



Each year, local Chapters meet to affirm their commitment to and affiliation with Virginia Organizing. The Harrisonburg Chapter held a potluck annual meeting to celebrate all the work the Chapter has done in the last year and to make plans to move forward.



Teresa Stanley (left) and Shelia Carter (center) won Exemplar of the Year awards from the *Hampton Roads Gazette* for outstanding social justice leadership and work in the community.



Members of the Danville Chapter stood in solidarity with local CWA Verizon employees on strike. Employees are striking because Verizon wants to make it easier to ship jobs overseas and cut employee health care benefits.

News From the Grassroots

Restoration of Civil Rights for 206,000 Virginians

We briefly alluded to Governor Terry McAuliffe's restoration of rights announcement on April 22, but we want to make sure everyone knows how important this is for returning citizens.

Virginia Organizing is celebrating the recent restoration of rights order from Governor McAuliffe. We have been working hard since 1999 to change the restoration of rights process in Virginia and have asked every Governor since that time to restore the rights, including the right to vote, to returning citizens.

Over the years, the process has been streamlined and made more efficient. Former Governor Bob McDonnell shortened the application process in consultation with Virginia Organizing and many other groups. Governor McAuliffe has taken further steps to include more people in the shorter process for non-violent felonies, remove payment of fines and fees as a condition of restoration, and shorten the process even more for those who committed more serious crimes.

On April 22, Governor McAuliffe restored the rights of all people who have

completed their sentence as of that date. This means that a person must have served their prison time and completed probation or parole. While outstanding fines and fees alone are no longer a barrier to having one's rights restored, a returning citizen must pay these if it were part of the sentence or a condition of completing probation to qualify for the April 22 restoration of rights.

Virginia Organizing is working to get the word out to newly restored voters that they do have to take action in order to be able to vote in November.

First, all returning citizens who think they might have been eligible for the April 22 restoration should visit <http://commonwealth.virginia.gov/ror> and look up their status (right hand side of the screen). If you check your status and your rights have been restored, you may register to vote. If your rights were restored as a result of the April 22 order, you should note April 22, 2016 as the date of restoration on the voter registration form.

If you check your status and it says your rights are not restored, but you believe they should have been or if your name was not found, you should call the Secretary of the Commonwealth's

Restoration of Rights Department at 804-692-0104.

Once you register to vote, you will need a photo ID in order to cast your ballot. A full list of acceptable photo IDs is available on the Department of Elections website at <http://elections.virginia.gov>. If you do not already have a photo ID, you can get one for free that can only be used for voting purposes at your local registrar's office (each locality has one).

After you register and confirm that you have a valid photo ID for voting, be sure to vote! Virginia has an election every year for different state and local offices and in even numbered years for national elections.

We put together a fact sheet with some helpful information for returning citizens that you can find at <http://bit.ly/vaorgorfacts>. If you know anyone who is a returning citizen, please pass this information along to her or him.

As State Governing Board member Jay Johnson noted in a recent email, "Virginia Organizing knows that real change takes a long time and we are going to keep organizing and keep fighting in Virginia for justice for all people for as long as it takes."

Real people. Real change.

Exploring Education Issues Across the State

Virginia Organizing leaders in Norfolk, Portsmouth, and parts of Southside Virginia are exploring school discipline and opportunity gap concerns to decide whether their areas should work on a school to prison pipeline or other education campaigns.

Preliminary data from Norfolk and Portsmouth show a disproportionate rate of suspensions and referrals to law enforcement for students of color; even though research shows that students of color are no more likely to commit infractions of school policy than their white counterparts.

The emerging Portsmouth Chapter held a meeting in May to discuss school discipline concerns. More than 40 people came to the meeting to share stories and learn more about how to get involved. Virginia Organizing leaders want to create change in a way that ensures people who are affected by these issues are speaking out and taking action.

Annual Power Analysis Held at Massanetta Springs

Every year, during the last weekend of April, Virginia Organizing leaders, Board members, and staff gather to do a Power Analysis.

At the Power Analysis, we focus on an evaluation of Virginia Organizing's power in Virginia, what we need to do to get more power and have more successes, and who else has power in the state. From the Power Analysis (and other feedback throughout the year), Virginia Organizing's State Governing Board adopts a long-term Organizing Plan, as well as annual goals. It

was from this Power Analysis several years ago that Virginia Organizing decided to strategically focus on building more and stronger local Chapters and to make sure each Chapter was working on a local campaign.

Monthly Action Step

Call Governor Terry McAuliffe at 804-786-2211 and thank him for restoring the rights to 206,000 returning citizens and for his commitment to restoration of voting rights to all returning citizens in Virginia.

Help Sustain Us!

Virginia Organizing is only able to do this work because of our grassroots funders — that's real people like you who support our organization! This year, we set a goal to have 275 sustainers. Sustainers are people to give a monthly gift to Virginia Organizing. This can be done in several ways:

- Fill out the sustainer agreement and mail to our office. The sustainer form can be downloaded from our website at http://bit.ly/vaorg_sustainer.
- Set up a monthly bill pay through online banking. Ask your local bank or credit union if you have questions about how to set up a monthly bill pay to send donations to Virginia Organizing.
- Visit <http://bit.ly/vaorgdonate> and set up a recurring donation through our Network for Good account.
- Send a monthly gift by mail.

Contact Sally Bastian at 434-984-4655 ext. 229 or bastian@virginia-organizing.org for more information.

Leader of the Month Nancy Carpenter



For the past four years, Nancy Carpenter has been an active leader in the Charlottesville Chapter of Virginia Organizing. She joined Virginia Organizing because she was interested in

supporting a local organization that addresses how state issues affect people in her community.

Nancy also valued Virginia Organizing's approach to change.

"I like how Virginia Organizing is very focused on helping each other. We are actually out there doing work through direct action," Nancy stated.

One of the direct actions Nancy participated in was a meeting with the Albemarle human resources director to ask the county to ban the box — the box is not banned yet but it was a good opportunity for Nancy to learn more about the process.

Although Nancy is dedicated to making change in all areas of social injustice, she is most passionate about improving re-entry programs, increasing minimum wage, and housing the homeless.

Nancy believes Virginia Organizing can achieve these goals through all the hard work of its Chapter Leaders and Organizers.

"Virginia Organizing brings a diverse group of like-minded individuals together to create a stronger unity to make change. Just knowing we are working together to create community unity to move issues forward is great," stated Nancy.

Thank you, Nancy, for your commitment to social change in Virginia!

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



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News in Brief

- Fredericksburg Chapter leaders spoke at the City Council meeting and submitted letters to the editor of their local paper about the need to remove the tankers filled with toxic chemicals from the Mayfield neighborhood in Fredericksburg. The owners of the tankers, CSX, were told to move them but have not yet complied.
- Members of the Lee County Chapter participated in the public comment period of the Lee County Hospital Authority Board meeting in April. Virginia Organizing leaders asked the Board to get more information out to the public.
- Our emerging Chapter in the Eastern Shore has held two planning meetings for people to learn more about Virginia Organizing and begin to work on policy issues in the area. The emerging group is excited to be connected to a statewide organization with other Chapters in the region.
- Virginia Organizing in the New River Valley area knocked on approximately 100 doors in Christiansburg and Radford to hear from community members about their concerns and invite them to take action. They also set up meetings with legislators in their local offices to discuss Medicaid expansion.

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