

Stronger Together

Virginia Organizing
Mid Year Report 2024



In times of change, it takes people who are willing to rise up together in solidarity to usher in change on their terms. That is exactly what Virginia Organizing has done in the past, is doing now, and will most certainly continue to do in the future.

Virginia Organizing is dedicated to building power and calling for a better Virginia through local and state campaigns that address diverse issues across our state. With so many directly-affected Virginians leading our chapters, from Hampton Roads to Lee County, there is no wonder why so many individuals find a sense of belonging and empowerment in Virginia Organizing.



One of our driving goals is to listen to directly affected community members and to build power together and share their stories in many ways. By organizing with those who have been left out of the process, we can build the just society that we all deserve. Not only can this be transformative for our communities, but it can act as a form of healing justice for those who have been wounded by unjust and corrupt institutions.

For me personally, throughout my years with Virginia Organizing, I have been proud to participate in campaigns that would not only affect present change, but that would also make a lasting impact for those who will follow.

This year has already presented many opportunities for chapter leaders to be involved throughout the state. Several of our members spoke at city council and board of supervisors meetings for the first time, sharing their experiences with community leaders and policymakers.

This year, we have focused on statewide issues including Restoration of Rights, Housing, Environmental Justice, and the statewide Childcare budget. We have gathered for various community workshops and forums, public demonstrations, our 2024 Power Analysis, Regional Grassroots Gatherings, and meetings with members of the General Assembly at the beginning of the year.

We have won campaigns and built power - we are not done yet!

This work will continue through the rest of this year. We will also take part in a lot of civic engagement moving toward the coming elections in November. Virginia Organizing will keep defending the rights and gains that protect the interests of all people, particularly for people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ+, and underrepresented people in our communities.

I'm also proud to join hands with the 60 joint plans of work and community partners with which we strive to create change. We are always stronger together, and there are plenty of seats at the table.

Please give what you can to keep Virginia moving forwards, and thank you for supporting this crucial, transformative work.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lily".

Lily Hungarland
Chairperson

Statewide Highlights



This year, members from multiple chapters attended the General Assembly, organizing meetings with legislators and sharing their experiences related to statewide issues.



During the General Assembly session, Virginia Organizing also held public demonstrations in Richmond, like the “Don’t Go Breaking Our Bank” rally and took part in the Affordable Energy Coalition Lobby Day in February.



Our chapters also organized housing demonstrations across the state, as a part of our Housing Week of Action and other actions to demand affordable and safe housing this year.



South Boston Housing Forum



Charlottesville Housing Rally



Wythe County Housing Rally



Fredericksburg Housing Rally

Our Waynesboro, Richmond, and New River Valley chapters also took action to call for local rental inspection programs. Each chapter has met with local legislators and members have shared their own experiences and called for rental inspection programs in these communities.



Norfolk Housing Press Conference



New River Valley Housing Rally



Danville City Council Meeting



Richmond City Council Meeting



Waynesboro Housing Press Conference

Uplifting Directly Affected Voices

Shawn Barksdale

Shawn Barksdale is a local non-profit organization leader and directly affected individual in Halifax, VA. He has a passion for impacting and uplifting the community, and has been joining the efforts of the establishing new Virginia Organizing South Boston Chapter.



Shawn, who was formerly incarcerated, now works on the effort to restore rights, focusing on reform and helping ex-offenders reintegrate into society. In addition to his enthusiasm for restoration of rights, he is also dedicated to mentoring youth and has participated in the Fair Sentencing of Youth event.

“The mere fact that we have to hold conversations on adults treating children with justice is appalling to say the least,” said Shawn. He expressed that “as adults we must think and act as adults,” and that we cannot “expect the youth to be accountable for Emotional Intelligence while not exercising it ourselves. Not only is it hypocritical, it’s inhumane.”

Shawn brings with him a wealth of experience and a thriving spirit of service. His commitment to making a difference in Halifax is evident, and his leadership is sure to inspire others to join us in our mission. He has expressed interest utilizing his expertise to contribute actively to our fundraising initiatives and community outreach programs.

