



VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Issue 27



The Martinsville Chapter protests misplaced budget priorities.



Denise Smith (who could not attend) is honored for her service to the Virginia Organizing State Governing Board at the annual power analysis gathering.



This is the scene just before the last 10 people from Virginia Organizing got inside the Bank of America shareholder meeting, with a full-scale march in the square outside.

News from the Grassroots

Virginia Organizing leaders speak out at the Bank of America stockholders' meeting

Virginia Organizing leaders were part of the committed and disciplined group from many parts of the country who came to the Bank of America (BOA) shareholders' meeting in Charlotte on May 9 and grilled CEO Brian Moynihan for two hours.

"True, we were there at the bank's forbearance, though our shareholder credentials were in order. Yet we controlled the meeting, airing all aspects of the bank's misdeeds in detail, from foreclosures to payday lending, from its financing of the coal industry to its tax evasion, political spending, executive compensation, and lobbying. Our questions also included a sustained critique of Mr. Moynihan's non-existent or evasive answers," said Becky Thomas, one of 10 Virginia Organizing participants.

Of the 60 statements from the audience, only three had anything good to say about BOA. Along with the group of 100 shareholders that were part of the National People's Action delegation, some 200

others ranged from aggrieved individuals to representatives of housing coalitions, religious orders, and others. A gentleman from Bellingham, Washington, vowed that his organization would fight tooth and nail Peabody Coal's plan, financed by BOA, to turn his beautiful West Coast port into a hub for exporting American coal to China. Several shareholders simply bemoaned the fall of Bank of America stock or inquired when the bank would start paying a dividend. But foreclosures headed the list of topics, because Bank of America was the top issuer of subprime mortgages and is so half-hearted in undoing the damage it has done.

Outside the auditorium, protesters created an ear-splitting din. The "insiders" who wanted to make noise got their chance at the end of the meeting with the now-traditional "Mic check," and many descended the granite steps to the lobby chanting, "They got the money, money/They got the money, money/They got the money, money/We got the bill."

"Back at our staging location, we agreed that, having prepared for the worst-case scenarios, amazingly, we got the "best case" one. We were pumped," added Thomas.

Virginia Organizing will continue encouraging people to take their money out of BOA and put it in local banks or credit unions to benefit our local communities.

Virginia Organizing Welcomes New Staff (see page 2)



Amanda Pohl



Addie Alexander

Real people. Real Change.

Working at all levels on economic issues

South Hampton Roads Chapter leaders attended regional public budget hearings to challenge their local officials to demand that Richmond legislators pass a state budget that works for all Virginians.

Chapter leaders also made sure that Bank of America heard loud and clear on tax day that we want them to use the taxpayer bail out dollars given to them to stop illegal foreclosures and invest in local communities.

The SHR Chapter continues to work in the Lake Edward Community in partnership with the Virginia BankOn Project and "Women Helping Women" to empower families that have been traditionally preyed upon by the payday lending industry.

Local actions also continue with the Affordable Care Act and pushing for a consumer friendly health care exchange in Virginia. South Hampton Roads actions included two education forums that resulted in a letter to the editor campaign, petition signing directed at Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, health care story collecting and a "protect our health care" street demonstration.

People are getting active on a wide range of campaigns!

Working with partner groups MoveOn

and CCAN, Virginia Organizing recruited participants for the 99% Spring trainings across the state and led a training in Richmond and hosted one in Waynesboro.

Richmond Chapter members attended the Greater Richmond Transit Task Force and three members spoke at the hearing concerning the need to improve public transit so people have access to jobs in the region.

Lee County members made statements during the School Board meeting about the need for more revenue and progressive taxes to pay for education.

Eight small businesses attended a health care reform forum in Fredericksburg and learned how the ACA benefits their businesses.

In March, a group of students from the College of William and Mary spent a week in Danville knocking on 1,400 doors, tabling at a health clinic and organizing great community meetings. They had a great time talking to 300 potential new members!

We amped up our Listening Project work by canvassing Latino neighborhoods in Harrisonburg.

Virginia Organizing talked with 23 ministers who pastor churches in the Louisa/Fluvanna area about civic engagement: voter registration, education and participation and the restoration of rights.

Wishing fond farewells and welcoming new staff

This spring we said goodbye to two highly respected colleagues and beloved members of the Virginia Organizing community. They are already greatly missed and we know they are bringing intelligence, passion and great humor to their new organizations.

Kevin Simowitz, who coordinated our civic engagement work and staffed the Fredericksburg Chapter, is organizing with the Maine People's Alliance.

Julie Blust, who was our Communications Director for the past three years, is now working with the Working Families Party in Philadelphia.

Thank you Julie and Kevin for your great service to Virginia!

Addie Alexander will be staffing the Fredericksburg Chapter and using her bilingual skills in other parts of Central Virginia. She served as an intern with Virginia Organizing and a Chapter leader at the College of William and Mary before traveling to Colombia as a Fulbright scholar.

Amanda Pohl is our new Communications Coordinator. She previously worked with Housing Opportunities Made Equal and the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, among other non-profits.

Welcome Amanda and Addie!

Virginia Organizing

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

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro

Charlottesville

Danville

Fredericksburg

Harrisonburg

Northern Virginia

South Hampton Roads

Washington County & Lee County

Tri-Cities/Petersburg

Richmond

On Campus: W&M, UMW, VSU,

CNU, UVA, E&H, U of R

News in Brief

- ◆ The Washington County Chapter won its anti-hydrofracking campaign! The County Board voted to not allow drilling before 2014, when the EPA expects to complete a study.
- ◆ In April, Martinsville-Henry County became the newest local Chapter of Virginia Organizing! With a commitment to voting rights and building a strong statewide organization, the Chapter is planning a Community Power Analysis on June 19.
- ◆ The Health Care Reform Strategy Committee helped plan and carry out more than 10 events around the state to celebrate the American Care Act's two-year anniversary.
- ◆ The Danville Chapter distributed 500 non-partisan door hangers and made hundreds of phone calls to turn out voters for the Danville City Council May 1 election.

