



Virginia Organizing Staunton Chapter called on Rep. Bob Goodlatte to stop blocking the Affordable Care Act.



In Charlottesville, Dell Erwin and her grandsons spoke out in front of the federal courthouse on protecting the Affordable Care Act.

Martinsville called on Governor Bob McDonnell to veto voter suppression legislation.



News From the Grassroots

Don't Repeal Progress

All across Virginia, residents who stand to lose their health care if the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court spoke out on the need to protect the law.

Virginia Organizing supporters gathered in Virginia Beach, Fredericksburg, Newport News, Harrisonburg, Staunton, Charlottesville and Richmond to share their stories of how they have personally benefited from the law. They illustrated how the law is already helping millions of Virginians and called upon the Supreme Court to uphold the law and for Virginia politicians to stop blocking further implementation.

Breast cancer survivor and Medicare recipient Dell Erwin spoke in Charlottesville on the need to protect the ACA for seniors. "The medications I take to keep me in remission cost over \$600 per month. Like many seniors, I am in the dreaded 'Donut Hole.' One of

the many reasons that I support the health care law is that in ten years, it will close that Donut Hole," said Erwin. "In the meantime, many seniors who struggle to afford their prescriptions have already received a \$250 check for a prescription drug rebate. This June, I will automatically receive 50 percent off my cancer medication."

Erwin also praised the ACA for ending the health insurance industry practice of discriminating against children with pre-existing conditions. Her seven-year-old grandson Tucker had open-heart surgery and faced a lifetime of discrimination due to his pre-existing heart condition. "Having a child or grandchild with a serious heart defect is scary enough without having to worry about whether he will have the care he needs," she added. Since the Affordable Care Act was signed into law, Attorney General Cuccinelli has consistently opposed the

new law. The Attorney General recently remarked that he would continue to block the health care law even if the Supreme Court upholds it, citing the fact that "there are no criminal penalties" for non-compliance. However, at a town hall meeting on March 21 in Martinsville he back-peddled on ignoring the law once it is upheld.

Virginia Organizing spoke out against Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli's attempts to block the law, which has allowed 53,900 young Virginians to go back on their parents' health insurance. Without the ACA, Arianne Waschler, a 23-year-old grad student at VCU would have been kicked off her parents' plan at age 22, a scary prospect for a young woman who battled anorexia as a teen.

"Thanks to the new law, I have the piece of mind that I can stay on my parents' plan while I search for a job and attend grad school," said Waschler.

Real people. Real change.

A Better Budget for Virginia

Virginia Organizing joined a chorus of other advocacy organizations from across the state to urge lawmakers to put families first in their budget negotiations. The proposed House and Senate budgets gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars to corporate special interests and the 1% while Virginia families are left behind.

The Fredericksburg Chapter spoke out against the proposed cuts-only budget with a forum, while Virginia Organizing leaders from across the state wrote letters to the editor, made phone calls and visited with their legislators.

Conservative legislators proposed severely underfunding public education, spending \$400 million less than five years ago even though student enrollment is on the rise. At the same time they wanted to give away \$25 million dollars in private school tax credits.

Medicaid cuts proposed by conservatives would eliminate over 4,500 seniors from long-term care programs while the same budget hands out \$40 million in tax credits to coal companies. Meanwhile, over 60% of Virginia corporations pay no income taxes.

After weeks of negotiations, the State Senate finally passed a budget that,

while not perfect, better responds to the needs and priorities of Virginia's families. It is now up to budget conferees to determine the details.

A Better Budget for America

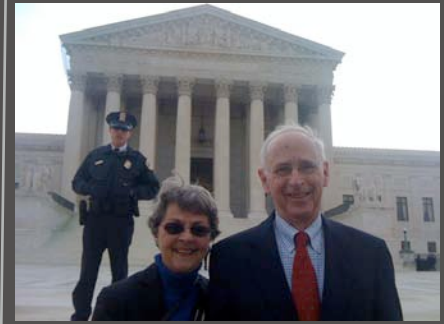
House Republicans approved Rep. Paul Ryan's budget that punishes the poor while giving even more tax breaks to the wealthy. This budget plan aims to privatize Medicare, cuts Social Security administration and slashes food stamps.

"House Republicans seem to have no idea that there are poor people in America who will suffer even more if this budget is implemented," said Sandra Cook, Chairperson of Virginia Organizing.

Ryan's budget also threatens the future of our retirement security by slashing Social Security benefits for middle-class seniors and people with disabilities. And it will change Medicare into a voucher system, making it more costly for anyone who participates.

"As a person with a disability, I rely on Medicare and Social Security for my livelihood. Rep. Ryan's budget could take away my health care and income. The Ryan budget puts people like me on a path to poverty, while the wealthy will continue on the 'path to prosperity,'" added Cook.

Leaders of the Month: Linda and Eric Christenson



At the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court, Linda and Eric Christenson shared their story to show the need to protect the Medicaid expansion in the Affordable Care Act (ACA) with hundreds of supporters.

The Christensons became temporary legal guardians of their 14-year-old granddaughter after the girl's parents lost their jobs and were unable to care for her. The Christenson's health plan would not allow them to cover her, but fortunately she was able to get the help she needed for her numerous health problems through Medicaid. Today she is thriving as a high-school sophomore. "We are a middle class family and would never have guessed that we could ever need Medicaid. But we are grateful beyond words that it was there when we needed it," said Linda.

"Surely all faiths would want Congress to heed St. Matthew's words to 'look after the sick' and not to turn away. We can only hope that the Supreme Court and Congress heed these words and preserve life and health for all by protecting the ACA," added Eric.

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

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Local Chapters (call or visit the website for more information)

Augusta/Staunton/Waynesboro
Charlottesville
Danville
Harrisonburg
Fredericksburg
Northern Virginia
South Hampton Roads
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 Danville Chapter hosted a community meeting on an exciting new program to help lower renters' monthly utility bills and create jobs by weatherizing up to 300 rental units.
- Over a dozen UMASS students opted to spend their spring break with Virginia Organizing learning about community organizing. The students spent the week in Richmond knocking on 1,900 doors, making 1,100 phone calls and planning for a community meeting on local transportation issues.
- Virginia Organizing leaders from across the state will be heading to Charlotte, NC for a Bank of America Shareholders meeting on May 9. Virginians will be speaking out against Bank of America's bad practices inside and outside of the shareholder's meeting. To get involved, call Joe at 434-984-4655 x 222
- Making or revising estate plans? Please remember Virginia Organizing! Planned gifts—such as will bequests, insurance policies, retirement plans, and charitable trusts—help insure Virginia Organizing continues its work for justice for all Virginians. For information, call Michele Mattioli at 434-984-4655 x 223



www.virginia-organizing.org