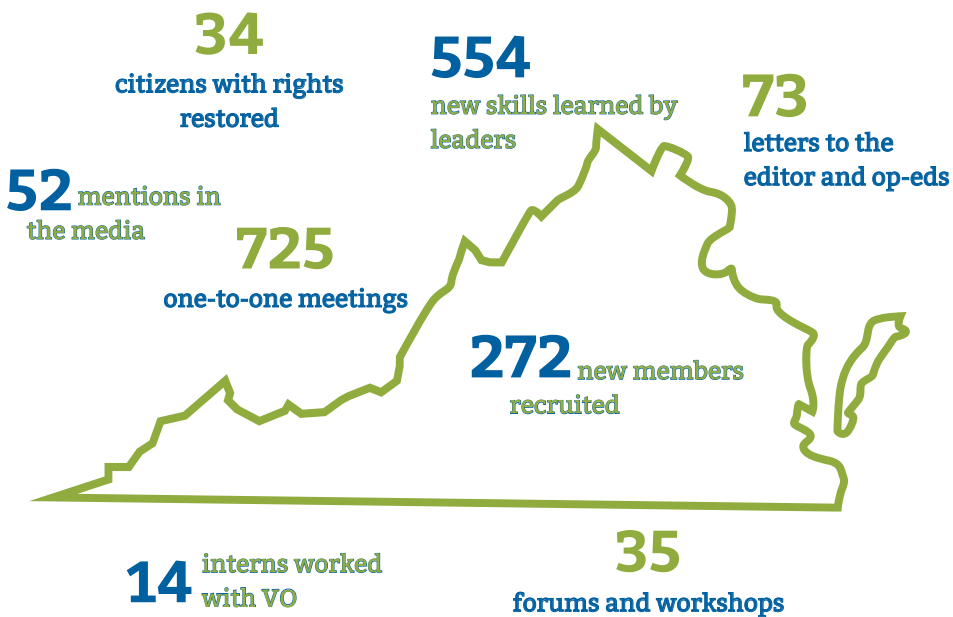


Amiyna Whitehurst

Amiyna Whitehurst is a chapter member who has experienced housing insecurity and homelessness in Hampton. She has gotten involved with the Newport News/Hampton Chapter and participated in our housing and education campaigns.

As a new member of the chapter, she has hit the ground running by attending chapter meetings, city council meetings, canvassing, and representing our chapter at Day Without Child Care Action in D.C. In May, she spoke before the Hampton City Council to present signed postcards from community members in support of the proposed regional shelter for the peninsula area.

Amiyna shared with the City Council that “there are plenty of people who are out here struggling with the same situation,” and emphasized that this is a “community need for all or us.”



Chapter Highlights & State Wins

- The Wytheville Town Council voted unanimously to allocate \$10,000 of the town budget for the Open Door Community Warming Shelter Program. This came after over a year of our Wythe County chapter members writing letters to the editor, meeting with Town Council members and at council meetings, and holding a rally bringing attention to the unhoused situation.
- In April, 100 protesters gathered with our Fredericksburg Chapter in support of the Lloyd F. Moss Free Clinic.
- Our Newport News/Hampton Chapter hosted an action as part of the 2024 National Day of Child Care, and other chapters supported other actions. On that very day, the General Assembly allocated a total of \$1.1 billion for early childhood care and education (ECCE) for FY25 and FY26.
- Our Suffolk Chapter partnered with a local collective to open a community garden that will provide free produce for citizens.
- The Supreme Court ruled to uphold that the funding for the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) is constitutional. This decision allows the agency to continue holding predatory lenders accountable and promote economic and racial justice. Virginia Organizing has worked to help create and support the CFPB's protections against predatory lending.
- The Emergency Utilities Protection Act was passed and signed into law, protecting Virginians from utility shutoffs during extreme weather conditions. This win comes after several years of organizing on the state and local level.

New State Governing Board Members



Adelaide "Addie" Alexander

Addie began her involvement with Virginia Organizing as a summer college intern in 2008, and joined the staff as the organizer for the Fredericksburg Chapter in 2012. In addition to her work with Virginia Organizing, Addie also worked as a tenant organizer in New York for three years, focusing on efforts related to multi-family apartments and coalitions on housing issues. In 2019, Addie returned to Virginia Organizing to reestablish the Richmond Chapter, which officially restarted in 2020.

In May 2024, Addie completed her Masters degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University in May 2024, and she currently works for Virginia Commonwealth University at the Center for Public Policy. She has conducted research on sustainability and environmental justice, and created a plan for Community Land Trust in Richmond that could utilize accessory dwelling units for affordable housing. In her free time, she enjoys reading novels and playing with her one-year-old daughter, who she "loves" to make laugh.

Brandy Faulkner

Brandy joined the Virginia Organizing State Governing Board in June 2024. She has been active in the New River Valley chapter since its beginning in 2017, working on the school-to-prison pipeline and low- and no-income housing campaigns.



Brandy has also served on the statewide Environmental Justice committee. As a long-time organizer, she spends most of her time fighting for racial and economic justice and enjoys listening to people talk about their lives. When she's not engaged in community work, you'll find her reading, cooking, or studying. She's a professor of Political Science and Africana Studies at Virginia Tech.

 **VIRGINIA ORGANIZING**
Chapters 2024



Virginia Organizing
703 Concord Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22903
434-984-4655

info@virginia-organizing.org
www.virginia-organizing.org

