



**Ray Scher, Larry Kim, Dell Erwin and Kevin Wilson spoke in support of the health care law at the U.S. Court of Appeals hearing.**



**Virginia Organizing leader Joe Katz protested at a Coventry Health Insurance shareholder meeting.**



**Virginia Organizing helped host a board orientation for the Unitarian Universalists Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.**

## News From the Grassroots

### Health Care Law Hearing

Virginia Organizing leaders and community members Ray Scher, Larry Wilson, Kevin Wilson and Dell Erwin joined Families USA in speaking out in support of the health care law in front of the courthouse in Richmond where the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court heard appeals in two challenges to the law.

Virginia Organizing leaders directly helped by the health care law voiced their opposition to Virginia Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli's attempt to block national health care reform.

### No Premiums for Politics!

Virginia Organizing activists were kicked out of a shareholder meeting held at the Tyson's Corner Ritz Carlton for Coventry Health

Insurance, the sixth largest health insurer in the country.

Several consumer shareholders, including Paula Neustatter and Joe Katz, held proxies to go inside the meeting and speak in support of a shareholder proposal to disclose political contributions used to influence elections.

Despite having the proper credentials, Neustatter and Katz were blocked by Coventry staff from speaking. When Neustatter attempted to speak on the transparency resolution, the microphone was promptly whisked away from her.

As the consumer shareholders were being blocked from commenting inside the room, activists were chanting outside the meeting in order to draw attention to Coventry's abusive practices.

Eventually Coventry's CEO paused and motioned to one of his staff to deal with the disturbance outside. Security then escorted the protesters out of the building with one of the protesters joking, "This is the nicest place I have ever been kicked out of!"

While the disturbance continued outside, Joe Katz sat inside the shareholder meeting and watched Coventry's reaction, "From inside the meeting room I could see the look of fear in the eyes of Coventry's CEO when he heard citizens just outside the room chanting. The executives realized that we plan on holding them accountable. These CEOs cannot hide in corporate boardrooms anymore. We have a right to know how our health care system operates and where our health insurance premiums go."



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**We said goodbye to four incredible campus organizers this month: Addie Alexander, Natalie Grossman, Erin Franey and Amber Hartley are all graduating and moving on to careers in social justice work!**

# Real people. Real change.

## Virginia at the Showdown in Ohio

By: Johnny Hanley

Last Monday, I joined four members of Virginia Organizing to make the seven hour trip to Columbus to support Showdown in Ohio, a large scale protest organized by National People's Action against Chase Bank at their annual stockholder meeting the following day. We met with social activists from all over the country who were united by their frustration with abusive banking policies that led to record highs of joblessness and homelessness. Sub-prime lending and abusive foreclosures were two of the event's main focuses. These issues are here in Virginia but cannot be solved only by actions within Virginia.



This protest certainly did not come without difficulty. The scale of this action attracted a lot of police attention. My section of the protest was broken up with unnecessary aggression from horse-mounted

police and other protesters were reportedly shoved and pepper sprayed. However, I believe that the most important actions that we can do are the most daunting and that the importance of a just cause outweighs intimidating odds. We took a stand in Ohio for Virginia communities alongside communities just like ours from all over the country and that is a cause to be proud of.



## Protecting Social Security

We had our first Social Security Strategy Committee call in May and we're getting ready for our campaign work this summer including presentations around the state. Let us know if you'd like to be part of this committee by contacting Brian Johns: [bjohns@virginia-organizing.org](mailto:bjohns@virginia-organizing.org)

## Leader of the Month:

Jody Grogan



Jody Grogan has been an integral part of the burgeoning Staunton/Waynesboro Chapter. He has been working hard to grow the

chapter and to ensure that the membership is diverse and that the issues reflect local concerns.

Jody has lots of experience organizing and is no stranger to social justice activism. After 20 years of teaching, he began organizing teachers for the NEA and AFT in Georgia. "What got me interested as a volunteer for the teacher organizations is the same idea that got me involved in civil rights, womens' rights and other struggles: fighting for the underdog," said Jody. "I find it hard to sit still while people are mistreated and are suffering from injustice at the hand of corporations or governments. I see Virginia Organizing doing that same thing and that is why I got involved."

Passion for social justice runs in Jody's family. His sister has spent years fighting for what's right in the Georgia legislature and his nephew organizes against predatory lending. Jody has numerous issues he is passionate about including health care, tax reform, immigration reform, ending hydro-fracking and education.

Despite the diversity of his issue priorities, Jody sees a strong connection, "These issues are all linked and are an extension of Virginia Organizing's work. Empowering people and organizing around issues close to the community is why I continue to do this work."

## VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

703 Concord Avenue  
Charlottesville, VA 22903  
(434) 984-4655 Fax: (434) 984-2803

**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,

## News in Brief

- The Lee County Chapter will be starting an education campaign in June to hold the school system accountable for the amount of students doing online work and to make sure students get the best resources possible about post-graduation options.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter did an affordable housing power analysis and members are working to make a protective policy for mobile home residents a reality for the city of Chesapeake.
- The Washington County Chapter had a great meeting in May to strategize upcoming campaigns dealing with natural gas drilling and sustainability.
- The Danville Chapter is kicking off its first local campaign, focusing on the use of public money in economic development.
- The Richmond Chapter is working with Greater Fulton community to stop the coal ash dumping and storage in a landfill in their community. On windy days dust clouds can be seen from high-rise office buildings in downtown Richmond.

[www.virginia-organizing.org](http://www.virginia-organizing.org)