



**Virginia Organizing Executive Director Joe Szakos was part of a recent delegation to Afghanistan.**



**Virginia Organizing members McKenna and Andrew Callaghan of Richmond at the White House.**



**Virginia Organizing joined the Better Choices Coalition at the capitol to call for a balanced approach to the budget.**

## News From the Grassroots

### McDonnell's Budget for the 1 Percent

In December, Governor Bob McDonnell presented the people of Virginia with a budget that will hurt the 99 percent. Instead of closing tax loopholes that cost the state \$12.6 billion annually and reforming the broken tax code, the Governor is taking a cuts-only approach. Over 60% of Virginia corporations pay no income tax in Virginia, but Governor McDonnell refuses to ask them to pay their fair share.

Over the last five years, Virginia's cuts-only approach to the budget has meant fewer police on the streets, fewer firefighters in the stations, cuts to education funding and dramatic cuts to health care. Governor McDonnell's budget continues to balance the budget

on the backs of our most vulnerable citizens while passing the buck to local governments by inadequately funding vital services.

Now it's up to the General Assembly to work out a budget. Over the next three months we will be fighting back against the Governor's proposed cuts.

We urge the General Assembly to reject the following cuts:

- Early Childhood Education: \$81 million in funding for the state's pre-K program.
- Medicaid: Cuts to reimbursement for Medicaid services provided by hospitals and nursing homes.
- Community Health: 50% cut in state funding from the critical health safety

net for community health centers and free clinics.

- Transportation Shell Game: Shifting \$110 million in sales tax revenue from critical state services to transportation, rather than dedicating separate transportation funding.

Virginia cannot afford two more years of a cuts-only approach. Now, more than ever, we need strong public structures – in health care, education, transportation, public safety, and more – to support and protect all Virginians.

Virginia Organizing is part of the Better Choices Coalition and is calling on the Governor to take a balanced approach to the budget. On December 15, we joined coalition partners at the capitol in speaking out against a cuts-only approach and delivered a petition signed by over 1,300 Virginians.



**Virginia Organizing participates in the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign for public employees. Virginia Organizing's number is 3168. Thank you for supporting Virginia Organizing.**

# Real people. Real change.

## Danville Delivers Holiday Wish to Representative Hurt

During the holiday season many Virginia seniors struggle to pay the bills, let alone afford gifts for their loved ones. On December 15, the Virginia Organizing Danville chapter lined up in front of Rep. Robert Hurt's Danville office to call on him to protect Social Security, a program that makes the holiday season brighter by keeping thousands of Danville's seniors out of poverty.

Despite being one of America's most successful social programs and contributing nothing to the deficit, many members of Congress continue talking about deep cuts to Social Security. Local residents are angered by the prospect of cutting Social Security and took to the street to send a message to Rep. Hurt.

## Calling on Representative Cantor to Help the Unemployed

As the debate over extending unemployment benefits heated up in Washington, Virginia Organizing and the First Unitarian Universalist Church sponsored a Richmond Unemployment Action Forum on the impact of unemployment and underemployment in our community.

The Richmond Unemployment Action Forum was in solidarity with the thousands of Americans who

converged on Washington for "Take Back the Capitol," four days of protest to make the voices of the 99 percent heard and counter the influence of the 1 percent over Congress.

The forum included a panel to discuss the growing wealth disparity and how budget cuts have weakened the safety net just when it is needed the most. Residents contacted their members of Congress, especially Rep. Eric Cantor, about extending unemployment benefits. Thankfully Congress voted to extend the payroll tax cut and unemployment benefits.

## The Health Care Law Helps

The Department of Health and Human Services announced new figures this month showing that the number of uninsured young adults has dropped by 2.5 million as a direct result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

The ACA allows young adults to stay on their parents' health insurance plans until they are 26 years old, a benefit that helps 31,200 young adults in Virginia this year alone. Khadijah Anderson, a student at George Mason University, is one of them. "I am a full-time student and I work my way through school. The last thing I want to worry about is being booted off my parents' insurance when I turn a certain age. The health care law gives me the peace of mind."

## Leader of the Month:

### Stan Maclin



Stan Maclin is leading the way in Harrisonburg by fighting anti-immigrant legislation and encouraging diverse groups to come to the table, literally.

Recently, the Harrisonburg Virginia Organizing Chapter held its first Intercultural Potluck dinner to celebrate months of progress in bringing diverse communities together. Stan was no small part of this achievement. He has been integral in organizing bi-weekly community conversations designed to create more understanding among immigrants and other groups. The talks have created relationships among diverse community members that would have never existed if not for the work of Stan and other dedicated leaders.

"We have to continue to fight injustice in our communities. What happens to our neighbors, effects us," said Maclin.

Stan is no stranger to organizing and has been a dedicated activist for most of his life. His experience and enthusiasm were a welcome addition to the Harrisonburg Chapter when he first connected with organizer Emily Riehl.

"I am concerned about the racial profiling aspects of the 287-G laws. I believe we can do better as a society," added Maclin. "We can fight crime without trampling on human rights and resorting to discrimination. We owe it to our community to do better."

## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters (call or visit the website for more information)  
Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro  
Charlottesville  
Danville  
Harrisonburg  
Martinsville  
Fredericksburg  
Northern Virginia  
South Hampton Roads  
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

- Virginia Organizing Executive Director Joe Szakos just returned from Afghanistan as part of a delegation from the UVA Center for Politics. While in Kabul, he met with government officials involved in women's affairs, the justice system and nonprofit organizations that focus on women and children's affairs and civic engagement.
- Four lucky Virginia Organizing members were in attendance at the White House for the President's speech asking Congress to moved forward with a clean extension of the payroll tax cut and employment benefits. Linda Powell and her son Samuel made the trip from Fredericksburg and McKenna Callaghan and her husband Andrew made the trip from Richmond. "I continue to be struck by the lack of civility in Congress that leads to a lack of progress in our nation. I appreciate that President Obama is willing to speak out about the payroll tax cut which will help my family in these tough economic times," said McKenna Callaghan.
- Governor McDonnell has decided to ignore the recommendations of his own Health Reform Advisory Panel and delay moving forward with a Virginia Health Benefits Exchange.