



VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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The Richmond Chapter joined the Richmond Peace Education Center at a rally at the Brook Road Post Office to educate last-minute tax filers on where their money goes. The groups asked people to call Congress and tell them to cut the waste in defense spending and put people over profits!



Virginia Organizing welcomes our newest staff person, Director of Philanthropy, Mary Alex! Welcome, Mary Alex!



Two big immigration rallies were held April 8-10 in Virginia to coincide with a national immigration march in Washington, D.C. on April 10. About 125 people attended the rally in Charlottesville. At the Harrisonburg rally (pictured), a crowd of over 400 came out to rally and march to Congressman Bob Goodlatte's office.

News From the Grassroots

All About Immigration Reform!

Virginia Organizing has been working on immigration reform for many years in Virginia, and because of the work of grassroots people across the nation, we are one step closer to comprehensive immigration reform that includes a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented people living and working in the United States.

In January, Virginia Organizing began a statewide Immigration Strategy Committee that met regularly to discuss how to make comprehensive immigration reform a reality and how to raise our collective voice in a way that would move Congress to action.

Virginia Organizing joined many other groups in Virginia and formed the Virginia Coalition for Immigrant Rights.

We have met with U.S. Representatives Scott Rigell, Rob Wittman, Bobby Scott, Gerry Connolly, and Bob Goodlatte. We met with the office of U.S. Senator Tim Kaine and met with U.S. Senator Mark Warner and his staff and had individuals in three of his town hall meetings across

the state, asking questions about immigration legislation.

Virginia Organizing Chapters in Charlottesville and Harrisonburg organized rallies for reform and partnered with several local groups also committed to changes in current immigration policy.

On April 8 in Charlottesville, 125 people came out to support reform, which generated media coverage from nearly all the outlets in Charlottesville. Rally participants lined the major intersections and drivers honked in support of those gathered. *Sin Barreres*, Church of the Incarnation, and Casa Alma Catholic Worker co-hosted the rally with Virginia Organizing.

On April 10, over 400 people came out to rally at the historic center of downtown Harrisonburg. The group shared personal stories and information about what immigration reform with a path to citizenship would mean for many undocumented people and families living in Harrisonburg. The group then marched to U.S. Representative Bob Goodlatte's office to call on the Congressman to support reform with a path to citizenship. Virginia Organizing,

DREAM Activists Virginia, EMU student government, Occupy Harrisonburg and Comité Salvadoreño Paisanos Unidos (COSPU) organized the rally.

A bill was introduced on April 16 in the U.S. Senate. Virginia Organizing Chairperson, Sandra A. Cook, responded to the bill, "This is a good start. It's not perfect, but it's a start."

The bill allows undocumented people to change their documentation status relatively quickly provided they pay hefty fines and fees. After obtaining a work visa, immigrants must wait 10 years to apply for a green card and another three years after that to apply for citizenship. Every step of the process requires more money.

"Virginia Organizing is very concerned about the economic effect on families and individuals who are just trying to make it in the U.S., and we urge Congress to take a closer look at these issues and work to make citizenship more attainable for our immigrant families," said Cook.

The bill still faces challenges. Be sure to call your Representative and Senators and ask for their support. Senator Warner's number is 877-676-2759 and Senator Kaine's number is 202-224-4024.

Real people. Real change.

Tax Fairness on Tax Day

As tax filers began the last minute rush to the U.S. Post Office to ensure their taxes were mailed on time, Virginia Organizing held a media conference in Charlottesville and a rally in Richmond to ensure people were informed about where their money was going.

In Charlottesville, media conference participants held signs showing the costs of the infamous F-35 jet and information about the revenue loss that tax havens for wealthy individuals and big corporations cause. The F-35 is a fighter jet that was placed in production in 2001 and has yet to fly a mission. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates even urged Congress to end the program so we would not “waste” \$3 billion on the completion of the program.

Corporate and individual off-shore tax havens cost our government approximately \$60.6 billion. That's more than enough money to fund Head Start, child nutrition programs, a child care and development fund, AND funding for schools serving disadvantaged children.

In Richmond, Virginia Organizing and the Richmond Peace Education Center rally participants passed out flyers and pizza and asked people if they knew where their tax dollars are going. The vast majority goes to military spending while other programs that help people are constantly on the chopping block. Flyers noted that the cost of just two F-35 fighter jets is more than the entire Richmond Public School budget.

Virginia Organizing is calling on lawmakers to get our priorities straight and put people over corporate profits.

Student Groups Visit Danville and Fredericksburg

The Danville Chapter hosted a team of students from the Branch Out program at the College of William and Mary who spent their entire Spring Break learning about community organizing in Southside. In the six days they spent in Danville, the students knocked on over 2,400 doors, generated 465 calls to Senator Mark Warner about protecting Social Security and identified 203 potential new Chapter members!

A group of 11 students from the Grassroots Community Change course at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, came to Fredericksburg to learn about how to put community organizing theories into action! During the week, they participated in the Social Security Listening and Learning project, a joint effort by the Urban Rural Learning Linkage Living Institute, the Center for Community Change, and Virginia Organizing. They were trained in door-to-door canvassing and phone-banking, and used these tools to talk with hundreds of people in Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania about our local Mural Project and our campaign to protect Social Security. They also participated in a dismantling racism workshop and a local Chapter meeting.

Leader of the Month Oscar Harris



Oscar Harris has been a Washington County Chapter leader for over a year. He first got involved when he started learning about hydrofracking, the process of

extracting natural gas from the ground using water. Oscar went to a meeting and met our Southwest Organizer, Brian Johns.

From there, he kept going to meetings and learning more about the issues Virginia Organizing is involved in, but his primary focus is the harmful practice of hydrofracking. Oscar believes that balance is important, “I really want to get information from all sides before I make a decision on what I think.”

Oscar loves the open-minded approach Virginia Organizing takes to issues and the organization's focus on raising local voices in state and national politics.

Oscar has made phone calls and written emails to his legislators about issues that he cares about. “It's my duty as a citizen to keep the politicians informed about what I think since they are supposed to represent me,” said Oscar.

Keep up the good work, Oscar!

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

- The South Hampton Roads Chapter offered a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival Status (DACA) application assistance workshop in the area to help young immigrants obtain documentation! If you are interested in future workshops, contact tstanley@virginia-organizing.org.
- Please consider donations to Virginia Organizing in your estate planning. Contact Sally Bastian at sally@virginia-organizing.org for more information.
- The Senate members of the Medicaid Innovation and Reform Commission have been selected. We will update you via email, Facebook and our website with more information as the Commission meetings get closer. Thanks for all your hard work on making Medicaid expansion possible in Virginia!
- The Richmond Chapter met with groups to discuss rapid transit in Richmond and how to move forward on transportation recommendations from the Anti-Poverty Commission.
- The Washington County Chapter filled the room at the Land Use Committee meeting to encourage the committee not to change the zoning to allow for drilling and hydrofracking in the county.

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