

## Local Candidate Forums Across the State

This month, our Newport News/Hampton, Portsmouth, and Wythe County Chapters all held nonpartisan candidate forums to highlight local candidates ahead of this year's election.



VO Newport News/Hampton members talking with a candidate



Newport News/Hampton Chapter Candidate Forum at CNU



Chapter leader ready to register voters!

In Newport News, about 65 people attended a forum at Christopher Newport University to hear from local candidates about housing and other important issues. Attendees had the opportunity to meet the local candidates and hear their positions on issues, as well as register to vote on-site. Speakers included Councilwoman Vick, Randy Bowman, Aaron Weaver, Andrea Diggs and Scott Cox.



Rural Retreat Town Council Candidates



VO Wythe County Leaders

In Wytheville, the chapter co-hosted a forum for residents of Wythe County and Bland County to come out and learn more about the candidates running for office and their positions on local issues. The community was also invited to submit questions to the candidates.

Speakers included Rural Retreat Town Council candidates Sean Viars, Bob Lewis, and Michael Duncan, as well as Wytheville Town Council candidates Holly Atkins, Jim Cohen, and Joseph Hand. Our Wythe County Chapter leaders were all smiles at the event.



Wytheville Town Council Candidates



Portsmouth Candidate Forum



Portsmouth Candidate Forum

In Portsmouth, the candidate forum featured candidates running for mayor and city council. Attendees learned about candidate perspectives on city issues, and were given the opportunity to ask questions and meet the candidates.

The goal was to emphasize the importance of local voting, and Portsmouth Chapter leaders shared their hopes for what they wanted to see prospective officials address in the community.

"We have a lot of violence in my community. I want to know how the next mayor and city council members want to address this problem." said Kenny Hall.

Ahead of the event, Portsmouth residents and chapter members also shared why they attended the event. Keon Shepard of the Portsmouth Chapter said that he was "looking for a good mayor and city council member to help Portsmouth people thrive."

Crystal Harrison also called on Portsmouth residents to "embrace their civic duty and vote. Research the candidates, understand what they stand for, and choose those who will fight for a better quality of life for all. Your vote is your voice, and it is essential to use it to advocate for the change you wish to see in Portsmouth."



Portsmouth Candidate Forum

## Richmond Housing Press Conference



Our Richmond Chapter held a press conference to demand action from the city administration to implement a rental inspection program. Almost two years after the city promised to develop a rental inspection program, the program has still not been completed and Richmond City Council has not provided an update since November 2023.

"Put yourself in my shoes. We call our landlords - they don't act. The city needs to step in and support us. You work for us, listen to us," said chapter leader Kim Taylor.

Press conference speakers included Richmond Chapter leaders Del McWhorter, Erin Trimmer, Kim Taylor, and Marquetta Fisher. The conference highlighted concerns from tenants and community members across Richmond, and brought awareness to the substandard and dangerous living conditions that are not being addressed, including mold and pest infestations.

The press conference was covered by 12 On Your Side, ABC 8 News, and the Richmond Free Press.



## Waynesboro Out in the Community

Our Waynesboro Chapter has been holding voter registration drives at the local farmers market. Chapter leaders have been able to engage and educate residents on local and state candidates, register voters, and advocate for Virginia Organizing's restoration of rights efforts.

In addition to the farmers market events, the chapter was invited to attend Waynesboro's first pride event, PRISM. Chapter members gathered information that could benefit the chapter's upcoming anti-discrimination campaign, learned more about what issues LGBTQ residents cared about, and had the opportunity to base-build. They also registered voters and discussed our restoration of rights efforts at the event.



## Unveiling of the Henrietta Lacks Statue in Halifax



Over the past few years, the Halifax community has worked diligently to honor Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman and Virginian whose cells were the source of one of the most significant contributions to medical cell research, while also addressing the presence of a Confederate statue. Toward this effort, our Halifax/South Boston Chapter was able to help raise \$51,000 for the Henrietta Lacks statue, primarily through the generous support of Sentara Halifax Regional Hospital. This funding is essential to recognizing Lacks' important contribution to medicine.

The chapter also held events that attracted around 200 attendees, reflecting the community's commitment to honoring Lacks and advocating for representation. These gatherings facilitated crucial discussions about racial equity. Additionally, the chapter received support from local legislators, including Representative Bob Good and Senator Tammy Mullin. Their involvement helped amplify our message and advocate for more inclusive representation in the community.

The newly formed chapter is making strides to impact the community in a variety of ways!



We are excited to announce the kick-off of our #GivingTuesday Campaign for 2024! Giving Tuesday is an opportunity to join a movement that focuses on giving toward something that is bigger than ourselves. Here at Virginia Organizing, we place great value on the benevolence of our supporters, because we know we have a common desire to live in a better Virginia. This year, Giving Tuesday will be held on December 3, 2024.

This is not only a chance to support the work that we do through Virginia Organizing, but it is also a time to collectively build power and amplify the voices of directly affected members of our communities. Through your giving, we can continue the integral work that we are doing through our individual chapters, statewide strategy committees, collaboration with legislators and local leaders, and workshops across the state.

It is through giving by generous donors like you that we can continue to see wins that build and shape the future of our communities. Your support is an investment in the vision of a more empowered and compassionate Virginia, and we are grateful to be able to partner with you.

## 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

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## Leader of the Month

### Johnthan Burman - Martinsville Chapter

Johnthan is a leader of our Martinsville Chapter who has been taking an active role in the work that the chapter is doing throughout the community.

Not only has Johnthan been attending meetings regularly, but he is also helping restart the chapter in Martinsville and talking to the community about the work of Virginia Organizing. He has attended chapter events and participated in civic engagement activities where he registered six voters for the upcoming election.

At our 2024 Grassroots Gathering, Johnthan spoke on the Restoration of Rights Panel, sharing his experiences and passion for every vote counting. Most recently, he has participated in the Barbershop Restoration of Rights Campaign, where he spoke in one forum and is slated to speak again at an upcoming event.

Johnthan has expressed his enthusiasm for the continued work of the chapter. "I see a need for change. During my course of growing up - on one front I helped to destroy a community that I [now] want to rebuild. And one of the best ways I see doing that is through Virginia Organizing," said Burman.

Thank you for all that work that you do and for building power with us!



Johnthan Burman speaking on the Restoration of Rights Panel at the 2024 Grassroots Gathering

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## Election Day is November 5 - Don't forget to Vote!

If you see anything unusual or suspicious at the polls, report it to the election hotline.

Any voters with questions, including on how to use Virginia's Same Day Registration process, should call or text the Election Protection Hotline at 866-OUR-VOTE, or call one of the bilingual Election Protection hotlines at 888-VE-Y-VOTA (Spanish); 844-YALLA-US (Arabic); or 888-API-VOTE (Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Korean, Mandarin, Punjabi, Tagalog, Urdu, Vietnamese).

