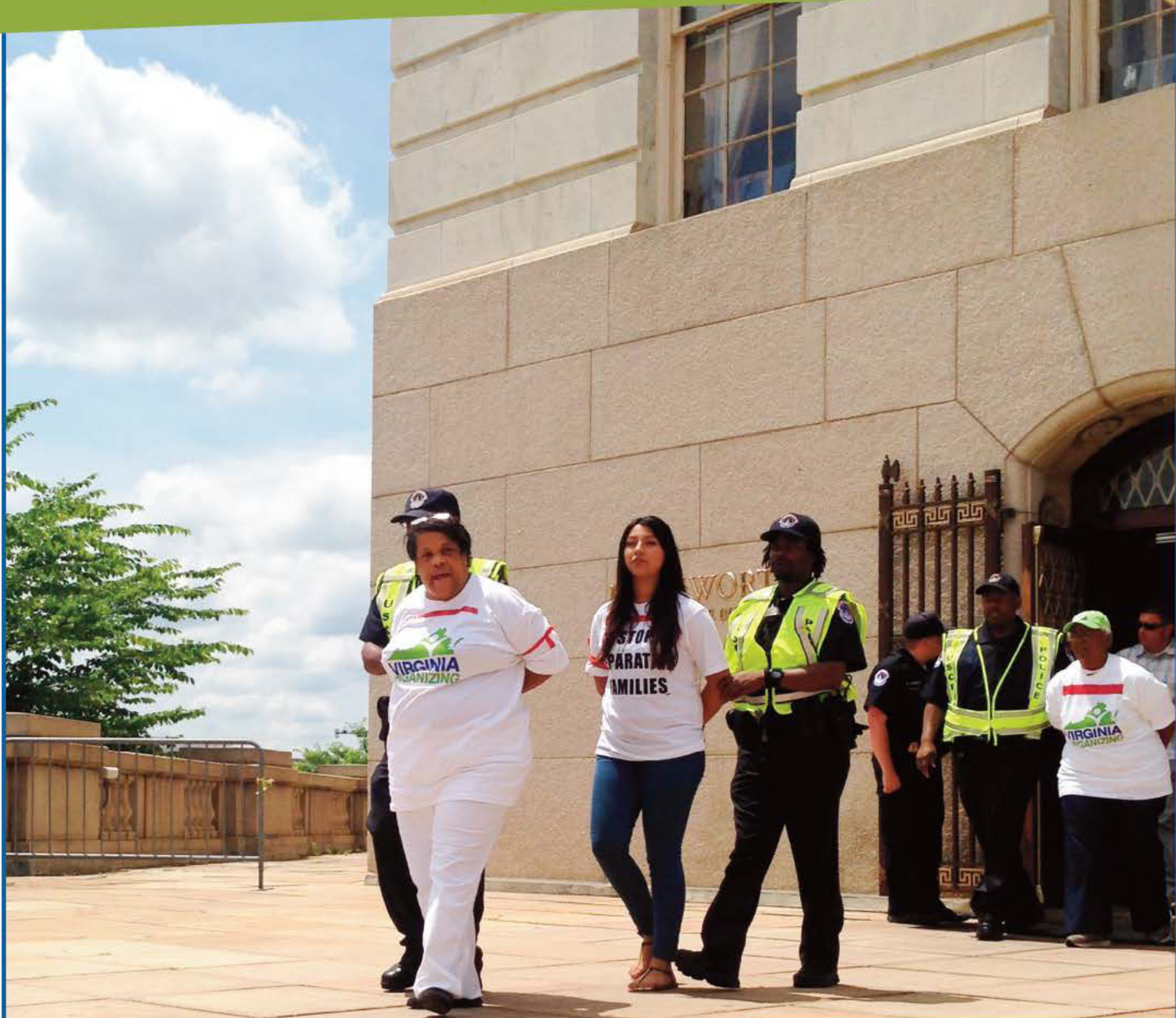


Virginia Organizing 2014 Annual Report



Virginia Organizing leaders and Board members were arrested for standing with immigrant youth in support of comprehensive immigration reform in June 2014.



