



Rep. Bobby Scott spoke at our Richmond forum in celebration of the 1st anniversary of the health care law.



UMMASS students spent their spring break with us in Southside learning community organizing.



Virginia Organizing continues to build new chapters in Danville and the Valley.

News From the Grassroots

Celebrating the Affordable Care Act's 1st Birthday

March 23 marks the one-year anniversary of the Affordable Care Act being signed into law. Rather than engage in political games of who's up and who's down we should take this moment to examine the choice facing millions of Americans. We can move forward with a health care system that protects our freedom and gives us control over our health care decisions, holds insurance companies accountable to patients, and lowers costs for families and small businesses.

Although only one year old, thousands of Virginians are already seeing the benefits of the Affordable Care Act:

- *102,000 small businesses will receive tax credits.
- *123,000 children with pre-existing conditions can now obtain coverage.

- *54,000 young adults are now able to stay on their parents' insurance plans until they are 26 years old.
- *1.2 million Medicare beneficiaries now have access to free preventative health services.
- *74,100 Medicare beneficiaries received a rebate to cover prescription drug cost.

Yet, despite the benefits the health care law is already providing to Virginians, Governor McDonnell and Attorney General Cuccinelli want to take away the consumer and patient protections in the law and put the insurance companies back in charge. That's why Virginia Organizing is holding events in Richmond, Petersburg, Danville, Harrisonburg, Fredericksburg, Virginia Beach and Newport News to celebrate and spread the word about its benefits.

Join us for our next health care forum in Charlottesville on April 5

at 6:00pm at the City Council Chambers.

We are all Wisconsin

Virginia Organizing joined other groups to express outrage over Governor McDonnell's support of Governor Walker's underhanded vote to strip the collective bargaining rights of public sector workers.

"I am deeply ashamed that Governor McDonnell would support Governor Walker's reprehensible, back door deal making. Governor McDonnell does not speak for the millions of Virginians who support the nurses, teachers and police officers of Wisconsin. Stripping collective bargaining rights for Wisconsin workers will not make a nickel's worth of difference in the state budget," said Janice "Jay" Johnson, Treasurer of Virginia Organizing.



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Community Organizing Spring Break

The week of March 13, the Danville chapter of Virginia Organizing welcomed 12 students from the University of Massachusetts Amherst who drove down over their spring break to learn about community organizing and help put together the local chapter's North Main Hill Week of Action. Knocking on over 1,100 doors and making hundreds of phone calls, the students—along with chapter member David Harrison—reached out to members of a low-income neighborhood of color here in Danville.

The Danville chapter hosted a community meeting with a diverse group of more than 35 residents in attendance. Participants met new people, discussed issues impacting quality of life in their neighborhood, called Governor Bob McDonnell to tell him not to fight the health care law and signed up to take a couple concrete next steps.

Chapter members Ernest Williams, David Wilson and Sandra Harris did a great job leading different parts of the meeting, and the college students helped set up and welcome participants. After the largest Virginia Organizing event to date in the Danville area, chapter members left with a new appreciation for

neighborhood-level work and new energy from seeing so many new faces!

Budget Cuts Hit Home

Think it's time to get serious about funding schools, libraries, and public safety? We do too.

Every year, local communities all across Virginia are forced to reckon with tighter and tighter budgets as the General Assembly fails to update the Commonwealth's out-of-date tax structure. It's no wonder that city and county budgets are stretched so thin: our regressive tax structure ensures that low-income Virginians pay a higher percentage of their income in state and local taxes than the wealthiest 1% of Virginians pay!

On March 24, the Spotsylvania Board of Supervisors is holding a public hearing and Virginia Organizing and our many partner groups in the area are turning out to remind the Board that protecting local agencies is important, but it's also important to demand that our state legislators help raise revenue to balance the drastic cuts made in Virginia's budget over the past eight years.

The Charlottesville Chapter will also be speaking out on the need for tax reform at a tax day event on April 18.

Leader of the Month:

Natalie Grossman



Although Natalie has always been involved in activism, her first experience with Virginia Organizing was three years ago in a sociology class where she participated in door-to-door canvassing, tabling and phone banking.

Since that time Natalie has been a tireless Virginia Organizing campus organizer at the University of Mary Washington.

Natalie and her UMW chapter members have been active on a number of different issues. They recently held a campus march in opposition to anti-immigrant legislation. "It made me really happy to see the club members and other students supporting immigrant education rights. Everyone coming together to march down campus and chant loudly was an unforgettable experience that I am definitely going to remember as a highlight."

The UMW group have also been organizing on the local CSX campaign. The group recently put their craft skills to use by wearing bright triangles on their shirts reading "danger" and "toxic" to highlight the danger of CSX's rail cars carrying toxic materials.

Natalie's future plans include going on to earn a master's degree in instructional design, however, she plans on staying involved with community organizing. "Grassroots community organizing is important because it preserves the voices of community members and involves strategically pushing for lasting change."

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 South Hampton Roads Chapter will be hosting a meeting with our legislative social justice partners on March 29th to evaluate our relationship building strategy with legislators in the upcoming General Assembly session.
- The Washington County Chapter helped fill the County Board meeting room and members presented to the Board about why local folks are working to develop a sustainable economy for Washington County. This was in response to an attack on sustainable development by the local Tea Party.
- The Valley Chapter has been researching our local budget cuts by visiting with local agencies. They have also started building another group in the Staunton area.
- Lee County Chapter members attended our most recent Drug Court Coalition meeting to strategize how to move forward after the House killed a bill that would have given six Southwest counties a General Assembly-recognized drug court this past session.

www.virginia-organizing.org