



**The Richmond Chapter protested renewing the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy outside of Senator Jim Webb's office.**



**Virginia Organizing celebrated the Virginia Beach City Council adoption of the Human Rights Resolution to "....protect human rights of all in our community."**



**Virginia Organizing members with State Delegate Tony Wilt, Harrisonburg.**

## News From the Grassroots

### The Virginia Health Care Law Ruling

Virginia Organizing is speaking out against Judge Henry Hudson's decision on the constitutionality of so-called mandate in the Affordable Care Act (ACA). On December 13, Judge Hudson, who has known financial ties to a consulting firm whose clients include Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli and insurance industry lobbyists, ruled that the Constitution's commerce clause gives Congress the power to regulate economic activity, but not to regulate economic inactivity.

Hudson's decision will have no immediate impact on implementation in Virginia. The decision only relates to the personal responsibility provision, which will not go into effect until 2014. Judge Hudson rejected Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli's attempt to strike down

the ACA by denying the request for an injunction against implementing the health care law in Virginia. Virginia still must implement and comply with all provisions of the law, unless the Supreme Court were to declare it unconstitutional.

To date, fourteen judges have heard challenges to the ACA and all have dismissed these meritless cases. In November, U.S. District Judge Norman Moon in Lynchburg dismissed the Liberty University case against the ACA, concluding that Congress "acted in accordance with its Constitutionally delegated powers under the Commerce Clause when it passed the employer and individual coverage provisions."

"Judge Hudson has only provided fuel to Mr. Cuccinelli's fire by wasting tax dollars in an effort to continue his political grandstanding, which will only hurt Virginians who

deserve access to quality, affordable health care," said Dr. Chris Lillis of the Virginia Organizing Health Care Committee

Virginia Organizing filed an amicus brief in the October hearing and will continue to defend the law. "The ACA may be the only chance I have to get affordable health care in the future. The law will prevent insurance companies from denying patients due to pre-existing conditions and will not allow insurers to try to drop you if you get sick. These are two provisions that would have helped me tremendously when I first became ill," said Amy Koons of Chesapeake. "Now Attorney General Cuccinelli wants to take away the health care law so that people in my situation, will again have no recourse. He should be fighting for consumers like me and it seems like all he is doing is fighting against consumers like me."

**Are you a state employee? Please support our work! Virginia Organizing is participating in the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (for state employees) and our number is 3168.**

# Real people. Real change.

## Governor McDonnell's Budget Announcement

On December 17, Governor Bob McDonnell's presented his amendments to the 2010-12 biennium budget. Virginia Organizing commended the Governor for several of his budget proposals but expressed concerns about continued cuts to vital services without plans to raise revenue.

"We appreciate Governor McDonnell's proposals to provide economic incentives for job creation. The problem is that Virginia has been making extreme and reckless budget cuts for a number of years, budget reductions that have had a negative impact on schools, human services and infrastructure," said Jeffrey Hunt of Virginia Organizing Budget and Revenue Committee.

"What company wants to relocate to a state that has more crowded classrooms, crumbling roads and too few fire fighters and police officers? It seems that we are not sending a consistent message to potential companies. We cannot expect others to invest in Virginia when we do not invest in ourselves, added Hunt."

"Until the McDonnell administration and the General Assembly decide to be more serious about increasing

state revenue, Virginia will continue to plug holes until the dam breaks again. It takes real leadership to put a long-term solution ahead of short-term fixes. Unfortunately, we have not moved a single step closer to solving our long-term budget problems and needs," added Hunt.

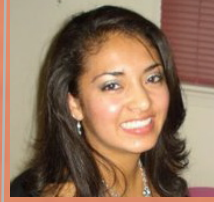
## No Millionaire Bailout!

This month, the Senate voted in favor of extending unemployment benefits for 13 months and extending all of the Bush tax cuts, even for those making over \$250,000. Virginia Organizing spoke out against the tax compromise which ultimately held tax cuts for the middle class and an extension of unemployment benefits hostage in order to procure another tax break for the wealthy.

We held protests in Charlottesville, Danville and Richmond and wrote op-eds and letters to the editor. Virginia Organizing leaders also had a conference call with Senator Webb's staff to discuss the Senator's previous vote against extending tax cuts to the middle class only. "We believe this bill could have been much more effective at helping the unemployed, small businesses and the middle class, and lowering the deficit, simply by allowing the tax cuts for the wealthy to finally expire," said Sarah Williams of the Budget and Revenue Committee.

## Leader of the Month:

### Isabel Castillo



Isabel Castillo is a Harrisonburg resident who has been fighting for the passage of the Dream Act for a year. The Dream Act would allow a path to citizenship for undocumented young

people who serve in the military or complete two years of college. Unfortunately for Isabel and thousands of other undocumented young people, the U.S. Senate voted down the Dream Act this month by five votes.

Isabel got involved with the Dream Act through the U.S. Student Association where she met other "dreamers" and was encouraged to become an organizer. "When they asked me to get involved, I hesitated briefly and said, 'I'm not an organizer. I don't know even how to do that!'" Yet Isabel managed to garner support from countless Virginians through petitions, marches and vigils and was instrumental in getting the Harrisonburg City Council to unanimously pass a resolution in support of the Dream Act. Isabel began partnering with Virginia Organizing through the efforts of Valley Organizer Emily Riehl and the two found ways to support each other.

Despite the defeat in the Senate, Isabel is proud of the courageous individuals who shared their stories. Isabel is one of the many undocumented young people who risked everything to speak up. "One of my main reasons I started working on this is because I have family members and friends who cannot speak up. Putting your life at risk by telling your story is not easy, but if we as undocumented youth don't take our stories to the forefront of the movement, no one will. This defeat has only ignited our fire."

## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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**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

Petersburg

Richmond

**On Campus:** W&M, UMW, VSU, CNU, UVA, E&H, U of R

## News in Brief

- The Martinsville Chapter worked with the NAACP, Voters League and Religious Review to ask City Council to enforce regulated hours for sweepstakes gambling parlors.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter had a huge victory when the Virginia Beach City Council passed a Mobile Park Protective Order which will protect home owners and secure affordable housing for more Virginians.
- The Valley Chapter had their first big meeting in Harrisonburg with 30 people in attendance, supported two actions with Dream Activist VA and met with Delegate Tony Wilt to talk about immigration and budget issues.
- The William and Mary Chapter held a restoration of voting rights training.
- RePHRAME succeeded in getting an additional resident position approved through Richmond City Council to serve on the Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Board of Commissioners.
- The Washington County Chapter met with Senator Bill Wampler on budget and tax reform issues. The Emory and Henry Chapter participated in a three-day Dismantling Racism Workshop.
- The Fredericksburg Chapter is having a Health Care Forum on Saturday, January 8 from Noon-2pm at the England Run library, 806 Lyons Blvd, Fredericksburg, VA.