



Virginia Organizing leaders from the Shenandoah Valley Chapters pose for a photo with Virginia Senator Emmett Hanger during their visit to the Capitol to ask legislators not to delay on Medicaid



Virginia Organizing facilitated a Dismantling Racism workshop in Southwest Virginia on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Seventy-five students attended the workshop at Emory & Henry.



Leaders in Norfolk paid a visit to U.S. Senator Mark Warner's office to urge him to protect programs that support families and ask big corporations and wealthy Americans to pay their fair share.

News From the Grassroots

Medicaid Expansion at the General Assembly

By Trisha Hindy and Zach Hanson, Virginia Organizing Interns

There's been big movement on Medicaid expansion in the last month! The General Assembly Conference Committee, made up of six state Senators and six Delegates, is now considering Medicaid expansion in their budget negotiations.

Virginia Organizing Chapters across the state showed support of Medicaid expansion during a Week of Action after the Virginia House of Delegates Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees released their budgets on Sunday, February 3. Those budgets notably excluded Medicaid expansion until at least the middle of 2014, possibly later.

Virginia Organizing, along with a significant number of other organizations supporting Medicaid expansion, focused on asking our legislators not to delay on implementing Medicaid expansion.

Harrisonburg and Augusta-Staunton-Waynesboro Chapter leaders drove more than 130-miles to Richmond on

Wednesday, February 6, to talk to Shenandoah Valley legislators about the importance of Medicaid expansion.

The Danville Chapter had been urging the Danville City Council to support Medicaid expansion and on Tuesday, February 5, the mayor agreed to send a letter from the city in support of the expansion.

Small business leaders from the South Hampton Roads area visited Virginia Senator Frank Wagner's Richmond office on Wednesday, February 6 to deliver a packet of information on the importance of Medicaid expansion. The packet included a copy of the Virginia Beach resolution asking the General Assembly to expand Medicaid and letters of support for Medicaid expansion from the Hampton Roads Chamber of Commerce, Sentara hospitals and the Virginia Main Street Alliance.

In northern Virginia, students and community members from various groups rallied at George Mason University to show their support of Medicaid expansion on Tuesday, February 5. Speakers at the rally discussed personal experience with Medicaid expansion, the faith perspective on why expansion

without delay is important, policy considerations, and health care as a human right.

Students and community leaders from across the Commonwealth also gathered at the General Assembly on Friday, February 8, to pass out candy watches with the message "Medicaid can't be delayed" to all of our legislators. If Medicaid were to be delayed, Virginia would lose approximately \$5 million a day in federal funding — money that Virginians have already paid into taxes.

In addition to the actions across the Commonwealth, Virginia Organizing also made thousands of phone calls over the past few weeks informing constituents about the importance of contacting their legislators in support of Medicaid expansion through phone banking and word of mouth.

"Great job to all who participated in these efforts and many thanks to all the other groups who have been pushing for these programs," said Sandra A. Cook, chairperson of Virginia Organizing, "We will all continue to ask our legislators and Governor Bob McDonnell to support Medicaid expansion without delay."

Real people. Real change.

Balance Due

Virginia Organizing held two actions on January 30 to tell members of the U.S. Congress not to cut programs that benefit families like Medicaid, Medicare and Social Security. The actions took place at the Huntington Metro station in Northern Virginia where participants handed out flyers asking people to contact their members of Congress and in Norfolk where a large “balance due” notice was delivered to U.S. Senator Mark Warner’s office. Virginia Organizing will hold further actions during the last two weeks of February to remind Congress that big corporations and wealthy Americans need to pay their fair share.

Fredericksburg Chapter Leader Speaks Out About Restoration of Rights

The Virginia Senate passed a bill to propose a constitutional amendment that would automatically restore voting rights of people who have a non-violent felony on their record. However, in the state House of Delegates, the bill was defeated in

sub-committee. Members of the Fredericksburg Chapter were in attendance at the Senate Privileges and Elections Committee meeting as it passed the Senate bill to restore voting rights, which left them feeling hopeful and energized about the progress on the issue.

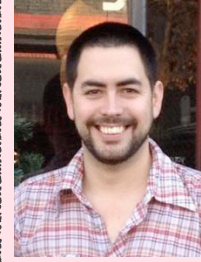
While at the General Assembly, a Fredericksburg Chapter leader and directly affected former offender also spoke with his legislators about what automatic restoration means to him. Though the bill did not pass this year, Governor Bob McDonnell’s public support for the measure and the bill’s progress through the Senate is a step in the right direction.

Statewide Immigration Strategy Committee

Virginia Organizing is working to form a statewide immigration strategy committee to develop plans for how Virginia Organizing will work on immigration reform. If you are interested in serving on this committee, or would like more information, please contact Emily Riehl at ceriehl@virginia-organizing.org.

Leader of the Month

Kevin Wilson



Kevin Wilson, owner of Sticky ToGoGo in Richmond, Va., has been involved with Virginia Organizing for about a year and a half now. Kevin is most interested in health care, education, and tax

fairness issues.

Kevin got involved with Virginia Organizing after having many conversations with Small Business Organizer Bob Becker. Kevin said, “As I started learning more about the issues, I realized that not only do I have a moral obligation to be involved, but it also makes good business sense.”

Kevin has spoken at rallies, given interviews to media, and went to the White House last July with Virginia Organizing. He was especially excited to meet officials from the White House and has been communicating with one official a few times about issues.

Working with Virginia Organizing, Kevin feels like he has an effect on policy decisions made and that it’s important for small business people to get involved. “The term ‘small business owner’ gets tossed around by politicians a lot, but I think small business owners need to be more active so we can make decisions about what happens in our communities,” said Kevin.

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



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News in Brief

- About 300 people came to Spotsylvania Mall to watch the documentary, “Escape Fire” about the failing health care system. A discussion followed with health care officials.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter presented testimony in support of providing in-state tuition for children of undocumented immigrants that would qualify under DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).
- Students and community leaders in Virginia traveled to Richmond for a student lobby day on February 8 to focus on Medicaid expansion. They presented candy watches to all legislators with the message, “\$5 million a day!?! We cannot delay!!!”
- Did you know that some employers offer matching gifts that can double your donation to Virginia Organizing? If your employer offers this, be sure to ask for a matching gift form!

www.virginia-organizing.org