



Virginia Organizing traveled to Detroit, Michigan to participate in discussions about mass incarcerations and the criminal justice system, and to learn skills to help organize around these issues.



The Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro Chapter screened the documentary "We're Not Broke" and held a discussion with a local economics professor about the U.S. tax system that favors big corporations.



Danville and Martinsville Chapter leaders met with Virginia Senator Bill Stanley to deliver more than 500 petition signatures in support of Medicaid expansion and discuss the importance of expansion for the Southside.

News From the Grassroots

The Struggle for Medicaid Expansion Continues

On Sunday, June 29, Virginia Organizing leaders in Fredericksburg gathered to send a message to the Speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates Bill Howell: People will die without Medicaid expansion. They even brought him a handcrafted coffin with messages from Virginians who need Medicaid expansion and those who have insurance, but support the expansion.

While Medicaid expansion has become a divisive political battle in Virginia, the main focus should be the people who are going without needed medications, visits to the doctor, and preventive care. Health care should be more than hoping for the best.

A recent study that Virginia Organizing released with Families USA showed that a majority of people who would receive Medicaid if the program were expanded are currently working. Others who will receive Medicaid if expanded include those who have been out of work but are currently looking for employment and those who are out of the workforce to care for children, a parent or other family

member, go back to school, or are disabled.

Eunice Haigler of Fredericksburg is one person who would benefit from Medicaid expansion. She is a constituent of Speaker Howell's and attended the event on June 29. While Haigler struggles to get the health care she needs, Virginia politicians are arguing over the merits of Medicaid and fighting against "Obamacare."

"I was always told Virginia is for lovers, but where is the love for me?" said Haigler. "Medicaid expansion would help me get life-changing treatments for chronic conditions and would bring jobs to Virginia. I wish Speaker Howell would stop thinking about his own feelings toward the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid and start thinking about the 400,000 Virginians who need coverage and are being denied that coverage by the Speaker. Mr. Speaker, please hear the voices of your constituents: we need health care now."

Well-known community leaders joined Haigler, including former Mayor of Fredericksburg Reverend Lawrence Davies. "Medicaid expansion is a moral issue that has been overly politicized," said Davies. "This is about how humans

relate to each other. Those who are unable to receive health care services for whatever reason are still part of the human 'chain' and still belong in our communities. We are already paying for Medicaid expansion to make sure that those who need services the most are being covered, why would we think it's ok to leave our fellow humans out in the cold without health care? This program is not a handout, it's a hand up to proactively get basic health care needs satisfied."

Dr. Patrick Neustatter, medical director of a free clinic and Virginia Organizing supporter, believes expanding Medicaid in Virginia is the reasonable and right thing to do.

"I see so many people who are uninsured or have lost their insurance, who are sick through bad luck. Not because of something they have done wrong. People just get sick," said Neustatter.

Governor Terry McAuliffe announced in June that he directed Secretary of Health and Human Resources Bill Hazel to develop a plan to expand Medicaid by September 1.

The General Assembly will convene for a Medicaid expansion special session on September 22.

Real people. Real change.

Virginia Organizing Received Methodist Federation for Social Action Award

On June 21, Virginia Organizing was presented with the Methodist Federation for Social Action's Bishop Leontine Kelly Social Justice Award for "the incredible social justice work being done across the Commonwealth" by Virginia Organizing Chapters and leaders.

Virginia Organizing Board Chairperson Sandra A. Cook received the award at the 232nd Session of the Annual Conference of the Virginia United Methodist Church.

"It is truly an honor to receive this award," said Cook. "Virginia Organizing works hard to raise the voices of directly affected Virginians on social, economic, and environmental justice issues that matter to the people. We are working to create a more just Virginia and this distinguished award helps us know that we are on the right path. None of this work would be possible without the continued support of Virginians like you, who care about these important issues."

Virginia Organizing Leaders Urge President Obama to Stop Deportations, Continue Local Immigration Work

At the monthly Light the Way gathering in Virginia Beach, South Hampton Roads Chapter leaders made calls to President Barack Obama to ask him to stop the deportations that are separating families. With the August recess approaching quickly, there is limited time for Congress to act on immigration reform. However, President Obama has the executive power to act to ensure that our broken immigration system

does not harm another family. Consider calling 866-473-5915 to ask President Obama to stop the deportations!

In addition to working to encourage executive action, South Hampton Roads Chapter leaders are also working on the local level to assist immigrants with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status obtain in-state tuition at local colleges. Through the Chapter's work, one local college sent a memo to its administration to help clarify what is needed to qualify for in-state tuition.

There's Still Time to Register for the Grassroots Gathering!

Virginia Organizing's annual Grassroots Gathering will be held September 5-7 at the Blackstone Retreat and Conference Center. Registration is now open for this event!

This year, the Grassroots Gathering will take place over a full weekend and participants may choose to attend all or just portions of the event. The gathering will begin Friday night and end early Sunday afternoon.

You can expect to learn about issues, tactics, and philosophies that make Virginia Organizing a strong grassroots organization and learn how we grow the organization and build on the work we have done for 19 years. It will also be a lot of fun!

To register online, visit <http://grassrootsgathering.eventbrite.com>. You may also fill out a paper registration and return to your local organizer. Paper forms are available at <http://www.virginia-organizing.org/content/2014-grassroots-gathering-registration>. Contact Nik Belanger at nik.belanger@virginia-organizing.org or 434-709-4953 for more information.

Leader of the Month Nicholas DeFilippis



Nicholas DeFilippis started as an intern with Virginia Organizing in 2011 and continued to work with the Richmond Chapter as a leader after his internship ended. The work Virginia

Organizing does is important to Nicholas because he wants to see improvement to his community.

"I am an activist at heart and I loved the good work my local Chapter was doing," said Nicholas.

Currently, Nicholas is working with the Richmond Chapter on the issues of local transportation, Medicaid expansion, and immigration reform. Transportation has been a key campaign in the Richmond Chapter as it affects quality of life and opportunity for many city residents.

"Transportation is an important issue in my community. City Council wants to spend \$3 million gentrifying a city park, but won't spend money to improve bus services to poor, under-served areas or our schools," said Nicholas.

Nicholas has met with members of the Richmond City Council and has testified in meetings about the issues affecting his community. In addition, he has attended lobby days at the General Assembly to share his opinions as a constituent on important state issues, met with his legislators one-to-one, and participated in rallies and other actions in the area.

Thank you, Nicholas, for working to make Richmond a better place for all people!

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters and Areas Served

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville/Albemarle County
Danville
Harrisonburg/Rockingham County
Fredericksburg
Lee County
Louisa 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, NSU, RU



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News in Brief

- Washington County Chapter leaders responded to a shocking vote of the local Planning Commission to pass recommendations to the Board of Supervisors for hydrofracking. Chapter leaders will continue to work with Supervisors to prevent fracking in the area.
- Our 2014 Mid-Year Report is available in video format! Visit bit.ly/midyear2014 to see some of Virginia Organizing's accomplishments in the first half of 2014.
- The Richmond Chapter is working on a listening project with area transit riders. Chapter leaders are surveying riders at various stops to gain a better understanding of their experiences.
- The First Baptist Church in Louisa hosted community workshops about the General Assembly to learn more about civic engagement at the state level.
- We are halfway to our grassroots fundraising goal for the year thanks to our wonderful supporters! You can still help us meet our goals and build power in Virginia! Please visit bit.ly/effform to become a monthly sustainer or bit.ly/vaorganizingdonate to make a donation.

www.virginia-organizing.org