

# VIRGINIA ORGANIZING 2016 MID-YEAR REPORT



## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING



Dear Friend,

**VIRGINIA ORGANIZING'S  
2016 MID-YEAR REPORT**  
chronicles our work from  
January through June.



So far, we have worked hard on local campaigns like organizing to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and close the opportunity gaps in schools, removing toxic rail cars from a predominantly African-American neighborhood in Fredericksburg, speaking out in favor of light rail transportation in Virginia Beach, working with local hospitals to address accessibility concerns for deaf and hard of hearing patients and their families in Central Virginia, meeting with local people about flooding and climate change in South Hampton Roads, and much more.

We have continued to work on statewide campaigns like helping returning citizens apply to restore their voting rights, working with the Secretary of the Commonwealth to make people aware of the restoration of rights processes, helping people register to vote, hosting women's roundtable discussions to provide a safe space for women to talk about issues that directly affect us, and fighting for clean energy in Virginia. Virginia Organizing is also tackling some important federal issues like immigration reform and consumer protections from predatory lending.

Our strategic organizing capacity continues to grow and more and more directly affected people are becoming active.

I hope this report will give you a clear picture of why organizing matters in Virginia — and how your donations and time help us tie it all together.

Thank you for your ongoing support and please let us know your questions and ideas!

Sincerely,

Ladelle McWhorter  
Chairperson



Wilfredo F. and Darisa L. of Harrisonburg participated in a photo petition drive to tell the federal Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) to issue strong rules for payday, car title, and other short-term loans. In June, the CFPB announced proposed rules that included some loopholes, which will continue to allow predatory lenders to trap people in cycles of debt if not closed. Virginia Organizing leaders are encouraging others to comment on the proposed rules and tell the CFPB to close the loopholes.

## SPOTLIGHT: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Virginia Organizing worked with Chesapeake Climate Action Network, the Virginia Student Environmental Coalition, and Interfaith Power and Light of Maryland, D.C. and Virginia to release a report grading Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe's record on climate change. The report showed some failures and room for dramatic improvements, particularly if the Governor works to implement a strong Clean Power Plan. Read the full report and learn more about clean energy at <http://bit.ly/mcauliffeclimatereportcard>.

CATEGORY	OVERALL GRADE
Keeping Fossil Fuels in the Ground	D-
Cleaning Up A Toxic Legacy of Coal Ash	F
Moving Virginia to a New Clean Energy Economy	C+
Fighting Sea Level Rise and Flooding Impacts Here Now	B-
Developing a Strong State Clean Power Plan	?
Final Grade	D+

## SPOTLIGHT: NATIONAL LEADER

Virginia Organizing State Governing Board member Janice "Jay" Johnson was elected the first Chairperson of People's Action — a new national grassroots organization of more than one million people across the United States united in the fight for human dignity, corporate responsibility, respect for our planet, and racial, gender, and economic justice.



## REAL CHANGE, REAL VICTORIES

- WE HIRED TWO NEW ORGANIZERS IN SOUTH HAMPTON ROADS AND ONE ORGANIZER IN FREDERICKSBURG.
- MARTINSVILLE CITY COUNCIL, AT THE REQUEST OF VIRGINIA ORGANIZING, PASSED A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF NON-PARTISAN REDISTRICTING.
- VIRGINIA ORGANIZING IS DEVELOPING CHAPTERS IN LYNCHBURG, ROANOKE, BLACKSBURG/NEW RIVER VALLEY, PORTSMOUTH, CHESAPEAKE, AND THE EASTERN SHORE.
- HENRY COUNTY BECAME THE 21ST LOCALITY TO BAN THE CRIMINAL HISTORY BOX ON JOB APPLICATIONS.
- LEADERS IN THE LEE COUNTY CHAPTER SHOWED UP TO EVERY SINGLE HOSPITAL AUTHORITY MEETING TO DISCUSS THE HEALTH CARE NEEDS OF SOUTHWEST VIRGINIANS.
- VIRGINIA ORGANIZING IS WORKING WITH OTHER GROUPS ON A SERIES OF ECONOMIC FORUMS TO DEVELOP IDEAS FOR 21ST CENTURY JOB GROWTH IN SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA.
- OUR MEMBERSHIP GROWS DAILY, WHICH SHOWS VIRGINIANS ARE READY FOR REAL CHANGE!



Virginia Organizing is committed to the restoration of civil rights for returning citizens and has been working on this issue since 1999. This year, we proudly celebrated and stood with Governor Terry McAuliffe when he restored the voting rights to more than 206,000 Virginians who had completed their sentence through executive order (below, left). This restoration order was challenged in court and overturned in the Supreme Court of Virginia in July. Virginia Organizing remains committed to helping returning citizens with the restoration of rights and voter application processes. Virginia Organizing held workshops in Virginia Beach (below, center) and Danville (below, right) with Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Thomasson to help returning citizens understand the order and register to vote.



