



Virginia Organizing leaders posed for a photo with the First Lady of Virginia, Dorothy McAuliffe, at a holiday reception at the Governor's Mansion to celebrate restoration of civil rights work in Virginia.



Emerging leaders in Richmond gathered for the second "barber shop talk" to discuss issues important to young people of color in the city and surrounding areas.



The Harrisonburg Chapter held an information session and know-your-rights training for immigrants in partnership with several other groups.

## News From the Grassroots

### Protecting and Improving Health Care

In the coming Congressional session in the new year, it is expected that a lot of time will be spent on health care with a special focus on repealing and possibly replacing the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as Obamacare.

According to a December 2016 report by the Urban Institute, 685,000 Virginians stand to lose their health insurance if a reconciliation bill passes Congress and is signed by the President.

Only bills that have federal budget implications may be considered under the reconciliation process. In this process, the Senate filibuster rules do not apply, so only a simple majority of U.S. Senators (51) need to approve the bill for it to pass the chamber. Since the U.S. House of Representatives has passed similar ACA repeals in the past, and the makeup of this chamber has not changed much, it is expected that they will also pass the reconciliation bill.

This also means that only parts of the ACA will be affected by the reconciliation bill — the parts that have federal budget dollars attached. These items, specifically, Medicaid expansion,

tax subsidies for Marketplace plans, and individual and employer mandates for coverage, would be in danger.

If the federal government repeals these things, it is anticipated that many healthy people will cancel their health insurance. Other people who rely on subsidies to pay their premiums may also cancel their insurance since it will be more expensive and unaffordable for many lower-income individuals and families. This will cause premiums for health insurance to go up.

Additionally, there is no current plan to reinstate hospital reimbursements at the federal level, and with more people becoming uninsured, hospitals will have to make decisions as to who qualifies for treatment under the Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA), which requires hospitals to treat emergencies and women in labor regardless of ability to pay. Hospitals will also make decisions on whether to stay open — doing so will require increasing "indigent" or "charity" care, which will be passed along to the insured patient in the form of higher costs. Hospitals may also opt to reduce staff to minimum levels, compromising care, to save money.

Congress has no current viable plan to address these concerns. Virginia

Organizing, along with many other state and national groups, wants to see improvements made to the current law that would lower premiums, lower deductibles, lower prescription drug costs, and increase access to doctors and hospitals.

Congress can lower costs by giving everyone the option of an employer-sponsored plan or Medicare. They can also negotiate lower prescription drug costs by using the low prices that Medicare and Medicaid pay for those drugs as the standard.

We cannot afford to go backwards on health care. Doing so puts other social programs and people's lives at risk.

### Important Dates!

**December 21:** "Don't Take My Health Care" action in Danville. Look for other events in your area at [www.virginia-organizing.org/events](http://www.virginia-organizing.org/events).

**January 4:** Public hearings on the state budget. Learn more at [sfc.virginia.gov](http://sfc.virginia.gov).

**January 11:** 2017 Virginia General Assembly convenes.

# Real people. Real change.

## Dodd-Frank and the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau at Risk

With a new Presidential administration and a new Congress, the law that created the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and other consumer protections from bad banking, lending, and consumer services practices is at risk. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act has been criticized by newly-elected officials and the President-elect has vowed to repeal the law. Repeal of Dodd-Frank would roll back consumer protections and put us at risk for another recession. Virginia U.S. Senator Mark Warner has said in the past that he's open to eliminating some of the regulations in Dodd-Frank. Virginia Organizing wants Senator Warner to know that we support the CFPB and want him to do whatever it takes to protect this important agency. The CFPB is dedicated to protecting ordinary consumers from businesses trying to take advantage of them. The agency has proposed stronger rules for payday and car title lending, holds debt collectors to higher standards, and ensures consumers get relief when they are taken advantage of. Take a look at this month's action step to see how you can help support the CFPB!

### Take Action!

This month, we're asking everyone to call U.S. Senator Mark Warner at 202-224-2023 and tell him that you are with Virginia Organizing and you want him to do whatever it takes to protect the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

## Fredericksburg Chapter Wins School-to-Prison Pipeline Campaign!

Virginia Organizing leaders recently met with Spotsylvania Superintendent Dr. Scott Baker and Sheriff Roger Harris to go over a new draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the public schools and school resource officers (SROs). The Chapter has been putting pressure on the Spotsylvania Superintendent and School Board for months in order to change the way that school discipline issues are handled. The Chapter discovered that there were more students of color and students with disabilities being suspended and referred to law enforcement even though those students made up a much smaller percent of the school population.

The new MOU is still in draft form and needs to be approved by the Spotsylvania School Board before it becomes a final document, but it includes provisions for when an SRO should become involved and puts the burden of ordinary discipline issues, like those that are classified as "behavior issues," back into the hands of school administrators and out of the juvenile justice system. The new MOU will hopefully mean that SROs are only used when an actual crime has taken place.

Congratulations to the Fredericksburg Chapter on this important victory! We will continue to work on school-to-prison pipeline and school discipline issues in other areas and we will update our newsletter readers with any changes!

## Leader of the Month Martha Woody



Since 2008, Martha Woody has been a strong member of Virginia Organizing. After participating in a series of meetings with legislators around predatory

lending, health care, and more during the 2008 General Assembly session, Martha became active in establishing the Martinsville/Henry County Chapter in 2011. A retired mental health clinician, Martha believes in the way Virginia Organizing works for change.

"I'm proud of the way we partner with like-minded organizations to address community issues," said Martha. "This May, our Chapter worked with OneVirginia2021 to get a resolution in support of non-partisan redistricting reform from Martinsville City Council."

Martha has written letters to the editor, facilitated Chapter meetings, attended restoration of rights clinics, and recruited new members into the organization.

"I'm excited about the many opportunities we have to address issues of inequality and injustice. I think there will be a lot of opportunities for Virginia Organizing to have a tremendous impact in 2017 and beyond.

"One of the wonderful things about Virginia Organizing is that there are any number of issues to get excited about and get involved in and to make a difference on — restoration of rights, ban the box, school-to-prison pipeline," said Martha. "To be able to make the difference on the local level, it helps to keep you hopeful."

Thank you, Martha! Virginia Organizing wouldn't be the same without you!

## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING



703 Concord Avenue  
Charlottesville, VA 22903  
(434) 984-4655 Fax: (434) 984-2803

### 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  
Richmond  
Roanoke  
South Hampton Roads  
Washington County  
On Campus: UMW, UVA, E&H, U of R,  
ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

## News in Brief

- Chapters across Virginia will be holding events to call on Congress to protect health care for all. If you'd like to participate, connect with your local organizer. Find out more at [www.virginia-organizing.org](http://www.virginia-organizing.org).
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter is working to help people sign up for the Health Insurance Marketplace again this year. Volunteers help answer questions and help people fill out applications for health insurance.
- If you work for any state agency in Virginia, you can still give to Virginia Organizing through the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign until the end of the year! Use code 3168 to support our work.
- The Danville Chapter held a community values media conference and leaders were featured in the local newspaper and on local television stations discussing their work to make the Danville police department more accountable and their communities better places.

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

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