Letter from the Chairperson

Dear Friends,

Virginia Organizing had a fantastic 2014! I'm so thrilled with the exciting things we've done this year. Virginia Organizing focused on leadership development and building strategic power. We put pressure on local, state, and national decision-makers to ensure that the voices of the people were being heard, especially those voices that had traditionally gone unheard. We even won awards for our inclusivity and focus on social justice!

In this year's report, you'll read more about our 2014 Power Analysis, our annual Grassroots Gathering, and important local campaigns. You'll learn about the Fredericksburg Chapter's commitment to diversifying the Spotsylvania County Board Room mural and the fight in Washington County to protect their water. You will read about local organizing and victories all across Virginia—from the coast to the mountains and everywhere in between.

We are proud of our work this year. While Virginia Organizing focused much time and energy on leadership development and building local Chapters, we also took action to a new level in Washington, D.C. when five of our leaders, including two State Governing Board members, were arrested standing with immigrant youth for comprehensive immigration reform.

In 2015, Virginia Organizing will celebrate 20 years of grassroots organizing. As we end 2014 and reflect on our accomplishments and lessons learned, we look toward the future with hope because of the great work of our grassroots leaders and members.

We know that Virginia is becoming a more just place to live because people like you are taking action, learning new skills, financially supporting Virginia Organizing, and getting involved in your community.

Thank you for your ongoing support and effort. Your work does not go unnoticed!

Sincerely,



Sandra A. Cook
Chairperson



Virginia Organizing By the Numbers

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING 2014 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



ORGANIZED 189 COMMUNITY FORUMS

FOR 2,436 PEOPLE AND 142
DIRECT ACTIONS WITH
2,883 PARTICIPANTS



SEVEN DISMANTLING RACISM

WORKSHOPS WITH 406 PARTICIPANTS



89 LEGISLATOR MEETINGS

WITH CONSTITUENTS



353 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TRAININGS

WITH 3,675 ATTENDEES, AND

1,375 LEADERS

APPLIED A NEW SKILL IN A PRACTICAL WAY



CONSULTED WITH 142 OTHER GROUPS

TO HELP MAKE THEM STRONGER

REGISTERED 280 VOTERS AND HELPED RETURNING CITIZENS

APPLY TO RESTORE THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS



WON TWO AWARDS

FOR OUR GRASSROOTS WORK!

EQUALITY VIRGINIA RECOGNIZED US FOR
BEING AN

OUTSTANDING VIRGINIAN

WORKING FOR LGBT EQUALITY.

THE VIRGINIA CHAPTER OF THE
METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL
ACTION AWARDED VIRGINIA ORGANIZING
THE BISHOP LEONTINE KELLY

SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD

AT THE 232ND SESSION OF THE VIRGINIA
ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE METHODIST
CHURCH.



81 MEDIA RELEASES BECAME

292 MEDIA HITS



2,800 INTERN HOURS

COMPLETED THROUGHOUT THE YEAR



MADE MORE THAN

60,000 PHONE BANKING CALLS

ENCOURAGED LEADERS TO WRITE

240 LETTERS TO EDITORS

142 WERE PUBLISHED IN LOCAL
NEWSPAPERS, INCLUDING FIVE OP-EDS



1,516 MEETINGS

WITH INDIVIDUALS ABOUT
VIRGINIA ORGANIZING



RECRUITED 1,990

NEWLY INVOLVED PEOPLE

Local Organizing

The Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro Chapter focused on Medicaid expansion and developing a strategy to ban the criminal history question on city job applications in Staunton, known as “ban the box.” The Chapter organized around Medicaid expansion to support Chapter leaders who are directly affected. They attended town halls, held rallies and protests in support of expansion, and called on state legislators representing their districts to vote in favor of Medicaid expansion.



The Charlottesville Chapter worked locally to challenge the criminal justice system and ensure that people are being treated equally. They worked with local law enforcement officials for a commitment to collect data to make sure police officers are not racially profiling. The Chapter also focused on Medicaid expansion and health care, since many Chapter leaders are directly affected by the Affordable Care Act.



In Danville, Chapter leaders helped develop a response to the local coal ash spill in the Dan River, worked with Piedmont Access to Health Services (PATHS) to support Medicaid expansion in Virginia, and worked with local tenants fighting for their rights against an unjust landlord. Additionally, they were able to “ban the box” on city job applications and facilitate community dialogue on racial justice by hosting a #BlackLivesMatter seminar.