## BUILDING STRATEGIC CAPACITY: DIRECTLY AFFECTED PEOPLE CREATING CHANGE

WE PROVIDED CONSULTATION  
FOR 58 OTHER GROUPS

41 NEW PEOPLE  
BECAME SUSTAINERS

CONSTITUENTS MET  
WITH 51 LEGISLATORS  
ACROSS THE STATE

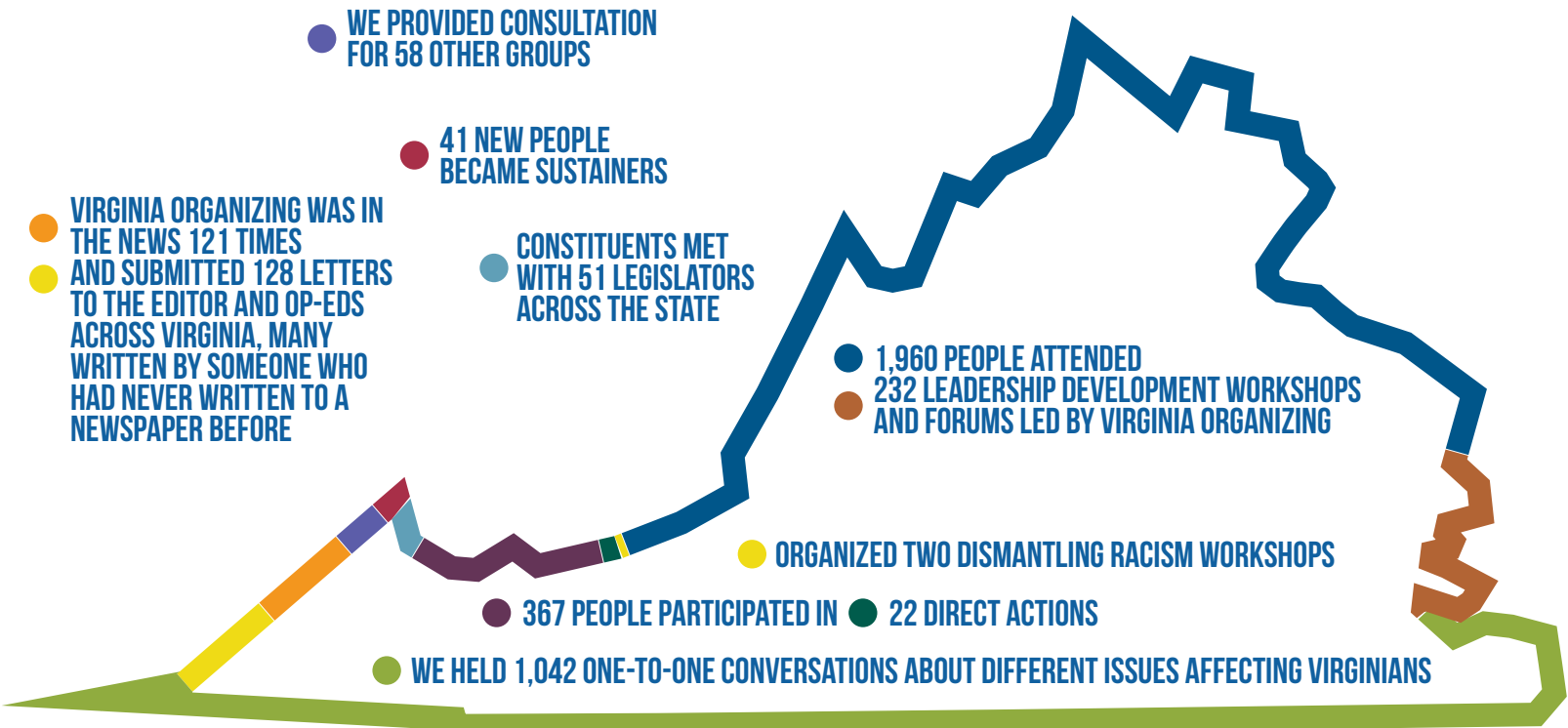
1,960 PEOPLE ATTENDED  
232 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS  
AND FORUMS LED BY VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

ORGANIZED TWO DISMANTLING RACISM WORKSHOPS

367 PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN 22 DIRECT ACTIONS

WE HELD 1,042 ONE-TO-ONE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT DIFFERENT ISSUES AFFECTING VIRGINIANS

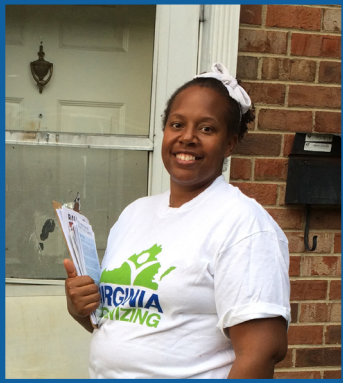
VIRGINIA ORGANIZING WAS IN  
THE NEWS 121 TIMES  
AND SUBMITTED 128 LETTERS  
TO THE EDITOR AND OP-EDS  
ACROSS VIRGINIA, MANY  
WRITTEN BY SOMEONE WHO  
HAD NEVER WRITTEN TO A  
NEWSPAPER BEFORE



## SPOTLIGHT: LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Returning citizen and new voter Odessa Hudson is quickly developing her leadership skills in Fredericksburg.

She is working to register voters in her community, help people understand the restoration of rights process, and speaking to the media about her experiences. Odessa is a valuable part of Virginia Organizing.



The Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro Chapter ended 2015 with victory as they celebrated the increased accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing patients at Augusta Health. The Chapter has continued to work on these issues in 2016. Pictured above is Chapter leader Ronna Wertman at a meeting with the Deputy Director of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to discuss opportunities for collaboration and further needs for the deaf community.

***Join us at the Grassroots Gathering to learn new skills, work with the Deputy Secretary of Education on school-to-prison pipeline issues, and strategize to build power. Learn more and register:***

[grassroots2016.eventbrite.com](http://grassroots2016.eventbrite.com)



Virginia Organizing leaders have been working hard to help others in their community. Eunice Haigler (above, left) made a phone call to her legislator, Speaker of the House Bill Howell, at a Medicaid expansion rally in February to tell him that all Virginians deserve health care. That same month, Virginia Organizing volunteers posed for a photo (above, right) before a Know Your Rights training for undocumented immigrants in Harrisonburg.

In Abingdon, community members participated in one of twelve actions across Virginia in support of a strong Clean Power Plan. Abingdon Chapter leaders joined with local members of the Sierra Club and eNRG on this April day of action (below).



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