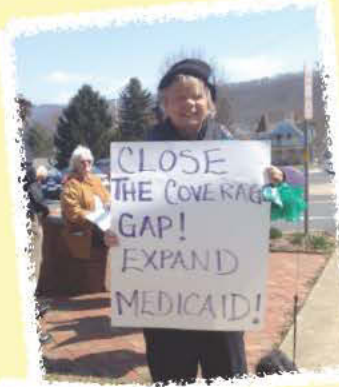




Fast for Families visited Richmond the first week of April to urge U.S. Representative and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor to allow a vote on comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship.



Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro Chapter leaders gathered in March to send a message to Virginia Delegate Steve Landes: close the Medicaid coverage gap!



South Hampton Roads Chapter leaders attended the Norfolk City Council meeting to support affordable housing at Church Street Station.

## News From the Grassroots

### Fast for Families Visits Virginia, Immigration Reform is Still a Work in Progress

Last year, Virginia Organizing stepped up our efforts to pass federal comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship. In this short time, Virginia Organizing leaders, with the support and activity of many other groups, urged members of Congress to pass a comprehensive plan with phone calls, postcards and letters, vigils at offices, rallies, and more.

Throughout this campaign, Virginia Organizing leaders have gained important organizing skills and learned lessons about local organizing on a national issue.

South Hampton Roads Chapter leader Grace Ross said, "I learned that the issue of immigration can be complicated for a lot of people. I'm an immigrant and became a citizen through the military and I think it is important that people understand that immigrants want citizenship to contribute and make the U.S. even better."

The current status of immigration reform is rocky. The U.S. Senate passed a comprehensive immigration reform bill last summer that included a path to citizenship. The U.S. House of Representatives refused to discuss that bill and members of Congress like Representative Bob Goodlatte, chair of the House Judiciary Committee and Representative of Virginia's 6th District, have pushed for a piece-by-piece approach to immigration reform. Immigration reform proponents in the House introduced H.R. 15, but House leadership, including Majority Leader and Representative of Virginia's 7th District Eric Cantor, will not allow a vote on the bill.

"Politicians have changed their minds on this issue because they hear stories from immigrants about the current, broken system and they realize that has to change," said Ross.

Harrisonburg Chapter leader Jossimar Diaz-Castro agreed that personal stories make a difference in the larger immigration debate.

"Local people make a strong impact on issues, even in a small city like Harrisonburg," said Diaz-Castro. "I know that Harrisonburg was a national

focus because of Representative Goodlatte's position in Congress, but the local organizing around immigration helped bring out the significance of the issue. That was really important to me and everyone involved in the campaign for immigration reform."

At the end of 2013, immigration activists and those directly affected by immigration reform began the "Fast for Families." The fast is an opportunity for people to fast and pray for immigration reform. Fasters set up a tent on the National Mall of Washington, D.C. in November and in January took their message across the United States.

"The Fast for Families movement showed how important real stories are to this debate," said Ross.

This month, fasters came to Richmond, Virginia Beach and Harrisonburg to join Virginia Organizing's efforts to urge members of Congress in their home districts to support comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship.

You can take action on immigration reform by calling 866-691-9212 and telling your Representative to support a path to citizenship.



# Real people. Real change.

## What's New With Medicaid Expansion?

The 2014 General Assembly session briefly adjourned in March without a budget due to the current standoff over Medicaid expansion between the Virginia House of Delegates and Virginia Senate. Legislators are back in Richmond for a special session to work out a budget. The House of Delegates has refused to vote for any budget that includes Medicaid expansion, even in the form of a private-public partnership that is a compromise to the program.

Virginia Organizing leaders are organizing around the Commonwealth to ensure that the voices of those directly affected by Medicaid expansion are raised. Leaders have held media conferences and rallies in local districts and shared their own health care stories with their delegates.

You can make a difference on Medicaid expansion! Please contact your Virginia delegate and ask him or her to support Medicaid expansion in the state budget. Visit <http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/VGAMain?openform> to find your legislator and contact information.