Local Organizing



The Fredericksburg Chapter held a General Assembly 101 training to help leaders develop their skills and understand the process for citizen lobbying and lawmaking. The Chapter also worked with the Virginia Student Power Network to help young people get active in their communities. Fredericksburg leaders met with city officials to ban the box, hosted an income inequality online workshop with the Alliance for a Just Society, delivered a homemade coffin to support Medicaid expansion to Speaker of the House of Delegates Bill Howell's office, built a candlelight labyrinth for an immigration reform vigil, organized town meetings on community race relations, and began working on a new local campaign to address discipline disparity in the local school system.



The Harrisonburg Chapter asked the Harrisonburg City Council to take steps to diversify the city workforce by recruiting more diverse applicants for city jobs so that the city workers more accurately represent the diversity of Harrisonburg. Chapter leaders also worked hard on immigration reform and delivered a "backbone" to U.S. Representative Bob Goodlatte's local office to encourage him to move reform legislation forward, and took leaders to Washington, D.C. to share their immigration stories.



In Lee County, the community was devastated by the loss of the local hospital in 2013 due, in part, to lack of Medicaid expansion in Virginia. The Lee County Chapter has organized around Medicaid expansion to bring awareness to the closing of the hospital and the needs of southwest Virginians.

Local Organizing

In Louisa, Virginia Organizing leaders continued community organizing work by attending various events and focusing on issues that matter to the community. Leaders were involved in helping with ACA enrollment, restoration of civil rights work, registering voters and providing information on new voter photo ID laws, and holding workshops on the importance of being active in the local community.



The Martinsville/Henry County Chapter hosted a group of College of William and Mary students for an alternative spring break experience canvassing neighborhoods and generating calls to state lawmakers on Medicaid expansion. The Chapter delivered petitions to Delegate Les Adams on Medicaid expansion, worked in a non-partisan way to encourage voter participation, and met with local elected officials to discuss banning the criminal history question on city job applications.



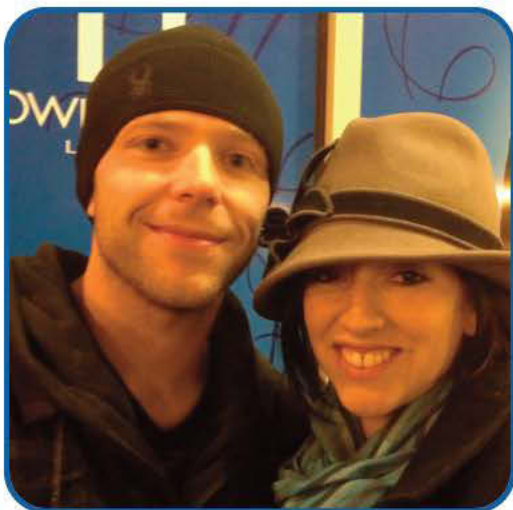
The Petersburg Chapter focused on building the local Chapter in 2014. The Chapter worked with University of Massachusetts students during spring break to canvass the community and learn about the history of Petersburg. The Chapter organized a local peace walk to unite the community against high crime rates and chose food insecurity as a local issue to focus their efforts. In December, the Chapter began working to supply locally grown, fresh produce in community markets across the city.



Local Organizing



The Richmond Chapter developed a transit team to reach out to local bus riders and discover their needs for public transportation. The Chapter also focused on affordable housing and landlord issues at a local trailer park and worked with the City of Richmond and other stakeholders to find a workable solution for those living in the mobile homes. In addition to local work, the Chapter organized and attended rallies in support of comprehensive immigration reform, voter rights, and Medicaid expansion.



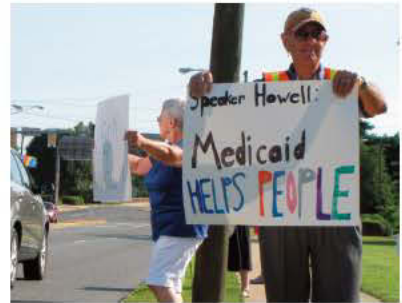
In South Hampton Roads, Chapter leaders continued monthly “Light the Way” vigils to stand in support of comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship. Chapter leaders also spoke out about affordable housing at the Norfolk City Council meetings, became Certified Application Counselors to help Virginians sign up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, attended Medicaid expansion town hall meetings, and offered seminars on qualifying for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) programs.



