

# VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

## News from the Grassroots

November 2024 Issue 143

### We're Thankful for You!

During this season, many people take time to give thanks for what is important to them - and we want to express gratitude for our members who contribute to building power in Virginia. You have played a huge part in making change across the state, and we want to take this time to express how much we value YOU!

### Statewide Dismantling Racism Workshop



"A human right, if it is not complete, is not a human right."  
-Dilcia Molina of the Fredericksburg Chapter

This month, we held a 3-day Dismantling Racism workshop attended by members from across the state. The workshop gave chapter members the opportunity to share and listen to one another's personal experiences, and to participate in exercises that explored how individual and institutional racism have affected our communities.

"It is necessary that I am here. Even everything that I studied in school - everything came back to racism," said DaShaunda Taylor of the Norfolk Chapter.

Activities were held in both small and large groups, giving participants the chance to hear from a variety of people.

Much of the discussion throughout the weekend centered around the issues that continue to challenge our communities as a result of racist systems that have gone unchecked.

The workshop also addressed ways that we can build power by confronting racial injustices.

"That's the kind of power you have when you show up," said Bennie Gates of the Richmond Chapter.



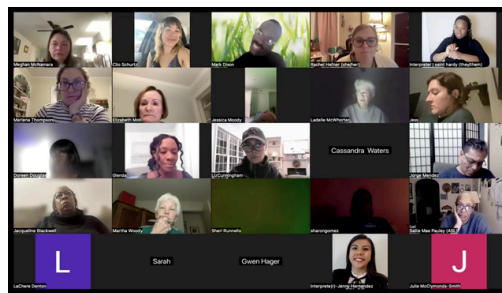
Other participants appreciated the opportunity to support language justice by breaking down language barriers between English-speaking and Spanish-speaking members. The ability to connect on a deeper level despite cultural and language differences was one source of unity throughout the workshop.

Toward the end of the weekend, Leslie Moncada, of the Fredericksburg Chapter, shared that she felt "grateful and united with this community," a sentiment echoed by multiple participants.

The weekend wrapped up with takeaways and action steps to bring back to our chapters, families, and friends as we work toward a more just Virginia.



### Statewide Committee Issues Briefing



Our chapters are at work across the state preparing for meetings with legislators to address our priorities for the upcoming 2025 General Assembly session. As part of that preparation, we held a Statewide Committee Issues Briefing this past Monday night to discuss the priorities and plans for the session.

"Tonight we are at the very beginning of the process that we go through to prepare for that 45-day [General Assembly] session...We want to be prepared for everything starting to happen very fast in January," said Ladelle McWhorter during her opening remarks.

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At the meeting, our Restoration of Rights, Housing, and Environmental Justice Statewide Strategy Committees each spoke on current campaigns, the bills that we will be tracking during the session, and next steps for the committees as we move forward into the session.

The **Restoration of Rights Statewide Strategy Committee** reported that the [HJ2](#) resolution supporting a Restoration of Rights constitutional amendment passed during a House Privileges & Elections Committee hearing last week. The **Environmental Justice Statewide Strategy Committee** discussed securing a patron for a bill to support adequate air conditioning in prisons, as well as participating in a bill to create a task force for whole home energy efficiency retrofits for low-income households. The **Housing Statewide Strategy Committee** discussed a proposed mold study and subsequent regulation bill to hold landlords accountable, as mold regulation does not currently exist in Virginia.

We were reminded throughout the meeting that progress often takes time, and as Ladelle aptly stated at the close of the meeting, "we are in it for the long haul, and that's how we win."

If you were not able to attend the meeting, you can watch the recording of the briefing [HERE](#).

[CLICK HERE](#) to view our list of priorities for the 2025 General Assembly.

Lastly, if you are interested in participating in chapter meetings with legislators, please reach out to your local organizer.

## Fredericksburg Restoration of Rights Forum



Our Fredericksburg Chapter held an impactful Restoration of Rights forum where panelists discussed how we can end felony disenfranchisement with a constitutional amendment to restore the voting rights of returning citizens.

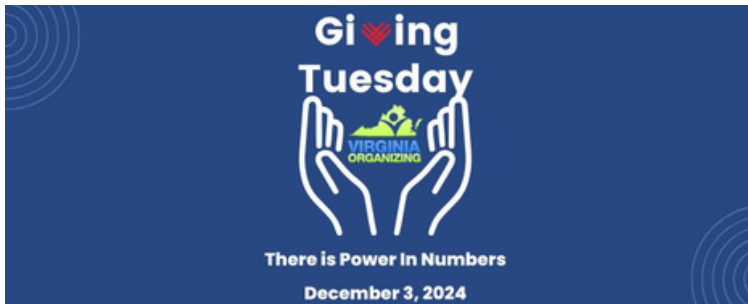
"When we talk about the restoration of rights, this is not a question of morality...What we're actually discussing is if we want to remove racism from the Commonwealth of Virginia," said Delegate Joshua Cole.

Our panelists for the forum were Delegate Joshua Cole (HD-65), who will advocate for the amendment, Juanita Shanks, founder of Failsafe-ERA, Duane Edwards of the Virginia Organizing Governing Board, and Fredericksburg Chapter leader, Jen Rhame.

The forum was co-sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Fredericksburg and the Spotsylvania Branch of the NAACP.



## #GivingTuesday



It's almost time! We're **less than a week away from Giving Tuesday**, and we are looking toward the future of building power together! Your donation will allow us to end 2024 and begin 2025 strong, preparing the way for us to support policy change that will make Virginia better

It truly takes a village to make real change, and we're so lucky to have such a dedicated community of supporters. Together, we can do this.

**As you are planning your end-of-the-year giving, please support our mission to uplift voices, empower communities, and create a better Virginia!** If you haven't already done so, please also consider telling your friends and family about our campaign. Spreading the word gets our voices heard and helps us continue this important work.

[Click HERE to give!](#)

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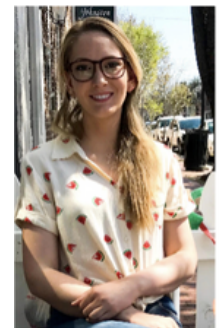
## Leader of the Month

### Jen Rhame - Fredericksburg Chapter

Jen has been a dedicated leader and member of the Fredericksburg Chapter, sharing her voice to help build power. Most recently, Jen was a panelist for the Fredericksburg Chapter's Restoration of Rights Forum this month, sharing her powerful story about the process of regaining her voting rights.

She also shared her experiences at our 2024 Grassroots Gathering, urging the community to uplift and assist returning citizens, emphasizing that "alienating them is the opposite of support."

Jen has served the chapter in multiple ways, and continues to be a valuable member of Virginia Organizing. Thank you for all that work that you do and for building power with us, Jen!



## Local Chapters and Areas Served:

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