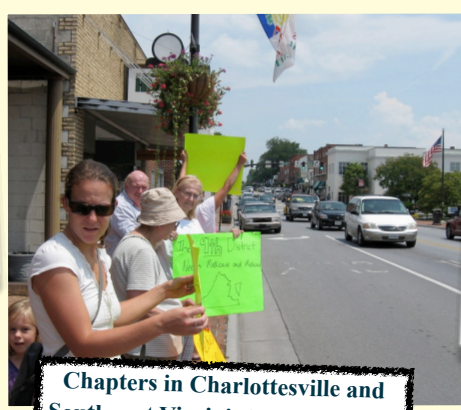




Virginia Organizing leaders attended a special policy briefing at the White House on July 13.



Chapters in Charlottesville and Southwest Virginia held actions at U.S. Representatives' offices asking for support of Medicaid and Medicare on August 3.



Leaders across the state joined our direct action at the Grassroots Gathering on August 11.

News From the Grassroots

2012 Grassroots Gathering A Huge Success!

This year's Grassroots Gathering in Richmond brought Virginians from all over the state to participate in a direct action, training sessions, and celebrations of Virginia Organizing's accomplishments this last year. The day began with 114 Virginians loading buses bound for Anthem CEO Burke King's Chesterfield County home. We had two messages for Mr. King: thank you for the rebate we received and please help us expand Medicaid in Virginia.

Members of the Health Care Strategy Committee approached Mr. King's door with flowers and balloons to present to the CEO, but no one answered the door. Meanwhile, Virginia Organizing leaders stood on the street holding signs and chanting and cheering. As the Strategy Committee came back from Mr. King's front door, the group made calls to the Governor's office and left messages asking that the Governor

support the Medicaid expansion in Virginia.

This action was a result of Anthem and Mr. King refusing to meet with Virginia Organizing to discuss the expansion of Medicaid in Virginia. A meeting had been scheduled with the health insurer, but was cancelled by Anthem without cause just days before the grassroots action.

After the action, Virginia Organizing leaders were given the option of attending two training sessions ranging from Virginia Organizing 101 to a Using Your Voice workshop led by Fredericksburg Chapter members.

We ended the day with a celebration of each chapter's accomplishments and remembering what the organization as a whole has done in Virginia this year. It was a day filled with excitement, energy, and enthusiasm as Virginia Organizing leaders connected with one another and celebrated together in all our achievements.

Let's keep working, Virginia! We have an exciting rest of the year ahead!

Virginia Organizing at the White House

July 13 was a special day for Virginia Organizing leaders. 135 people from every part of Virginia spent a full day at the White House participating in a policy briefing on health care, budget and tax issues, the economy, women's rights, and the environment.

Leaders visited the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and met in the Indian Treaty Room to hear from senior-level advisors to the President. Virginia Organizing leaders asked excellent questions about the budget, taxes, voting rights, health care and more.

After the briefing in the Indian Treaty Room, participants ate lunch in the White House Conference Center while interacting with more White House officials in breakout sessions on health care, environment, women's issues, and tax and budget. It was a great day for leaders, but the White House officials were also impressed with the level of activism in the room.

Real people. Real change.

Fighting for Minimum Wage Increase in Fredericksburg

Members of the Fredericksburg Chapter joined with the local SEIU on July 24, the national Minimum Wage Day of Action, to urge Congressman Rob Wittman to vote to increase the minimum wage. The chapter wanted the Congressman to know if the minimum wage had kept pace with inflation, it would be \$10.55 an hour. The current rate of \$7.25 per hour will not support a family and a person working full time at that rate cannot afford a two bedroom apartment anywhere in the U.S.

Intern Insights

Throughout the summer, interns have been sharing their experiences and ways they have grown as leaders. Valley intern Robin Schrantz participated in the area's listening projects, a way to gather information about what people in the community are experiencing. In one set of interviews, Schrantz was listening to people with housing issues. She said, "The responses we got from the interviews were truly shocking to me. Many expressed that it was the absolute worst place they had ever lived (or 'existed') but

there wasn't anywhere else they could go. They didn't believe that it could ever get better. The experience actually gave me a little hope; hope that with this information, Virginia Organizing and the community itself can come together to do something about these issues now that they are beginning to come out into the light."

Virginia Organizing Featured on Radio Talk Show

Virginia Organizing leaders Andrea Jackson and Josh Diamond and Executive Director Joe Szakos appeared on WMRA's Virginia Insight radio program on August 2. Virginia Insight is a call-in talk show that focuses on issues that are important to communities and this show was entirely focused on Virginia Organizing! Diamond, Jackson, and Szakos focused on local immigration issues in Harrisonburg, listening to the local community and getting more people involved in the democratic process. You can listen to the full interview at <http://www.wmra.org/post/group-used-have-project-its-name>.

Leader of the Month

Kate Rosenfield



Kate Rosenfield of Charlottesville has been a loyal Virginia Organizing leader for many years, and has volunteered her time with the state budget and

tax committee to work toward tax fairness in the Commonwealth.

Kate began her work with Virginia Organizing at a protest several years ago at a local hotel that was paying employees poverty wages. She was impressed with Virginia Organizing and decided to join!

While budget and tax issues are her passion, she has recently added more volunteer hours by organizing people in the community to help with voter registration drives. Her teams register voters in assisted living facilities and other locations in the community.

"The most meaningful part about working with Virginia Organizing is the input that volunteers have. In our chapter meetings, everyone is given an opportunity to share what issues are important to them and what their thoughts are about the issues. At chapter meetings, our organizer, Harold Folley, always involves new people in the discussions to gauge their interest on issues. What makes Virginia Organizing unique is the emphasis on using the skills and interests of volunteers to lead."

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters (call or visit the website for more information)

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



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News in Brief

- A big thank you to all of you who have donated recently! We are already well on our way to meeting our fundraising goal this year. Please consider making birthday, wedding and other gifts to Virginia Organizing in honor of friends/family. Thanks for your support!
- The Danville Chapter continued its local jobs campaign by meeting with city councilors and city officials. The chapter is making progress on the important issue of weatherization jobs in the City of Danville.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter is celebrating work on voter restoration application assistance and voter rights education and registration activities which have taken center stage in a commitment to push back against voter suppression efforts.
- Virginia Organizing has hired a dozen people to work on voter registration drives in Harrisonburg, Waynesboro, Madison County, Southwest Virginia, Lynchburg, Charlottesville, Martinsville and Danville! They will be visiting high schools, colleges, assisted living facilities, senior centers, and other locations to get eligible voters registered!

www.virginia-organizing.org