Washington County Chapter leaders fought off hydrofracking in the county for years and had been successful. After a maneuver from hydrofracking supporters in mid-2014, the county position changed to allow hydrofracking and natural gas extraction. The Chapter raised awareness and fought hard to protect the environment and resources in the county. Once it was clear hydrofracking would take place in Washington, the Chapter began working with residents to do water testing to ensure a baseline measurement of contaminants in the water before hydrofracking, in the event the county's water becomes damaged.

State and National Campaigns

Virginia Organizing leaders across the Commonwealth helped work on several statewide and national campaigns. In Virginia, one of the most important statewide issues is Medicaid expansion. Chapters held rallies, vigils, protests, and met with legislators throughout the year to discuss the benefits of expansion. Those benefits include insurance coverage for about 400,000 people, the creation of about 30,000 jobs, more money in Virginia's economy, and all at no cost to Virginia through 2016. Unfortunately, state legislators did not take action in 2014 to expand Medicaid.



Virginia Organizing also worked with several other groups to address climate change and sea level rise in the Eastern part of Virginia. Our environmental justice work will continue to be a focus for Chapters across Virginia as sea levels continue to rise, corporations attempt to extract gas from and build pipelines through the property of Virginians, and other environmental risks remain high. As part of our commitment to environmental stewardship, we will continue to update our fleet of vehicles to be more environmentally friendly.



We worked to "ban the box" in cities and counties across Virginia—and we were successful! Because of Virginia Organizing leaders and many other groups, returning citizens in Alexandria, Arlington County, Charlottesville, Danville, Fairfax County, Fredericksburg, Harrisonburg, Martinsville, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke, and Virginia Beach no longer have to answer questions about criminal history on job applications for the locality as of 2014. In 2015, we will focus on a statewide ban and encourage private employers to voluntarily ban the box.

National Campaigns and 2014 Top Ten List

On the national level, Virginia Organizing continued to support comprehensive immigration reform with a clear path to earned citizenship. Many of our Chapters are still working toward this goal by meeting with legislators and helping those who are directly affected lift their voices! As part of a national campaign in 2014, Virginia Organizing called for an executive order to provide relief to immigrant families. We supported the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) and extending the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, but we will continue to call on Congress to enact a more permanent solution in the form of comprehensive immigration reform.



TOP 10

We helped **BAN THE BOX** in localities across Va. making it easier for returning citizens to find **JOBS.** ✓

Interns contributed **ABOUT 2,800** hours this year. Plus, volunteers donated **THOUSANDS** of hours this year! ⌚

Same sex couples are **MARRIED** in Virginia now! Equality is becoming a reality for Virginians. 👫 👫 👫

Virginia Organizing registered **NEW VOTERS** and helped **RETURNING CITIZENS** get their rights to vote back. That means more people are able to participate and engage in communities. ✓

1,375 LEADERS learned new skills this year. Leaders **WROTE** letters to the editor or op-eds for the first time, **SPOKE** with an elected official in a meeting for the first time, **LEARNED** how to lead meetings, **AND MORE.** 🗣️

Virginia changed the process to restore **CIVIL RIGHTS** this year! We worked with the Secretary of the Commonwealth to ask for shorter forms and more access for returning citizens. 📎

We led six **VIGILS** across the state in support of Medicaid expansion in June. The Fredericksburg Chapter delivered a homemade coffin to Speaker Howell to symbolize the **LIVES LOST** due to lack of access to health care. 🙌 🙌 🙌

Five Virginia Organizing leaders, including two State Governing Board members, were **ARRESTED** in Washington, D.C. supporting immigration reform. 🇺🇸

