



VIRGINIA ORGANIZING 2011 ANNUAL REPORT

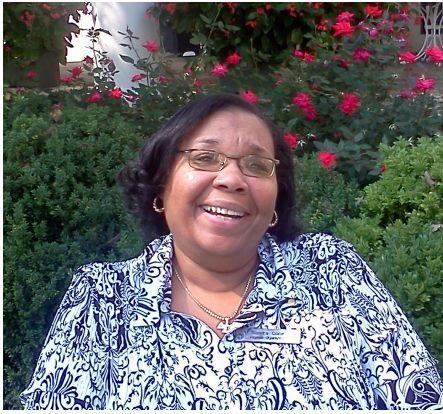


Mission Statement

Virginia Organizing is a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to challenging injustice by empowering people in local communities to address issues that affect the quality of their lives. As a non-partisan organization, Virginia Organizing especially encourages the participation of those who have traditionally had little or no voice in our society. By building relationships with diverse individuals and groups throughout the state, Virginia Organizing strives to get them to work together, democratically and non-violently, for change.

Virginia Organizing Statement of Beliefs

- We believe that all people should be treated fairly and with dignity in all aspects of life, regardless of race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, ability or country of origin.
- We believe that every person in the Commonwealth is entitled to a living wage and benefit package that is sufficient to provide the basic necessities of life, including adequate housing, a nutritious diet, proper child care, sound mental and physical health care, and a secure retirement.
- We believe that every person is entitled to an equal educational opportunity.
- We believe that community, economic, social and environmental policy should be developed with the greatest input from the people it is meant to serve, and that the policies should promote, celebrate and sustain the human and natural resources of Virginia.
- We believe in the elimination of the extremes of wealth and poverty, in a progressive tax system based on the ability to pay, and in making the nation's financial systems, including the Federal Reserve Bank, more responsive to the average citizen's needs.
- We believe that we should enhance and celebrate diversity in our community and in our state.
- We believe that those who have positions of authority in our governmental bodies, law enforcement agencies and institutions of learning should reflect the diversity of our communities.
- We believe that our public officials should be held accountable for their actions and decisions.
- We believe in the rights of workers, consumers, shareholders and taxpayers to democratic self-organization.
- We believe in the elimination of the death penalty in all cases because it is fundamentally inhumane, ineffective as a deterrent to crime, and disproportionately and unjustly applied against people of color and those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged.



Dear Friends,

I am so excited to share the great news about our work in 2011!

We had more and more new people get active, we expanded our activities on Social Security and divesting from the big banks, and really grew our work with small businesses in Virginia.

While we can't list every accomplishment and write about every project in this annual report, we hope that we can give you some fun snapshots of the progress that we are making.

Thanks to all of you who have written letters to the editor, attended a constituent meeting with a state or federal elected official, or called the Governor's office on an important issue. Let's hope we can continue to raise our voices — and get others to move to action — to fight for social justice in Virginia!

Sandra A Cook

Sandra A. Cook
Chairperson

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING BY THE NUMBERS IN 2011

- 1,036 new people got active
- 1,058 community leaders learned a new skill
- 1,323 people participated in 98 leadership training sessions
- 38 interns worked with Virginia Organizing
- 130 groups received consultations from Virginia Organizing staff
- 318 letters to the editor, op-eds and radio spots went out statewide
- 1,230 one-to-one meetings were held between the organizers and people new to Virginia Organizing
- 133 constituent/legislator meetings were held
- 88 direct actions were organized
- 1,611 people took part in 50 community forums
- 394 new fans on Facebook, 309 new Twitter followers, and 146 new online videos with 4,228 views
- 36,681 phone banking calls were made on Social Security, health care, jobs and unemployment, and getting out the vote



Virginia Organizing expressed our own personal concerns as well as those of the 1,000+ seniors we spoke with throughout the state. We attended a rally organized by Caring Across Generations that focused on protecting Medicaid.

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING'S TOP TEN OF 2011

- 1.) Virginia Organizing kicked off the Move Our Money USA campaign in Virginia to call on residents to divest from the big banks and invest in local banks and credit unions.
- 2.) Virginia Organizing made 96 presentations on protecting Social Security at senior centers and nursing homes and generated over 1,000 postcards to Senator Mark Warner.
- 3.) A slew of anti-immigrant bills made their way through the Virginia General Assembly and Virginia Organizing joined the Virginia United for Immigrants Rights coalition to eventually defeat most of the dangerous bills.
- 4.) A Richmond-based Federal Court threw out Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli's lawsuit against the new health care law and Virginia Organizing was there to speak out every step of the way.
- 5.) Virginia Organizing hired an organizer to organize the Virginia Main Street Alliance and give small businesses a voice. By the end of the year we had over 400 businesses willing to continue working on health care reform. We continue to press for a fair Health Benefits Exchange for Virginia's small businesses and consumers.
- 6.) In solidarity with Wisconsin workers, Virginia Organizing spoke out against anti-union laws and Governor Bob McDonnell's support of Governor Scott Walker.
- 7.) Virginia Organizing was there to hold U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor accountable for his inaction on jobs, his brinkmanship on the debt ceiling, and his refusal to give Virginians disaster relief without spending cuts.
- 8.) On two separate occasions, Virginia Organizing leaders made their way to the White House to join the fight for jobs and a payroll tax cut for the middle class.
- 9.) Virginia Organizing held 25 tax reform workshops and dozens of leadership trainings on dismantling racism, challenging sexism, and understanding the economy and the legislative process. We held hundreds of candidate forums, direct actions and constituent meetings with legislators.



