



**On August 13, Virginia Organizing held the annual Grassroots Gathering in Richmond.**



**Virginia Organizing rallied for jobs outside of Rep. Cantor's Richmond campaign event.**

**The Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Chapter held a school supply drive to oppose more cuts to education.**



## News From the Grassroots

### Rep. Eric Cantor: "No Irene Disaster Relief Without Spending Cuts"

In the wake of Hurricane Irene, Virginians in the Richmond and Hampton Roads areas are dealing with power outages and potentially billions of dollars in damage. Sadly, Rep. Cantor has extended the same promise to Virginia that he made to the residents of Joplin, Missouri in April: no disaster relief without spending cuts.

Rep. Cantor spokesperson Laena Fallon remarked last week, "We aren't going to speculate on damage before it happens, period. But, as you know, Eric has consistently said that additional funds for federal disaster relief ought to be offset with spending cuts."

In April, Rep. Cantor came under criticism for similar controversial remarks about disaster aid for Joplin.

Janice "Jay" Johnson, Newport News resident and Virginia Organizing

Treasurer spoke out against Rep. Cantor's callousness.

"We have really reached a new low in American politics if Rep. Cantor is willing to use disaster relief as a political bargaining chip. As my neighbors and I clean up our yards and wait for the power to come back on, it's truly sad to know that Rep. Cantor could have so little concern for the residents of his own state. Disaster relief is a necessary function of government and not something to be bartered with," said Johnson. "We are the richest nation in the world and should be able to respond to disasters with more dignity than someone bartering for a couch on Craigslist."

### Is Rep. Eric Cantor afraid to talk to his constituents?

Earthquakes and hurricanes aside, the biggest disaster is Rep. Cantor's unwillingness to work on creating

jobs. Despite a continuing jobs crisis hitting Virginia hard, Rep. Cantor has been avoiding talking about jobs in his district by not holding public events or town halls over the entire Congressional August recess period.

On Wednesday, August 31, over 200 Virginia Organizing members and community members gathered outside of Rep. Eric Cantor's so-called "town hall" in Richmond to make our voices heard on the need for jobs and Hurricane Irene disaster funding with no strings attached.

We ended up rallying across the street, while Rep. Cantor noted to the audience inside that he was happy that the protesters were kept out. We will continue to keep the pressure on so that Rep. Cantor has to hear from all of his constituents.



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# Real people. Real change.

## Surplus Smurplus

On August 11 members of the Staunton-Augusta-Waynesboro Chapter gathered to take a stand against cuts to education and to call on the Virginia General Assembly to raise the revenue it needs for vital public services.

Just one week away from the start of another school year, local residents gathered to speak out on the need to fund education and to collect school supplies to donate to local students and teachers. The group called attention to Virginia's budget surplus which only exists because of creative accounting and a cuts-only approach that merely kicks the can down the road.

Parents and teachers called attention to previous cuts to education funding in excess of 15 percent which has meant crowded classrooms, outdated textbooks, and reduced student achievement. The state closed last year's \$6.2 billion shortfall almost entirely with cuts and help from the federal government. Only 2 percent of last year's deficit was made up through new revenue. The state budget has been cut dramatically every year for several years, as state revenue has fallen by more than 10 percent. Only new revenue can close our budget gap without more significant cuts.

"We are speaking out because while the governor boasts about his surplus, Virginia is in the midst of an enormous fiscal crisis, in part due to irresponsible decision making by our state leaders. We shouldn't have to donate school supplies to bridge the funding gap. Our state leaders should be raising revenue to fund education, instead of considering even more deep cuts that will hurt our quality of life and prevent us from investing in our future," said Chapter member Connie Birch.

## Calling on Senator Mark Warner to Protect Social Security

Virginia Organizing is fighting against unnecessary cuts to Social Security and other safety net programs as part of the debt ceiling deal. We concluded our summer Social Security outreach program on August 8. The program made 93 presentations on strengthening, not cutting, Social Security to hundreds of seniors in Fredericksburg, Richmond, South Hampton Roads and Southwest, Virginia.

We will be delivering hundreds of postcards the week of September 1 signed by local seniors calling on Senator Warner to protect Social Security and Medicare.

## Leader of the Month:

Cynthia McVey



Cynthia McVey of the Valley recently got involved with Virginia Organizing through local work on Social Security, immigration and

jobs. On August 19, she shared her story of being unemployed at a jobs rally in front of Rep. Wolf's office. Cynthia stood in front of several hundred people and bravely told her story of looking for work for several years and finding nothing.

"I continue to look but there are not a lot of jobs out here. I don't want to be on unemployment or other assistance; I want to have a job where I can support myself. I want to be able to provide for my kids and go to the doctor when I am sick."

As one of 13.9 million unemployed Americans, Cynthia continues to speak out on the need for members of Congress to focus on the jobs crisis. She plans to continue working with Virginia Organizing in the future. "In the short bit of time I have been involved with Virginia Organizing I have come to respect what we stand for. I will continue to work with Virginia Organizing because it is a wonderful chance to help make a difference. Too long I have stood by and let my voice be unheard. But now it's time to speak out."

## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

703 Concord Avenue  
Charlottesville, VA 22903  
(434) 984-4655 Fax: (434) 984-2803

**Local Chapters** (call or visit the website for more information)  
Charlottesville  
Danville  
Martinsville  
Fredericksburg  
Northern Virginia  
Newport News/Hampton Roads  
South Hampton Roads  
Williamsburg  
Shenandoah Valley  
Washington County & Lee County  
Tri-Cities/Petersburg  
Richmond  
**On Campus:** W&M, UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H, U of R

## News in Brief

- The Richmond Chapter is going door-to-door notifying Greater Fulton residents about a public hearing concerning the neighborhood's landfill permit request.
- The Washington County Chapter is planning their local anti-hydrofracking campaign.
- The Danville Chapter has started organizing local seniors around the fight to protect Social Security.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter has been pushing local city councils to limit predatory lending businesses that are taking advantage of the expansion of the car title lending legislation.
- The next meeting of the Virginia Health Reform Initiative will be September 9 in Richmond. This will be the final meeting before the report on health care reform recommendations is due to the governor on October 1.