



During the “Sing the Unsung Heroes” event in Charlottesville, The Downbeat Project performed to help raise money for Virginia Organizing.



Richmond Chapter leaders visited U.S. Representative Eric Cantor's office to deliver a holiday greeting and some sopaipillas and to remind him that immigration reform remains an important issue for constituents.



Community leaders in the Shenandoah Valley rallied to support immigrant families the day before Thanksgiving to encourage Congress to remember those who are unable to be with their families due to deportations.

News From the Grassroots

Fight to Expand Medicaid Continues

On December 17, the Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission (MIRC) met for the last time in 2013. MIRC was formed during the 2013 General Assembly session as a way to ensure that certain reforms were met before Medicaid could be expanded in Virginia. MIRC acts as a “gatekeeper” and must vote to approve Medicaid expansion after the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services meets all conditions of reform and requests expansion. For expansion to move forward, at least three out of five Virginia Senators and three out of five Virginia Delegates on the MIRC must vote in favor of expansion.

While a vote on expanding Medicaid did not occur at the December 17 meeting, there was a lot of information shared and Dr. Bill Hazel, Secretary of Health and Human Resources, laid out the progress of the reforms that have been completed or are on track to be completed by proposed deadlines. There has been significant progress on reforms, arguably enough progress to meet the guidelines for the law and expand

Medicaid, but MIRC has chosen to delay this.

One of the presenters, Dr. Len Nichols, an economist from George Mason University, presented interesting facts about expansion and the cost to the state should Virginia choose to expand or fail to expand. If Virginia expands Medicaid, it will cost the state \$285 million by the year 2022. If the state does not expand, it will cost Virginia \$1.6 billion by the same year.

Medicaid expansion is a good investment for Virginia, but there are other reasons to expand. A public health expert from Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Dr. Ron Manderscheid, testified at the MIRC meeting that when people use emergency rooms for care, there are worse outcomes for patients because there is less continuity of care. Dr. Manderscheid also noted that Medicaid expansion and the entire Affordable Care Act is focused on prevention and wellness because prevention is more effective than treatment in combating illness and disease.

Medicaid expansion would provide an opportunity for individuals at all income levels to receive a “whole health”

approach to care, meaning they would not only have access to physicals and well-woman exams, but also behavioral and mental health programs.

As of January 1, Virginia will begin to lose \$5 million a day in federal funds for every day we do not expand Medicaid. About 400,000 Virginians who would have been covered by Medicaid will miss out on the benefits of having health care coverage. Jobs that would have been created will not be, and in fact, some jobs have already been lost due to failure to expand Medicaid after a hospital closed in Pennington Gap.

Virginians are already paying for Medicaid expansion with our tax dollars. These tax dollars will go to other states if we do not expand and Virginia will still need to find ways to pay for hospitals to provide care to people without insurance.

During the 2014 General Assembly session, which begins on January 8, 2014, will you call your Virginia legislators and ask them to make Medicaid expansion a priority? To find your legislator visit: <http://conview.state.va.us/whosmy.nsf/VGAMain?openform>.

Real people. Real change.

Virginia Organizing Needs You Before the End of the Year!

Virginia Organizing is working to meet our end of the year fundraising goals. There are several ways you can help!

If you are a state employee, you can donate to Virginia Organizing through the Combined Virginia Campaign (CVC) using code **3168**. Thanks in advance for your generous support!

Visit www.virginia-organizing.org and click on the "DONATE" button at the top of the page to make a secure online donation. Donations in someone's honor make fantastic holiday gifts for the friends of social and economic justice in your life!

Host a holiday-themed house party! Contact Sally Bastian at bastian@virginia-organizing.org for more information.

Every donation makes a difference in the work we do! Thank you for your support!

State Legislator Meetings

Virginia Organizing Chapters across the state are meeting with legislators on various issues that are important to the community. Some of these issues, like minimum wage, voter suppression, restoration of civil rights, uranium mining, in-state tuition for undocumented students, and health care, will likely be addressed during the 2014 General Assembly session.

These legislator meetings are an opportunity for constituents to provide feedback to elected officials and are very important. Your elected officials want and need to hear from you on the issues that face your community. Please consider

attending a legislative meeting! Contact your local organizer for more information. To find your local organizer, visit www.virginia-organizing.org/chapters.

Federal Budget Compromise

The bipartisan committee of U.S. Senators and Representatives came to a budget agreement for the first time in years this month. The House of Representatives and the Senate have both approved the plan as of December 18.

The compromise includes provisions to stop the next round of automatic cuts to the budget known as sequestration, but fails to raise revenue through closing corporate tax loopholes.

Virginia Organizing Chairperson Sandra A. Cook said, "Virginia Organizing was pleasantly surprised that cuts to Social Security, Medicaid, and Medicare were left out of this deal, and thrilled that the budget deal means that deeper spending cuts from the sequester will no longer take effect in the new year. However, Congress missed an opportunity to close corporate tax loopholes that benefit only the wealthiest and most privileged Americans and instead chose to create a budget that penalizes people who are looking for jobs by ending long-term unemployment benefits."

Senator Mark Warner has also called for "entitlement reforms" in the future which may put Social Security and Medicare in jeopardy. Virginia Organizing will continue to update supporters on the progress of the budget and what you can do to help protect important programs that benefit seniors, people with disabilities and families.

Leader of the Month Rick Chapman



Rick Chapman has been involved with Virginia Organizing for almost a year and has already become very active in Louisa County! Rick developed

interest in various issues debating politics with a friend prior to the 2008 Presidential election, but after talking to local organizer Cathy Woodson, he learned the importance of raising his voice on the things that mattered to him and his community.

"I never thought my voice mattered, but over the last four or five years, I have seen that people speaking out makes a difference," said Rick. "Elected officials are taking note now that more people are calling and getting involved."

Rick has helped organize voter participation activities, forums to help people understand voting rights including restoration of civil rights, encouraged people to call and write elected officials, and helped plan Affordable Care Act forums in Louisa. Rick is passionate about protecting Social Security and protecting the rights of others. He is also involved in other organizations and focuses on engaging seniors and churches on important issues.

"I am really impressed with Virginia Organizing because the organization makes it easy for more people to get involved," said Rick.

Thank you, Rick, for your hard work!

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville/Albemarle County
Danville
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County
Fredericksburg
Lee 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

News in Brief

- The South Hampton Roads Chapter participated in the Climate Change Conference sponsored by Virginia Organizing and Sierra Club on November 16 at the Botanical Gardens in Norfolk to learn about environmental issues in SHR.
- Virginia Organizing interns in Richmond planned an Affordable Care Act (ACA) community forum at St. Andrew Episcopal Church. The interns worked with the community leader to recruit local residents and church members and asked a Health Care Navigator to attend. The event provided information to attendees about the ACA and signing up for health insurance under the new law.
- In Fredericksburg, Virginia Organizing worked with the Multicultural Center and the Black Student Union at the University of Mary Washington to organize a "Know Your Rights" training for students and community members. Participants learned how to assert their rights, and what to do in the case of a perceived rights violation.
- Virginia Organizing is looking forward to another great year in 2014! Thank you to everyone who has been a part of the work to create a more just Virginia. We are growing and will keep you informed about exciting things happening in the coming year.



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