



# VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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ISSUE 69



The Staunton/Augusta/Waynesboro Chapter learned about grassroots fundraising at their last meeting so they can continue their work of organizing for better communications access for deaf patients in other hospitals.



Virginia Organizing leaders came together for a Dismantling Racism workshop in Portsmouth this month. Leaders learned strategies to combat racism and other forms of oppression and developed Chapter action plans.



The Danville Chapter held a media conference after their meeting with the City Manager and Police Chief to discuss police transparency and other community concerns.

## News From the Grassroots

### 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.

In the aftermath of the election, Virginia Organizing was contacted by hundreds of Virginians wanting to know how they could get involved and work to ensure the social, racial, economic, and environmental justice of all people.

As a non-partisan organization, Virginia Organizing is committed to working for justice no matter who is elected into any office. We recognize that many people are frightened and that we have a lot of work to do to stop bad policies and

agendas from undoing the hard-fought gains we've made in the past.

Virginia Organizing believes the most important thing that individuals can do right now is to organize and build strategic power to build a better Virginia for people of all religions, races, ethnicities, national origins, sexualities, genders, abilities, ages, and incomes. We believe there is a place for every person.

We want to make sure that all our supporters know that there are actions you can take every week that will show the power of Virginians who care about important issues like health care, the environment, ending predatory lending, women's issues, protecting and expanding Social Security, anti-discrimination, civic engagement, immigration reform, fair tax reform, criminal justice reform, and more.

**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!

### Important Dates!

**November 29:** #GivingTuesday! Check out [www.virginia-organizing.org/donate](http://www.virginia-organizing.org/donate) on November 29 and help us meet our goal of 100 monthly sustainers.

**December 1:** Virginia Organizing meeting with Virginia Secretary of Education Deidre Trent.

# Real people. Real change.

## #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.

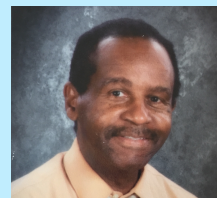
On December 1, Virginia Organizing leaders across the state will meet with Virginia Secretary of Education Deidre Trent to discuss school discipline and education justice issues. Specifically, we'd like Secretary Trent to encourage local school boards to develop policies that reduce the use of suspensions, address the disproportionately high number of students of color and students with disabilities who are being suspended, 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.

## Leader of the Month Al Willis



Al Willis first learned about Virginia Organizing through his church, and he's been a leader in the organizing drive on the Eastern Shore

ever since.

"I want to help people empower themselves and make their community better," he said.

Since getting involved earlier this year, Al is most proud of the successful Dismantling Racism workshop that he helped organize in October. With more than 30 participants, the workshop brought a diverse group of people together to reflect on personal experiences and develop a shared understanding of racism on the Eastern Shore. Al is already looking forward to what comes next.

"We'll pick some issues that we can be successful with and start working," said Al, lifting his own passion for good-paying jobs and support for young people.

And Al knows what it means to make a difference in his community. As a member of the board of directors of the Mary N. Smith Cultural Center, he helped establish a space for alumni of the county's old segregated high school and community members to come together. Al has seen change happen when people work together.

"It's good to be a part of the statewide organization. When we pick an issue that we want to work on, we have other Chapters to learn from and people who can help us reach our goals."

Thank you, Al, for your work to build a more just 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  
Portsmouth  
Richmond  
Roanoke  
South Hampton Roads  
Washington County  
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H,  
U of R, ODU, NSU, RU, TCC, VCU, JMU

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

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