



Virginia Organizing welcomes our newest Organizer in the Petersburg-Colonial Heights-Hopewell area, Fancy Greenwood! Welcome, Fancy!



Virginia Organizing leaders from Southwest and Southside Virginia came to Richmond to visit their legislators. They met with legislators, attended (and spoke at) a voter rights rally, and sat in the Gallery during the House of Delegates session.



Shenandoah Valley Organizer Emily Riehl (center) was honored with the Harriet Tubman Commemorative Leadership Award, presented by the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center in Harrisonburg. Congratulations, Emily!

News From the Grassroots

The Big Sequester (And What You Can Do About It)

If you've been anywhere near a television or the internet lately, you likely know that the automatic budget cuts known as sequestration were not stopped by Congress and are starting to take effect.

Federal government employees are facing furloughs and lay-offs, businesses that contract with the federal government are losing business, and even the restaurants and other services around places where government employment is high are starting to see declines in business.

Susan Scheffler of Nickoll's & Scheffler, a lunchtime favorite for many lobbyists and federal employees in Arlington, has already started seeing a decline in her business. "We got through the recession," said Scheffler, "but we are already seeing sales drop because of financial crises in Washington and it's hurting our business."

Danville Chapter leader Johnny Mayo agrees that cuts are harmful, especially for already vulnerable areas like Southside

Virginia. "Danville has already been hit with factory closings and other economic challenges. We've had to close schools so the wealthy can keep getting tax breaks. Now, we have to cut even more because Wall Street and big corporations want to keep their taxes low to pay CEOs more," said Mayo.

Virginia Organizing has partnered with several national groups to combat devastating budget cuts that will affect families while offering solutions that will avoid the \$85 billion in cuts this year alone.

We have held actions across the state to show our support for asking big corporations and wealthy individuals to pay their fair share. There are several ways Congress can make this happen:

- End tax breaks for corporations that ship jobs overseas. Right now, we give tax breaks to companies like Bank of America to open up call centers and other operations in other countries. Why should the American people pay these companies to move jobs out of the U.S.?
- Allow Medicare to negotiate prescription prices. Currently, the big pharmaceutical industry employs

almost two lobbyists for every Member of Congress to make sure that Medicare doesn't negotiate drug prices! Why should our government pay more for prescriptions for Medicare when we pay lower prices for the same drugs in different federally subsidized programs like veteran benefits?

- Cut the wasteful spending from defense contractor budgets. We spend trillions of dollars on defense projects that we don't actually need. That money goes to line the pockets of wealthy CEOs and shareholders instead of helping the American people. Why are we paying for equipment we don't need instead of supporting our troops and veterans and their families?

What can we do about all of this? How can you help?

We need Congress to wake up and start caring more about the people they represent instead of big corporate donors! We need you to contact U.S. Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner and your U.S. Representative and ask that they protect programs that benefit families and end tax loopholes and government handouts to big corporations. Senator Warner's number is 877-676-2759 and Senator Kaine's number is 202-224-4024.

Real people. Real change.

Environmental Health News Wins Journalism Award

Besides doing community organizing with 17 Chapters across the state, Virginia Organizing also accepts grants and donations for 41 groups working on a wide range of social justice and environmental issues. We have a "Joint Plan of Work" with these groups.

One Joint Plan of Work is with Environmental Health Sciences, an organization dedicated to helping people understand the link between environmental factors and human health. The organization publishes Environmental Health News (EHN), a free publication designed to get the word out about environmental health issues.

EHN won an honorable mention in this year's John B. Oakes Award for Environmental Journalism for its 10-part series investigating environmental justice problems in communities across the United States! This distinguished award is administered by the Columbia School of Journalism and is an incredible honor for the Charlottesville-based non-profit.

Pete Myers, CEO of Environmental Health Sciences, said, "Our journalists rock. Their series on environmental justice beat out 136 other entrants, including the *New York Times*. And to share an honorable mention with *USA Today* is amazing!"

Congratulations Environmental Health News and thank you for your dedication to bettering people's lives! If you'd like to sign up for the daily

EHN, visit:

www.environmentalhealthnews.org.

More Affordable Housing in Virginia Beach

Virginia Beach City Council showed some love to persons experiencing homelessness by approving the fifth Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residence in South Hampton Roads. Chapter leaders joined Virginia Supportive Housing to offer testimony and support at the City Council meeting for the SRO.

Immigration Update

Get ready for more immigration news! Virginia Organizing is the lead organization for national reform efforts in the state of Virginia as a part of Alliance for Citizenship (A4C). Right now, we're gearing up to support comprehensive immigration reform legislation that is in the works! If you're on Twitter, check out these hashtags: #timeisnow, #p2c, #familyunity and #CIR2013. Be sure to sign up for our e-alerts at www.virginia-organizing.org/signup for important updates and ways you can take action!

Leader of the Month Winston Whitehurst



Winston Whitehurst is the leader of the Affordable Health Care Coalition for South Hampton Roads. He has also been a strong voice on other issues of social and economic justice.

Winston has been involved with Virginia Organizing since 2009 when he began working to get the Affordable Care Act (ACA) passed. Since that time, he has served on Virginia Organizing's statewide Health Care Strategy Committee and organized presentations about the benefits of the ACA in his local community.

In the past few months, Winston has been working hard on Medicaid expansion in Virginia. He made presentations to city councils to ask them to pass resolutions in favor of Medicaid expansion and he met with legislators at the General Assembly to explain the benefits of expansion.

"We have to continue to work for affordable health care, equity and justice in all areas of social and economic justice," said Winston. "I agree with Franklin Roosevelt that we can't be a great nation if we don't take care of those who are sick and in poverty."

Winston is an asset to the South Hampton Roads Chapter and community. Thank you, Winston, for all your hard work!

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville
Danville
Harrisonburg
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

News in Brief

- Students from William & Mary spent their Spring Break in Danville canvassing and learning about community organizing. Thanks to all the students and **Danville Chapter** leaders who made them feel welcome! The **Fredericksburg Chapter** will host students from the University of Massachusetts for the UACT program the week of March 18.
- In February, we generated 3,365 calls to elected state officials in support of Medicaid expansion. In one week at the beginning of March, Virginia Organizing supporters sent 378 emails to the Governor in support of expansion. Great work!
- Virginia Organizing hosted another campus training for South Hampton Roads Chapter students at Old Dominion University.
- Did you get our fundraising letter from Alex or our follow up email? If not, please update your contact information by emailing mattioli@virginia-organizing.org. If you have not made your donation, now is the opportunity! If you have, we thank you for your support of Virginia Organizing!

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