Exercising Our Rights
Beyond the Polls

On Tuesday, November 8, Americans voted and elected a new President and other federal and local officials. After the results of the election became clear, many people reached out to organizations like Virginia Organizing, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, and the ACLU to find out how to protect their civil rights and how to work for a more just nation.

There was good news in Virginia from the recent election: The "Right to Work" proposed constitutional amendment failed. This was thanks to the hard work of many groups in Virginia under the leadership of the Virginia AFL-CIO.

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Each week, we will update our Act Now page on our website, which can be found at http://www.virginia-organizing.org/act-now, with new, concrete actions you can take. We know from experience (and from Congressional staff) that phone calls and personal letters gain more attention than form letters and petitions. That's not to say we won't use petitions and letters as well, but we will focus on what will build the most power and show our elected officials that we care.

You can choose to take one action or more than one action. This week, we are asking that you consider joining a Chapter, that you contact U.S. Senators Mark Warner and Tim Kaine and ask them to support health care coverage for all Americans, and contact Virginia Secretary of Education Deidre Trent to ask her to do what's in her power to reduce school suspensions.

We know that we can make change because we've seen the power of organizing in everything we do. People, united for a cause, are very powerful. We have that power and we will exercise our rights to organize and raise our voices!
#GivingTuesday

#GivingTuesday is November 29, 2016. It is a national day of giving to kick off the charitable season. This year, Virginia Organizing is participating and our goal is to have 100 new monthly sustainers to support organizing around social justice issues all year around. You can also make your gift in honor of someone as a gift for the holiday season. Holiday cards are available at http://www.virginia-organizing.org/honor-donations-holiday-cards/.

Here’s how you can help:
- $6 a month covers one day of intern training
- $21 a month helps our organizers do a week’s worth of one-to-ones with people who may have never before been asked what they want to see change in their community
- $27 a month provides leadership development training for one grassroots leader
- $50 a month gives a low-income person who is ready to take action a chance to attend a weekend Dismantling Racism workshop
- $100 a month means five people can attend our annual Power Analysis weekend and learn more about strategic organizing in their community

Thank you for your support!

Upcoming Meeting on School Discipline Issues

Virginia Organizing Chapters in Fredericksburg, Portsmouth, Norfolk, Lynchburg, and Danville have all been working on various educational justice issues in their communities over the last two years.

Our most recent victory was in Spotsylvania County, where a new memorandum of understanding was signed to limit the scope of duties of school resources officers, which will reduce the number of students referred to law enforcement and cut down on the racial disparities associated with the former policies.

On December 1, Virginia Organizing leaders across the state will meet with Virginia Secretary of Education Deidre Trent to discuss school discipline and education justice issues. Specifically, we’d like Secretary Trent to encourage local school boards to develop policies that reduce the use of suspensions, address the disproportionately high number of students of color and students with disabilities who are being suspended, and eliminate referrals to law enforcement for non-criminal actions, and address the opportunity gap for students of color in advanced classes.

We would also like to implement restorative justice programs across Virginia that focus on students rejoining their school community instead of being removed from learning.

See the “Take Action!” box below to learn how you can help us make our meeting more productive by calling Secretary Trent to encourage her to help change policies.

Take Action!

Will you call Secretary of Education Deidre Trent at 804-786-1151 and tell her that you are with Virginia Organizing and want her to do everything in her power to reduce suspensions in public schools and move to restorative justice, an alternative form of discipline that focuses on restoration and education.

News in Brief

- Our newest organizer, Tyson Jackson, has been busy meeting people in and around Richmond who want to get active in their communities, especially those under 35.

- In Roanoke, we had another planning meeting on November 14 for our developing Chapter. If you are in the area and are interested in learning more, please contact Keith Johnson at keith@virginia-organizing.org.

- If you work for any state agency in Virginia, you can give to Virginia Organizing through the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign! Use code 3168 to support our work.

- About 75 people in Lynchburg came out for the first school-to-prison pipeline community meeting to help people learn about the problem and start strategizing solutions to high rates of suspension and referrals to law enforcement.

www.virginia-organizing.org