"I received tax credits last year that helped me afford rising premiums for my 25 employees. Upholding the Affordable Care Act means upholding my ability to provide health insurance for my employees." — Kevin Wilson, owner of Sticky To Go-Go and The Cellar Door in Richmond

- 10.) Virginia Organizing saw many local victories this year including: moving toxic rail cars parked in Fredericksburg, fighting hydro fracturing gas drilling in Washington County, opposing predatory lending in South Hampton Roads, resisting a landfill in Richmond, working to promote people of color in Charlottesville city jobs, adding two new chapters in Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro and Harrisonburg, approving a Mobile Home Park Protective Policy in Chesapeake to provide protection for families in the event of rezoning and displacement, improving public education in Lee County, and working for drug courts and against uranium mining.



"My elderly parents live with me and I see first hand just how much they rely on Medicare. I think that my Congressman is out of touch with what his constituents want. The vast majority of Rep. Cantor's constituents do not want to see cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. People want an end to the Bush tax cuts. We want shared sacrifice for the wealthy and corporations. And we do not support Rep. Cantor's attempts to balance the budget on the backs of the poor, the disabled and the elderly." — Candace Graham, member of the Virginia Organizing Budget and Revenue Committee



"We have to continue to fight injustice in our communities. What happens to our neighbors affects us. I am concerned about the racial profiling aspects of the 287-G laws. I believe we can do better as a society. We can fight crime without trampling on human rights and resorting to discrimination. We owe it to our community to do better." — Stan Maclin, Harrisonburg Chapter



"I believe the future holds safer ways of harnessing energy, and thoughtless drilling today will only lead to regret tomorrow. The natural gas 'bridge' leads to nowhere — we all need to see beyond the money." — Karen Shafer, Washington County Chapter



"I came up here today from Locust Grove, Virginia to stand in solidarity with you. Instead of facing his constituents to explain why he is not fighting for jobs, Rep. Cantor is here in Philadelphia speaking on the virtues of trickle down economics, only to cancel at the last minute. In Virginia, we are tired of waiting for things to trickle down and we are tired of waiting for Rep. Cantor to show his face in his district." — Dee Jacobson, Fredericksburg Chapter member and coordinator of Harmony, one of Virginia Organizing's 40 Joint Plan of Work programs



"I got into nursing to serve patients, not shareholders. So many health care workers are non-union and are afraid to speak up because they fear losing their jobs. Any more, health insurance companies and corporations are working against what is best for patients. That's why we need to continue to organize. And getting grassroots people together is the only way we are going to win." — Ray Scher, Fredericksburg Chapter, and member of the Virginia Organizing Health Care Reform Committee



"I am passionate about Social Security because I know what it means to seniors like myself, young survivors and the disabled. I know that a lot of people take misinformation spread by politicians as fact. Social Security is on the deficit reduction chopping block, but the program does not contribute a penny to the deficit. Social Security is not broken, so politicians in Washington should leave it alone. If we don't speak out on Social Security and other issues, we get nothing. We have to remind these politicians why we sent them to Washington." — Gloria Johnson, Danville Chapter, organized 80 residents to attend a forum at her church to set the record straight on Social Security



"I would like to fight injustices in our criminal and judicial system. But I recognize that all injustices are related, whether it is cutting Social Security to give tax breaks to millionaires or locking innocent people up and throwing away the key. It's about accountability of the powerful and raising your hand and saying, 'We are paying attention and we know what you are doing.'" — Patrice Boone, South Hampton Roads Chapter



“It is easy to ignore one person, but if you get a lot of people together, it is harder to ignore. Once we get a lot of people together we can make our elected leaders more accountable.” — David Harrison, Danville Chapter



“I find it hard to sit still while people are mistreated and are suffering from injustice at the hand of corporations or governments. I see Virginia Organizing doing that same thing [fighting for the underdog] and that is why I got involved.” — Jody Grogan, Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Chapter



“I realized that I needed to speak out and that I was in a unique position to do so. This effort was collaborative. There were so many other people who came out to support us. There really is strength in numbers.” — Kathy Stanley, South Hampton Roads Chapter



“Working with Virginia Organizing has inspired me so much. Today we started a project in our church focused on bringing the community together that was, in part, inspired by Virginia Organizing. I’m even more motivated now to go into my neighborhood and share the message that if we pull together, we get strength from each other. And then we win.” — Pastor Loretta Murray, Danville Chapter



“It made me really happy to see the club members and other students supporting immigrant education rights. Grassroots community organizing is important because it preserves the voices of community members and involves strategically pushing for lasting change.” — Natalie Grossman and other University of Mary Washington Chapter members held a campus march in opposition to anti-immigrant legislation.

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