

## **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION**

### Virginia Organizing Principle:

We believe that all people should be treated fairly and with dignity in all aspects of life, regardless of race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability or country of origin. Discrimination must be eliminated in our schools, communities and workplaces.

### Legislative Positions:

- Virginia Organizing supports legislation that makes it illegal to discriminate based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Virginia Organizing supports legislation that protects all state and local employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Virginia Organizing supports legislation authorizing state and local government agencies to provide benefits to all employees regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Virginia Organizing supports legislation designed to enhance the ability of parents, education officials, and law enforcement to identify, prevent, and respond to incidents of bullying, harassment, and intimidation in public schools and state colleges and universities.

## **BUDGET & TAX REFORM**

### Virginia Organizing Principle:

We strive to work towards a long-term solution that restores balance to the state's budget and tax structure. We do not support further budget cuts to vital services, as such cuts to our state's infrastructure and services keeps our economy from moving forward. We also support progressive tax reform, as Virginia's tax structure is old and in dire need of modernization. Low- and middle-income families in Virginia pay a higher share of their income in state and local taxes than do the richest families. Furthermore, Virginia has a regressive state tax structure that relies too much on sales taxes that disproportionately impact low and middle-income families and an almost flat income tax in which not all taxpayers pay their fair share.

### Legislative Positions:

- Virginia Organizing supports Governor Bob McDonnell's transportation bond package.
- Virginia Organizing opposes a cuts-only response to the revenue shortfall and supports progressive tax reform and revenue enhancement measures based upon one's ability pay, including tax relief for low- and middle-income Virginians.
- Virginia Organizing opposes legislation that would limit increases in the state's budget arbitrarily to increases in population and cost-of-living.
- Virginia Organizing opposes reduction or elimination of corporate income taxes.

## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE & DEATH PENALTY**

### Virginia Organizing Principle:

We believe that a compassionate society can be measured by its criminal justice system and how it responds to crime and the persons who commit crimes. Individuals convicted of serious crimes should have to pay a price for their crimes but it is also incumbent on society to provide the help needed to give those individuals an opportunity to be truly rehabilitated. We also believe that it is wrong for individuals to be put to death for a crime, no matter how heinous. There is too much research and evidence that individuals have been wrongly convicted of crimes and there is no recourse to righting such wrongs if individuals are put to death, in addition to the unspeakable act of an innocent person receiving the death penalty. There is also no evidence that the death penalty deters crime and there is much evidence that the death penalty discriminates against the poor and people of color.

Legislative Positions:

- Virginia Organizing opposes the death penalty and any efforts to expand crimes for which someone can be put to death.
- Virginia Organizing supports a criminal justice system that treats the accused reasonably and appropriately, without unnecessary incarceration and with speed and proper treatment.

## **ECONOMIC JUSTICE & HEALTH CARE**

Virginia Organizing Principle:

We believe that every person in the Commonwealth is entitled to a living wage and benefit package that is sufficient to provide the basic necessities of life, including adequate housing, a nutritious diet, proper childcare, sound mental and physical health care, a secure retirement and an equal educational opportunity. We continue to work on improving access to quality, affordable health care for all Virginians, as health care is a right, not a privilege. We fight for jobs, fair wages and equality in the workplace.

Legislative Positions:

- Virginia Organizing supports expanding the FAMIS and Medicaid programs for low-income Virginians, including immigrant children and pregnant women legally residing in the U.S.
- Virginia Organizing supports the inclusion and expansion of childcare subsidies for low-income working families in the state budget.
- Virginia Organizing supports the funding of the Housing Trust Fund and the creation of a rental assistance program for low-income families.
- Virginia Organizing supports the elimination of the ban for TANF public assistance for persons otherwise eligible for TANF due to a prior felony drug conviction alone.

## **IMMIGRATION REFORM**

Virginia Organizing Principle:

We need comprehensive immigration reform. But the change we need won't happen without broad-based support and leadership from communities of immigrants, advocates, faith, business and labor and activists. Our vision of reform includes immigrants and native-born U.S. citizens working together to achieve better wages, working conditions, and labor protections—making

sure everyone is playing by the same set of rules making it more difficult for any immigrant workers to be cheated. We need to build faith in our immigration system so that people respect the process. Immigration reform must promote economic opportunity, be comprehensive and include long-term solutions.

