



Virginia Organizing Project

JULY 2010

ISSUE SIX



VOP was outside of the Cuccinelli health care trial and spoke out against the Attorney General's attempt to block reform



VOP celebrates the passage of historic financial reform legislation



The Danville Chapter addressing City Council on the Local Jobs for America Act

News From the Grassroots

Finally, a Victory for Main Street

By: Kevin Simowitz

Now that President Barack Obama has signed the Financial Reform bill into law, VOP is celebrating another victory over high-priced lobbyists and special interest groups. After Wall Street firms and big banks helped crash the economy, we worked in support of Congress's efforts to increase regulation and hold big financial firms accountable for their actions. Protecting consumers with a new, independent advocate and demanding transparency from institutions that trade derivatives, the bill passed by Congress prioritizes the financial security of small businesses and families over firms that once recklessly claimed to be "too big to fail."

VOP's statewide membership, working with a wide range of groups, again allowed us to help make it clear to our Congressional delegation that we need increased accountability in our financial system. Helping place op-eds and letters to the editor in newspapers from Richmond to Roanoke, we educated readers about the strengths of the legislation, and held lobby visits with the staff of Senators Jim Webb and Mark Warner to voice our support for reform. Congratulations to all the VOP members who helped win another round in the struggle between Main Street and Wall Street!

Balance Virginia!

Lots of new people are learning about the unfair system of

taxation in Virginia and taking action! The Fredericksburg Chapter is collecting petitions to the General Assembly to press for a more balanced approach to the state budget process. Tax and budget workshops were also held in Martinsville, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Charlottesville, Chesapeake, Falls Church and Fredericksburg.

VOP leaders attended America Speaks: Our Budget, Our Reality in Richmond. This all-day event was networked with 19 similar conversations across the country to discuss the federal budget deficit, spending and tax priorities. VOP took the opportunity to pass out flyers and speak out on the need for a balanced approach to the budget.

VOP's 15th Anniversary is August 7th!



Celebrate with us in Richmond on Saturday, August 7, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Linwood Holton Elementary School

Real People, Real Problems, Real Solutions

Cuccinelli Tries to Deny Virginia Health Care By: Mark Ryan, M.D.

On July 1, I walked past many mounted and plain clothes police and stood in front of the federal courthouse in Richmond as Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli's office made its opening arguments in a lawsuit challenging the health care reform law's constitutionality. The large police presence was in response to a group of health care advocates, myself included, organized by the Virginia Organizing Project. We came together at a media conference outside the courthouse to oppose Cuccinelli's absurd lawsuit. We stood together to oppose Cuccinelli's attempt to attack a law that will hold the health insurance industry accountable and ensure that all Americans will have access to health care.

While the Attorney General wasted time inside the courthouse, I joined health care

reform advocates outside the courthouse who shared real, vital information about the bill. As a physician, I know that the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will provide affordable health care to almost every person in the United States while ending the worst health insurance company abuses. Health insurance will be available without regard to pre-existing conditions, while the federal government will subsidize the costs of the insurance for lower-income families and expand Medicaid eligibility. Insurance companies will be required to spend 80-85 percent of the money received from premiums on patient care and would no longer be able to drop people for no reason.

I am disappointed by the Attorney General's decision to waste time and resources on this lawsuit. As a physician, I will continue to work to care for Virginia's people even as our Attorney General attempts to undermine this crucial legislation.

VOP Leader of the Month:

Ernest Williams



One afternoon Ernest Williams received a knock on his door from organizer Nik Belanger. Nik asked him about the issues he cared about and

Ernest resoundingly said jobs. As a longtime resident of Danville, Ernest has seen the city booming and has also seen a decline due to the loss of manufacturing jobs in the area.

Ernest put in 40 years driving a tractor-trailer and has seen much of the country. His perspective is defined by his experience traveling the open road but even more so by what he sees when he walks out his front door. Ernest has seen many people unemployed locally and notes the disastrous domino effect joblessness can have on an entire community. That is what motivated Ernest to open his door to VOP and get involved with the campaign for the Local Jobs for America Act. Ernest has been highly active in the campaign and has addressed City Council, had an op-ed published and has worked tirelessly to bring attention to the need for jobs. "I work with VOP because it gets to the heart of things and gets in the trenches," said Williams. "We can be the voice for people who cannot speak for themselves. Because someone has to speak up or else they will ignore us."

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING PROJECT

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

Charlottesville
Danville
Martinsville
Fredericksburg
Northern Virginia
Newport News/Hampton Roads
South Hampton Roads
Williamsburg
Shenandoah Valley
Washington County & Lee County
Petersburg
Richmond

On Campus: W&M, UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H, U of R

News in Brief

- VOP had a table at the first-ever Peninsula Gay Pride Festival, sponsored by St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Hampton.
- The Williamsburg Chapter held meetings with a number of School Board members, developing support for adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of categories protected under the nondiscrimination policy.
- VOP leader Jill Carson helped lead a workshop on community organizing and VOP for 150 Appalachian Service Project staff members going to work in central Appalachia this summer.
- VOP was represented at the Southern Health Partners meeting with Community Catalyst in Atlanta and presented on our work with health care reform implementation.
- VOP Charlottesville has been knocking on hundreds of doors registering voters and garnering support for the Local Jobs for America Act.

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