



Harrisonburg City Councilor Richard Baugh and small business owner Edwin Joya visited U.S. Representative Bob Goodlatte's Washington, D.C. office to urge his support for comprehensive immigration reform.



Leaders in Pennington Gap gathered for one of six Medicaid expansion vigils that Virginia Organizing led. The vigils were part of nine led by groups that support Medicaid expansion in Virginia.



Fredericksburg leader Eunice Haigler was among one of five Virginia Organizing leaders arrested at Speaker John Boehner's office standing up for immigration reform.

News From the Grassroots

Virginia Organizing Leaders Arrested at Speaker Boehner's Office

On June 11, 2014, five Virginia Organizing leaders, including two State Governing Board members, were arrested with 12 others taking a stand in support of immigration reform with a path to citizenship. The leaders were arrested outside of Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives John Boehner's Washington, D.C. office.

This is the first Virginia Organizing action that has included planned arrests as part of civil disobedience.

Fredericksburg Chapter leader Eunice Haigler was arrested at Speaker Boehner's office.

Haigler became active with Virginia Organizing on the issue of affordable health care, but was moved by the plight of immigrant families being separated by deportations and a broken immigration system.

"Our current immigration system is not fair," said Haigler. "We live in the United States and our nation is known for

freedom and civil rights. Telling families they cannot be together is simply appalling. I was arrested to stand for justice and stand with families who just want to stay together."

Like Haigler, Kate Rosenfield of Charlottesville was moved to action by the stories of families being separated.

"There are so many immigrant families living and working in the United States and supporting this nation doing jobs no one else will do," said Rosenfield. "I was arrested taking a stand for families being torn apart because Speaker Boehner refuses to even allow a vote on immigration reform bills that are ready for the House floor and would keep families together."

Alicia Bobulinski of Virginia Beach has been working with Virginia Organizing on immigration reform for a long time. She chose to be arrested because she believes that taking a stand for immigration reform is important to protecting the freedoms that Americans enjoy.

"Our immigration system is broken," said Bobulinski. "I was arrested today to stand with our immigrant neighbors because I believe that Americans should

be leaders in matters of freedom, opportunity, and justice. Today, it is me being arrested standing for justice, but if we are not willing to take this stand, what will tomorrow bring?"

The Virginia Organizing State Governing Board supported the civil disobedience action and stood with community leaders to take part. Board member Ray Scher of Ruther Glen was the first arrestee to be released from jail after processing.

"The experience moved me to tears, especially the dedication of the youths who were fighting to keep their families together," said Scher. "Getting arrested was the least I could do."

"I find it ironic that I spent my whole life avoiding getting arrested, only to volunteer to do it for immigration reform," said State Governing Board Treasurer Janice "Jay" Johnson. "It's that important of an issue."

House Majority Leader Eric Cantor announced his resignation from House leadership on the same day as the action.

To support comprehensive immigration reform, call Speaker John Boehner's office at 888-845-2087 and tell him we need a vote on immigration reform.

Real people. Real change.

Virginia Organizing Led Six Candlelight Vigils in Support of Medicaid Expansion

On June 12, Virginia Organizing led six of nine statewide candlelight vigils in support of Medicaid expansion in Charlottesville, Danville, Martinsville, Virginia Beach, Pennington Gap, and Staunton. Other vigils were held in Roanoke, Richmond, and Centreville and led by other groups. Community leaders gathered to share stories, stand in solidarity with the 400,000 people who would benefit from Medicaid expansion, and called on legislators to take action.

The General Assembly voted to pass a budget later that evening that restricted Medicaid expansion without specific legislative approval. Virginia Organizing leaders will continue work on Medicaid expansion to ensure all Virginians have access to affordable care.

'Ban the Box' Initiatives Move Forward in Danville, Fredericksburg

Virginia Organizing Chapters in Danville and Fredericksburg recently claimed victories in "Ban the Box" campaigns. Before "Ban the Box" initiatives moved forward, returning citizens who had been convicted of crimes had to report that on city job applications. By having to disclose this on a job application, many returning citizens were excluded from jobs before getting an interview.

Marty Jackson was one of the Chapter leaders in Danville who attended the City Council meeting where 'Ban the Box' was passed.

"I am so proud that our city councilors have taken such leadership in Southside Virginia to make sure that people who have served their time and are reentering society have a shot at a

second chance," said Jackson. "Danville is a place where new beginnings are possible."

Earlier this month, the Fredericksburg city manager "banned the box" and removed the question of criminal convictions from city job applications.

Perspective employers still have the right to run background checks and ask relevant questions in interviews about criminal history, but removing the question from job applications means one less hurdle for returning citizens seeking to change their lives.

Registration Open for Annual Grassroots Gathering

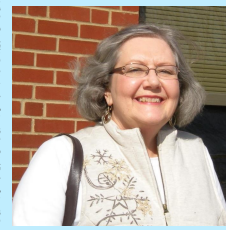
Virginia Organizing's annual Grassroots Gathering will be held September 5-7 at the Blackstone Retreat and Conference Center. Registration is now open for this event!

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, tactic, 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 Ramona Sanders



Ramona Sanders has been an active leader with Virginia Organizing for four years. During this time, she has worked on environmental, anti-poverty,

predatory lending, and other campaigns in Harrisonburg, but she has most recently been focused on the issues of immigration reform and Medicaid expansion.

Ramona wants comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship passed, but knows she can make a big difference working at the local level as well. "Our Harrisonburg jails are already overcrowded," said Ramona. "We need to stop arresting and holding people for low-level offenses and start focusing on the real issues our community is facing."

Ramona is committed to bettering her local community. She has worked with refugees for many years and is committed to raising the voices of local families who are affected by immigration policies.

"I believe the system needs to change for immigrants," said Ramona. "I was a single mom and I know how tough it is for women who are just hoping to make a good life for their children. This is about supporting families."

In the Harrisonburg Chapter, Ramona serves as the fundraising committee chairperson and has helped the Chapter raise over half of their goal for the year.

Thank you, Ramona, for your commitment to your local community and a more just Virginia for all.

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

- The Petersburg Chapter held a Peace Walk that drew a large crowd and made the front page of the local paper. Residents marched downtown and gathered to remember victims of violence in the community.
- Leaders in Culpeper gathered to watch the documentary, "The Dream is Now" and have a discussion about immigration reform. Several people took action and called U.S. Representative Eric Cantor to ask him to allow a vote on immigration reform.
- The Harrisonburg Chapter held a Dance for Social Justice fundraiser! 172 people showed up to help Virginia Organizing reach our goal of 20 organizers by 2016.
- Virginia Organizing partnered with the Center for Community Change to host a training on protecting and strengthening Social Security. Leaders from Washington, D.C., North Carolina, Louisiana, and Virginia participated in the training.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter honored the Virginia Beach Department of Health for their work in enrolling hundreds of local residents in the Health Insurance Marketplace and partnering with Virginia Organizing to make this happen.

www.virginia-organizing.org