Legislative Positions:

- Virginia Organizing opposes legislation that tries to impose differing standards on immigrants with respect to their treatment by state and local law enforcement, access to housing, ability to obtain permits and requirements to provide documentation when accessing public services.
- Virginia Organizing supports legislation that prevents law enforcement officers, when investigating a crime, from inquiring into the immigration status of any person who is a crime victim or a cooperating witness to a crime.

### **PREDATORY LENDING & CONSUMER PROTECTION**

Virginia Organizing Principle:

Along with many other organizations, we urge statutory change to stop predatory lenders and the financial trap they set for people in dire financial circumstances. We support a 36% interest rate cap on all loans in Virginia, a measure that will end predatory lending once and for all. Until that becomes law in Virginia, it is imperative that tighter controls be placed on payday lenders, car title lenders and lenders using the open-end credit loophole in order to end the debt traps they create for unsuspecting Virginians. Virginia Organizing also joins other organizations in supporting stronger consumer laws to more adequately protect citizens from predatory business practices.

Legislative Positions:

- Virginia Organizing supports a 36% APR interest rate cap on all loans in Virginia.
- Virginia Organizing supports the elimination of the open-end credit loophole that permits lenders to bypass recently enacted legislation and to provide loans with no limits on the interest rates and with the state having no regulatory authority.
- Virginia Organizing supports compromise legislation that will address the insurance industry's concerns regarding labeling cars as water-damaged without making any change to the duty of the seller of a car to disclose significant water damage to the buyer.
- Virginia Organizing supports changes to the Virginia foreclosure system that provide homeowners with a fair opportunity to enforce their rights and explore alternatives to foreclosure.

### **REDISTRICTING**

Virginia Organizing Principle:

We believe that a fair and just government, including its elected representatives, is based upon the creation of legislative districts drawn in such a way that they are compact, contiguous, equal in population, encompassing communities of interest, respectful of existing political subdivisions, and in compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act. The process of creating such districts should

be accomplished by a nonpartisan or bipartisan commission and should include maximum opportunities for public review and input prior to approval by the General Assembly and the Governor.

Legislative Position:

- Virginia Organizing supports redistricting reform through the establishment of a nonpartisan or bipartisan redistricting commission with the responsibility to prepare a plan for review and input by the public and for consideration by the General Assembly and the Governor.

### **RESTORATION OF RIGHTS**

Virginia Organizing Principle:

Only Virginia and Kentucky permanently disenfranchise all felons upon conviction, requiring an act of the Governor to restore voting rights. Virginia's disenfranchisement policy is a vestige from the Jim Crow era and was a product of the 1901 Constitutional Convention, deliberately designed to marginalize minority voters. We support changing the current policy that disenfranchises more than 300,000 Virginians who have completed their sentences and fulfilled their obligations to the state. Doing so would be a positive step towards their rehabilitation.

Legislative Position:

- Virginia Organizing supports legislation that authorizes the General Assembly, in addition to the authority of the Governor, to provide by law for the automatic restoration of civil rights for persons convicted of felonies who have completed service of their sentences.

### **VOTING RIGHTS & VERIFIED VOTING**

Virginia Organizing Principle:

We believe that it is every citizen's duty to actively participate in our democracy by voting in local, state and national elections. This is the surest way for our government to be truly representative of our citizenry. Laws that discourage voting in any way and that interfere with making certain that every vote counts undermine our democracy and create public uncertainty about the role that our government plays in our lives. This must not happen.

Legislative Positions:

- Virginia Organizing supports expansion of voting rights in Virginia, including but not limited to allowing voters to vote by absentee ballot for any reason, extending the hours during which polls are open, and allowing votes to be cast by mail.
- Virginia Organizing supports the use of voting machines with a back-up paper trail that insures all votes will be counted and opposes any changes to the current law that prohibits the purchase of DRE voting machines in the future.

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