



Virginia Organizing leaders were among more than 600 people who marched to the Governor's mansion for climate justice. Governor Terry McAuliffe has publicly supported harmful environmental policies like gas pipeline expansion and offshore oil drilling.



Virginia Organizing had another Dismantling Racism workshop — the 114th across the state since 1995 — in Lynchburg, where participants learned more ways to take action for a more just Virginia.



Local residents and community activists called for a comprehensive study and review of state oil and gas drilling standards, including regulations governing fracking, during a media conference led by Virginia Organizing and the Sierra Club Virginia Chapter in Washington County.

## News From the Grassroots

### Updated Restoration of Civil Rights Process Announced

Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe announced a new process for restoration of civil rights on Monday, August 22 to comply with the Supreme Court of Virginia orders on July 22, 2016.

In April, the Governor issued an order to restore the rights of all Virginians who had completed their prison sentence and completed all conditions of probation and/or parole as of April 22, 2016. He also issued similar orders in May and June.

Virginia General Assembly leaders believed the Governor did not have this authority and sued the Governor. The Supreme Court of Virginia heard the case on July 19. At the time of the lawsuit, about 13,000 Virginians who had their rights restored under the Governor's order had registered to vote.

On July 22, the Supreme Court of Virginia decided that the Governor did not have the authority to issue a "blanket" restoration order and must review each case before restoring civil rights of returning citizens. The court also ordered the Department of Elections

to cancel all the voter registrations of those who registered under Governor McAuliffe's orders in April, May, or June.

Virginia Organizing State Governing Board member and returning citizen Duane Edwards issued a statement in response to the decision: "As a returning citizen, I know firsthand what it means when you can't vote because of your past. We are appalled by those politicians like Speaker of the House of Delegates Bill Howell who have consistently put political ideology over the people of Virginia. It is unfair for returning citizens to hear that we deserve a second chance from politicians while they actively work against that second chance. Today goes down in history as another victory for Jim Crow and voter suppression, but we will continue to fight to overcome."

Returning citizens across the commonwealth received letters in the mail that their voter registration was cancelled, even after holding their voter registration cards, some for the first time in their life.

Exactly one month after the court decision was issued, Governor McAuliffe announced that he had restored the rights of most of the 13,000 people who had registered under previous orders and

plans to review the remaining cases known to the Governor's office for restoration.

Any returning citizen, regardless of what crime he or she committed, may request expedited restoration (which will be prioritized by the Governor's office for restoration as they are received).

"The process might change, but we will continue to organize and engage people for a more just Virginia," said Edwards.

Virginia Organizing will continue to go to beauty salons, barber shops, churches, community centers, neighborhoods and more to help returning citizens understand their rights and register new voters.

### Important Dates!

**September 16-18:** Annual Grassroots Gathering: <http://bit.ly/grassrootsgathering2016>

**October 17:** Last day to register to vote for the November 8 election

**October 22:** Virginia Transgender Information and Empowerment Summit: <http://www.equalityvirginia.org/tics/>

# Real people. Real change.

## Portsmouth Chapter School-to-Prison Pipeline Campaign Moving Forward

The newly-established Portsmouth Chapter is moving forward with their local campaign to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. Leaders have been attending Portsmouth City School Board meetings and speaking out about suspensions. In May, 17 leaders attended a meeting to ask the School Board members why they have ignored requests for meetings with the group. Since they publicly demanded action, six school board members and the superintendent have met with them to discuss how to reduce suspensions in Portsmouth. At the upcoming school board meeting on September 8, community leaders plan to be there to request that the school board report monthly on increases or decreases of suspensions at their meetings. A local television reporter has become interested in the campaign and will be covering the Chapter's efforts and the School Board's actions.