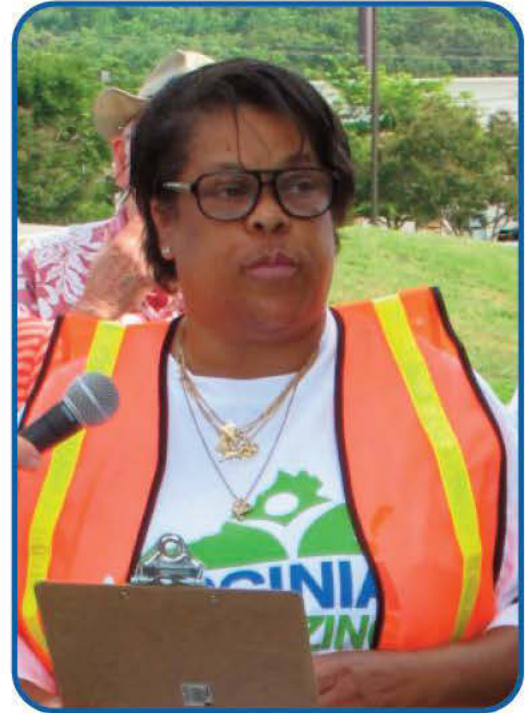
We hired new staff, including an **ORGANIZER** in Roanoke. We're growing our capacity to build more power for Virginians. +

Virginia Organizing held 353 **LEADERSHIP TRAININGS** to support grassroots leadership development and skill building. 💡

Virginia Organizing 2014
www.virginia-organizing.org

Grassroots Voices

On getting arrested to support comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship, Fredericksburg Chapter leader Eunice Haigler said, “I was prepared for the handcuffs, prepared for the processing, but I was not prepared for how I would feel once the door to the cell shut. I knew the outcome of my arrest, but it hit me that there were thousands of immigrants out there being detained for deportation who do not know their fate. They are taken from their homes to a cell filled with uncertainty. That was hard.”



“I love that Virginia Organizing is so focused on the community and letting all people in the community speak out and be their own advocates,” said Marty Jackson of the Danville Chapter. “I love that the voices of the underprivileged are heard!”



Jan Reeves, a Virginia Organizing leader in Abingdon, discussed the importance of civic engagement and being involved in communities. “Freedom is one of those things we have to keep fighting for if we want to keep it.”



Statement of Beliefs

- 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.
- 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 child care, sound mental and physical health care, and a secure retirement.
- We believe that every person is entitled to an equal educational opportunity.
- We believe that community, economic, social and environmental policy should be developed with the greatest input from the people it is meant to serve, and that the policies should promote, celebrate and sustain the human and natural resources of Virginia.
- We believe in the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty, in a progressive tax system based on the ability to pay, and in making the nation's financial systems, including the Federal Reserve Bank, more responsive to the average citizen's needs.
- We believe that we should enhance and celebrate diversity in our community and in our state.
- We believe that those who have positions of authority in our governmental bodies, law enforcement agencies and institutions of learning should reflect the diversity of our communities.
- We believe that our public officials should be held accountable for their actions and decisions.
- We believe in the rights of workers, consumers, shareholders and taxpayers to democratic self-organization.
- We believe in the elimination of the death penalty in all cases because it is fundamentally inhumane, ineffective as a deterrent to crime, and disproportionately and unjustly applied against people of color and those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged.
- We believe that physical and mental health are parts of personal and community well-being; we believe that Virginians have a broad public health and economic interest in ensuring that adequate care is available to low and moderate-income residents.



Mission Statement and Board Members

Virginia Organizing is a non-partisan statewide grassroots organization dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering people in local communities to address issues that affect the quality of their lives. Virginia Organizing especially encourages the participation of those who have traditionally had little or no voice in our society. By building relationships with individuals and groups throughout the state, Virginia Organizing strives to get them to work together, democratically and non-violently, for change.

Organizar Virginia es una organización imparcial de base a nivel estatal dedicada a luchar en contra de la injusticia dándole poder a la gente en las comunidades locales para que puedan exponer sus preocupaciones que les afecta en su vida diaria. Como una organización no partidista, Organizar Virginia especialmente fomenta la participación de aquellos que tradicionalmente han tenido poca o ninguna voz en nuestra sociedad. Estableciendo relación con grupos o personas individuales a través del estado, Organizar Virginia sigue luchando para que trabajemos juntos, democráticamente sin violencia por cambio social.

Board Members

Sandra A. Cook, Chairperson
D. Ladelle McWhorter, Vice Chairperson
Janice "Jay" Johnson, Treasurer
Thomasine Wilson, Secretary
Debra Grant
Duane Edwards
Johnny Mayo
Ray Scher
Denise Smith

