



Virginia Organizing protested the ten year anniversary of the Bush Tax Cuts with events in Fredericksburg and Danville.



Virginia Organizing hosted two Afghani delegates as part of the Global Perspectives on Democracy Program.



Virginia Organizing will be giving hundreds of presentations on protecting Social Security this summer.

News From the Grassroots

The Bush Tax Cuts: Ten Years of Disaster

On June 7, Virginia Organizing marked the ten-year anniversary of the Bush Tax Cuts with events calling for an end to the tax cuts that primarily benefitted the wealthiest Americans, raised the deficit and did nothing to create jobs.

Virginia Organizing supporters gathered in front of Rep. Robert Hurt's office in Danville and the Fredericksburg Public Library and shared their experiences over the past ten years and what they think the money could have been used for instead. Residents also expressed their concerns for Rep. Hurt, Rep. Rob Wittman and other Virginia members of Congress's recent vote in support of Rep. Paul Ryan's controversial budget proposal to end Medicare, as we know it.

In Fredericksburg, participants like Joe Katz flushed play money down a toilet to represent the valuable capital that went to millionaires instead of schools, health care, police and libraries. "I believe there's no excuse for our leaders in Washington to cut our Medicare, Medicaid, or Social Security so that millionaires can have huge tax breaks. The Bush tax cuts didn't create jobs for Virginians, they basically went down the toilet."

An Exchange That Works for Us, Not Just Big Insurance

Currently the Governor McDonnell appointed Virginia Health Reform Initiative (VHRI) is working on a blueprint for setting up Virginia's health benefits exchange. The exchange would be set up as part of the new health care law and would allow residents without employer provided insurance to pool their money together and bargain for

better rates and coverage. Creating a health benefit exchange that allows for competition is an important priority. The exchange should seek to have a selection of plans that all provide quality, affordable and accessible health insurance options for Virginia's consumers.

The exchange should be set up to serve health care consumers, not only the insurance companies.

The Virginia Organizing Health Care committee is fighting for an exchange that benefits consumers by encouraging competitiveness and opposing the conflict of interest of having insurers on the board. The Virginia Main Street Alliance, a small business project of Virginia Organizing, has also been surveying hundreds of local business on how they think the exchange should be set up and how it should be governed.



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*Please join us for the 2011 Grassroots Gathering, August 13 in Richmond! Sign up at www.virginia-organizing.org

Real people. Real change.

Democracy Across Borders

This summer Virginia Organizing proudly hosted two women from Afghanistan as part of the UVA Center for Politics participation in the Global Perspectives on Democracy program. The 11 delegates of this year's program are female public service and legal professionals from locations throughout Afghanistan and are volunteering at Charlottesville area non-profits and community organizations. Wazhma Abdul Rahimzay and Marina Sarwary shadowed Charlottesville organizer Harold Folley to learn about American democracy and civic engagement. Wazhma and Marina canvassed, registered voters, attended community and legislative meetings and spoke to dozens of local residents about their impressions of their own community and Afghanistan.

Setting the Record Straight on Social Security

As politicians in Washington debate cutting Social Security as part of a deficit reduction plan, a group of young Virginians will be speaking to thousands of seniors about Social Security's future and what can be done to protect the program for future generations.

This summer Virginia Organizing is sending teams of interns statewide to

make hundreds of community presentations on the current state of Social Security and how we can [take action](#) to protect it for future generations.

"As a senior, I know for a fact that there is a lot of misinformation out there about Social Security. It feels like every time I turn on the television some politician is fear mongering about Social Security. So, one day, Virginia Organizing said enough is enough," said Janice "Jay" Johnson, board member of Virginia Organizing. "We need to set the record straight for seniors and young people alike."

The teams of interns will make presentations in Tidewater, Richmond, Fredericksburg, Prince William County, and Southwest Virginia. The interns, many recent college graduates, will be presenting at senior centers, churches, synagogues, nursing homes and community centers.

The interns will be debunking myths about Social Security and will share ways to take action to protect the program for future generations.

"While the politicians spread false information via television ads, we are taking the real information directly to folks in the community," added Johnson.

Leader of the Month:

Patrice Boone



Patrice Boone is a volunteer intern making a difference in South Hampton Roads. Patrice recently starting interning with Virginia Organizing and has already rolled

up her sleeves and is working on phone banking, letter writing and organizing events. She is also participating in the Social Security summer campaign by helping to set up dozens of local presentations on Social Security.

While studying political science at Hampton University, Patrice still finds the time to volunteer for the causes she thinks are important. She is compelled to fight injustice in all its forms and is considering going to law school after college and eventually working on criminal justice reform. "I would like to fight injustices in our criminal and judicial system. But I recognize that all injustices are related, whether it is cutting Social Security to give tax breaks to millionaires or locking innocent people up and throwing away the key," said Patrice. "It's about accountability of the powerful and raising your hand and saying, 'We are paying attention and we know what you are doing.'"

When asked about her hope for the future, Patrice is surprisingly optimistic, "Things could be better but I am hopeful for the future. The President had a big mess to clean up and we have made a lot of progress. Across the country people are wising up. They are seeing that many of our politicians' priorities are displaced and favor the wealthy over the rest of us. I hope they take that spirit to the voting booth."

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 Lee County Chapter is currently working on an education campaign and presented a Students' Bill of Rights at the school board meeting on June 14.
- The Washington County Chapter is continuing their work opposing hydro-fracking this summer with letters to the editor and speaking out at board meetings.
- The Richmond Chapter co-sponsored a local meeting with people who attended the showing of the film 9500 Liberty and are working on immigration issues.
- Virginia Organizing presented information on predatory lending to the Hanover NAACP Branch.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter is participating in formation module on ending white privilege and gave testimony at the Norfolk City Council Meeting in support of fair ward redistricting.
- Several Chapters are joining with local groups to oppose lifting of the uranium mining ban.