## Another Victory for Civil Rights

On April 18, Governor Terry McAuliffe announced changes to Virginia's restoration of rights process that will reduce waiting times and remove drug charges from the list of violent felonies. Including drug charges on the list of violent felonies previously meant that many people did not qualify for the more automated process of civil rights restoration previously implemented by former Governor Bob McDonnell.

Virginia Organizing leaders have worked hard for 16 years to make the restoration of rights process an automatic one. The executive change is another step closer to an automatic restoration of civil rights!

## 20 by 2016!

Virginia Organizing is committed to raising enough money to support 20 community organizers by the year 2016. Adding more organizers to the staff will enable Virginia Organizing to reach more directly affected people in more areas of the state.

In order to reach this goal, we need your help! Here are some ways you can help us reach our fundraising goals:

- Become a monthly donor! Virginia Organizing can directly debit your bank account every month, which means less work for you and no credit card fees, so your entire donation supports organizing. Contact Sally Bastian at [bastian@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:bastian@virginia-organizing.org) for more information.
- Use Amazon Smile! Did you know that you can help Virginia Organizing raise money by using <http://smile.amazon.com> every time you shop online? Everything is the same as using Amazon, but Virginia Organizing gets donations for qualified purchases! Get started by visiting <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/54-1674992>. We still encourage you to buy local when possible!
- Use your Kroger gift card! When you shop with your Virginia Organizing Kroger gift card, Virginia Organizing receives a donation. If you don't have a Kroger gift card, contact Sally Bastian at [bastian@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:bastian@virginia-organizing.org).

## Leader of the Month Marty Jackson



Marty Jackson began working with the Danville Chapter of Virginia Organizing in 2013. As a former felon, Marty understands the issues that many people face when trying to re-enter society. Marty believes

Virginia Organizing's focus on people who are marginalized in their communities being empowered to raise their own voices is important.

"I love that Virginia Organizing is so focused on the community and letting all people in the community speak out and be their own advocates," said Marty. "I love that the voices of the underprivileged are heard!"

Marty has most recently been active through phone banking, organizing a prayer vigil for Medicaid expansion, canvassing, and even fundraising for Virginia Organizing by asking his friends and co-workers for donations. His passion is restoration of civil rights and he is currently focused on the "Ban the Box" initiative that would remove the question of felony convictions on employment applications in Danville.

"I know so many people who are just trying to get their lives back together after prison and reporting their felony conviction on an application prevents them from even getting an interview," said Marty. "A lot of times, people resort back to criminal activity just because they can't find a job."

Thank you, Marty, for all your hard work to make Virginia a more just place to live!

## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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### Local Chapters


Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro  
Charlottesville/Albemarle County  
Danville  
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County  
Fredericksburg  
Lee County  
Louisa County  
Martinsville/Henry County  
South Hampton Roads  
Washington County  
Tri-Cities/Petersburg  
Richmond  
On Campus: UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H,  
U of R, ODU, NSU, RU

## News in Brief

- Local Chapters are meeting with city and county officials to propose "ban the box" ordinances in Fredericksburg and Danville. The "ban the box" initiative would remove the question of felony convictions on city and county employment applications, so people who have paid their debt to society have a fair shot at getting a job.
- In Harrisonburg, leaders gathered and delivered a petition to U.S. Representative Bob Goodlatte asking him to support raising the minimum wage to \$10.10 per hour, which would bring the minimum wage closer to a living wage.
- Students from the University of Massachusetts visited the Petersburg Chapter to learn more about community organizing. During their time, they knocked on more than 1,300 doors to discuss Medicaid expansion and local issues with residents.
- The Richmond Chapter hosted a local stop of the Freedom Riders for Voting Rights and Caravan for Democracy to support voting rights in response to the U.S. Supreme Court 2013 decision that dismantled a key part of the Voting Rights Act.
- Missed your monthly newsletter? Our Communication Coordinator was out on maternity leave! Amanda Pohl welcomed daughter Elaina Kathryn on February 7.

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

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