VOP organizers and supporters have been working around the clock to bring community voices to the table on important issues affecting Virginians.

Health Care: January was a roller coaster ride for those working on health care reform in Virginia. VOP members continued the push to improve the U.S. Senate legislation, especially concerning affordability. That is why VOP members headed to Washington to attend the Health Care Affordability Summit. VOP member Shokoufeh Dianat presented Representative Tom Perriello with a “key” to thank him for his support for health care reform.

With all of the shuffling in Washington around health care reform, VOP’s efforts have remained strong and consistent. Members and other groups spoke out in local radio interviews, wrote dozens of letters to the editor and made hundreds of calls to their members of Congress. The message remained loud and crystal clear: “647,000 Virginians go to work every day without health insurance. We need reform now!” VOP members also continued to hold the health insurance companies accountable by exposing that the health insurance lobby (AHIP) had funneled money through the Chamber of Commerce to put anti-health care reform ads on TV stations statewide.

OUCH! Budget Cuts Hurt Virginians

With the state budget crisis looming, VOP organized against massive cuts and for creating more revenue as a solution to the state’s budget woes. VOP’s Tax Reform Committee released its Virginia Tax Reform Blueprint which calls for reforming the state’s antiquated, regressive tax system. Virginia’s heaviest tax burden is on the poor and middle class, creating a less prosperous economy for everyone. The blueprint makes five key recommendations to reform the tax structure with progressive changes to provide additional revenue. VOP also gave testimony on progressive tax reform at several state budget hearings this month. While the budget can be complicated, the impact on our communities is significant. VOP will be holding budget and tax reform workshops all over the state to give residents the information to understand the workings of the state budget and the tools to speak out.
VIRGINIA ORGANIZING PROJECT

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

Local Chapters (call or visit the website for more info.)

Danville
Martinsville
Fredericksburg/NOVA
South Hampton Roads
Newport News/Williamsburg
Shenandoah Valley
Southwest
Petersburg
Richmond
On Campus: W&M, UMW, VSU, UVA, E&H, U of R

Thomasine Wilson of Albemarle County has worked hard as a community leader and as a member of the VOP State Governing Board. Thomasine found out about VOP through her local organizer, Harold Folley. In 2006, Harold was organizing around the issue of predatory lending. He asked Thomasine if she knew anyone who had been caught in the car title lending trap. Having been caught in a car title loan trap herself, Thomasine replied, “You are looking at someone now,”

What started with a chance encounter with Harold ended with Thomasine testifying at the General Assembly on predatory lending and sharing her story with the media. Thomasine continued to speak out on VOP issues including predatory lending, health care and the environment. As a full-time personal care assistant and a member of the VOP Health Care Reform Committee, Thomasine has been particularly passionate about health care reform. She has headed lobby meetings with members of Congress in Washington, has spoken in front of large crowds and has performed hours of thankless phone-banking.

Thomasine reflects on her three years of work with VOP: "I like working with VOP because it is hands-on and face-to-face. We work on the issues that matter at the moment, when people are hurting. When people want to be heard we give them a voice."

Local Campaigns

The South Hampton Roads VOP Chapter became engaged in a local campaign to support Providence Mobile Home Park residents as they organize against a property owner who is seeking city rezoning approval to replace this thirty year old community with condo units. The Lee County VOP Chapter has been working on bringing a local drug court to their community. This month chapter members met with the three local Judges who’ve committed to a regional drug court. This is a great step forward. The Washington County VOP Chapter is continuing to work on open government issues and had a feature editorial in the Bristol Herald Courier concerning a back room deal to buy a county office building for $8 million while the school system has to cut $4.5 million. The chapter is also planning to attend local public comment periods to speak on the issue and is also working on a letter to the editor drive.

The Fredericksburg VOP Chapter is beginning to work on solutions to the lack of revenue in Virginia, and planning actions and lobbying to encourage the General Assembly to write a budget that works for all Virginians. The University of Mary Washington VOP Chapter is working to get students connected with VOP’s campaigns by lobbying, phone banking, tabling, and writing letters. The Hampton/Newport News VOP Chapter is hard at work putting together a workshop titled Sexual Orientation and Oppression. They are currently recruiting other organizations to co-sponsor the workshop, planned for March 20 in Hampton. The chapter has also been involved in planning the VOP budget workshops. The Shenandoah Valley VOP Chapters are working on a campaign to end racial profiling and will be holding “A Night of a Thousand Conversations” to discuss the issues of racial profiling. The Danville VOP Chapter will be holding Health and Wellness Forums to share ways to improve local health while building community.