## Addressing the Lack of Health Care in Lee County

In October 2013, after Virginia's General Assembly chose not to expand Medicaid in the state, Lee Regional Medical Center closed its doors, leaving every person in Lee County without a nearby place to go in an emergency. For many of the residents, the nearest emergency room is at least 21 miles away. Since that time, Virginia Organizing leaders have met with local folks, organized a 250-person town hall meeting, attended Hospital Authority meetings, met with local elected officials, and became the Authority's "go to" source of community members for input. This month, Virginia Organizing helped

organize a town hall meeting with U.S. Representative Morgan Griffith, Virginia Delegate Terry Kilgore, and Virginia Senator Bill Carrico to discuss Medicaid expansion and the hospital. While no commitments were made from the legislators, Chapter leaders were able to express their concerns to their elected officials and push for action to be taken.

## Organizing for Better Access

Virginia Organizing's Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro (SAW) Chapter has been organizing for better access to services for deaf and hard of hearing patients in area hospitals. So far, they have been successful in working with Augusta Health and the hospital is already making many changes!



Chapter members Rita Wertman and Roy Snider met with Isaac Izzillo, director of patient experience, at Augusta Health

to do a test run of the new custom-built Video Remote Interpreting unit to get feedback for the technology. Health care for the deaf community is improving!

## Take Action!

Are you ready to learn more about organizing and how to take action? Join us at Grassroots Gathering 2016, September 16-18 at Smith Mountain Lake. You'll learn new skills and be in the room when we meet with Virginia Deputy Secretary of Education Holly Coy. Register and learn more at <http://bit.ly/grassrootsgathering2016>

## Leader of the Month Lily Hungarland



Lily Hungarland began her journey with Virginia Organizing in high school. She recently graduated and started at UVA this month.

"I started learning about social justice issues and Virginia Organizing through church in middle school," said Lily. Her youth minister was also the local organizer for Danville.

Lily got involved by making phone bank calls in 2014 and 2015 to talk to people about Medicaid expansion. "I got to talk to people who were affected by not having health care and it was really powerful to hear their stories," she said.

Lily also worked on restoration of rights campaigns over the last two years and has seen the progression of helping people fill out longer applications to more simplified processes implemented by Governor Terry McAuliffe.

She also got to work with another woman in the Chapter last year to lead a women's roundtable discussion for directly affected women about issues that concern them in Danville.

"I could have volunteered to do some other community work, maybe at my school," said Lily. "But I would be subject to whatever someone told me to do. With Virginia Organizing, I got to take a leadership role, work with people who are actually experiencing the issues, and see real change happen."


Lily is currently working with the Chapter to end opportunity gaps in education and serves on the State Governing Board of Virginia Organizing. Thank you, Lily, for your service!

## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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## Local Chapters and Areas Served

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro  
Charlottesville/Albemarle County  
Danville  
Eastern Shore  
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County  
Fredericksburg  
Lee County  
Lynchburg  
Martinsville/Henry County  
New River Valley  
Portsmouth  
Roanoke  
South Hampton Roads  
Washington County  
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H, U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

 [www.facebook.com/virginiaorganizing](http://www.facebook.com/virginiaorganizing)  
[@VAOrganizing](https://twitter.com/VAOrganizing)

## News in Brief

- We have a new Chapter in Portsmouth! The Portsmouth Chapter met on Friday, August 19 to petition to be a Virginia Organizing Chapter. (See story above.)
- Fredericksburg Chapter leader Eunice Haigler addressed 65 grassroots leaders from all over the Southeast in New Orleans. She talked about Virginia Organizing's work on voting rights and the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Community leaders and pastors in South Hampton Roads met with Jim Cervera, Virginia Beach police chief, to discuss the department's development of a data collection system for racial profiling and ways that his department is developing to improve community-police relations.
- Virginia Organizing is growing because of your support! We hired another organizer in Central Virginia! We do not accept funding from government agencies for our organizing work. Would you consider becoming a sustainer with a monthly donation of \$10, \$25, \$50 or any amount? To become a sustainer, contact Sally Bastian at 434-984-4655 ext. 229 or [bastian@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:bastian@virginia-organizing.org)

[www.virginia-organizing.org](http://www.virginia-organizing.org)