regardless of whether we think it does or not. You might be having a fine time with the landlord you have now, but you could move to a different spot in Waynesboro, and that could change."



Take action!

Submit a public comment to oppose Governor Glenn Youngkin's proposed anti-transgender school policy. Our partners at Equality Virginia have created a convenient portal where you can write your comment. Or you can go straight to the Virginia Department of Education and submit your comment. More than 50,000 comments have already been submitted, most of them opposed to the new policy!

Let's keep up the momentum and defeat this reversal of the progress we've made in Virginia.