



Governor McDonnell: out of touch and reckless on immigration issues. Residents protest his policies outside of DMVs this month.



Wendell Potter and other experts spoke in Bristol and Kingsport this month at Tri-Cities health care forums on the Affordable Care Act.



Residents speak out against Attorney General Cuccinelli's attempts to block the new national health care law.

News From the Grassroots

VOTE! NOVEMBER 2

With a big election around the corner, we are working to increase turnout in communities of color, low-income communities and college campuses while improving civic engagement by identifying, training and motivating more local leaders. There is a lot at stake this election: the health care law, Wall Street reform and tax cuts for the middle class and not the wealthy.

But this is unlike any election we have ever seen. New campaign finance laws are maximizing the impact corporate donors can have by allowing them unlimited, anonymous donations. A recent landmark Supreme Court decision (*Citizens United v. The Federal Election Commission*) has given corporations and the super wealthy a greater voice in our democracy than ever before. That is why we are working twice as

hard to encourage real citizens--not corporate "citizens"--to speak out in their democracy!

We will register at least 500 new voters and will knock on at least 8,000 doors and make 11,000 GOTV calls. As we knock on doors in Central Virginia and Southside, we are talking to people about jobs and unemployment, issues important to these communities hard hit by the economic downturn. This summer in Richmond, we reached out to the largest public housing community (Gilpin) with 2,046 people plus 200 elderly/disabled units.

Canvassers will also distribute at least 5,000 door hangers encouraging people to vote and providing their polling place as a "treat or trick" near the end of October, in low-income African-American neighborhoods in at least 10 different communities. The

scariest monsters this Halloween are the corporations taking over our elections and the politicians who do their bidding. Help us fight back by encouraging everyone you know to get out and VOTE!

Implement the Health Care Law

Despite the Attorney General's attempts to block the health care law, implementation is moving forward in Virginia. We are asking supporters to make their voices heard by contacting Cindy Jones, the director of the Governor's Health Care Reform Initiative at:

vhri@governor.virginia.gov

Please ask her to make quality affordable health care accessible to all and work to include everyone's voice in the process by providing clear channels for public input, and by soliciting opinions from as diverse a range of people as possible in the state.

Are you a state employee? Please support our work! Virginia Organizing is participating in the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign (for state employees) and our number is 3168.

Real people. Real change.

Residents to Cuccinelli: Don't Deny Virginia Health Care

Community members directly helped by the health care law voiced their opposition to Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli's attempt to block reform. Residents spoke after the hearing on the constitutionality of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act in Richmond this month.

Marcus Grimes of Woodbridge shared his story of going blind due to not being able to afford the surgery necessary to save his eyesight. "Had the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act been the law 20 years ago when my health care problems began, my life would have been dramatically different."

Janie Williams spoke out after the hearing, sharing her story of graduating from the University of Virginia in May and finding herself kicked off of her parents' health insurance plan. "I am thankful that the bill passed and that I am now back on my parents' plan," said Williams.

After refusing to dismiss Attorney General Cuccinelli's health care lawsuit in July, U.S. District Court Judge Henry Hudson heard arguments on the constitutionality of the law. This argument follows a Michigan federal court decision issued in early October which found that the minimum coverage provision (the so-called insurance "mandate") is constitutional. "It is a shame that we are standing here today

wasting time addressing the Attorney General's attempts to block health care

reform," said Jim Lindsay of the Virginia Organizing Health Care Reform Committee. "At a time when Virginia is facing tough choices about budget cuts, Attorney General Cuccinelli and the McDonnell administration are wasting taxpayer dollars on a frivolous lawsuit that is bound to fail."

Judge Hudson's decision is expected by the end of the year. Whatever the outcome, the case will likely be appealed to the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals, and eventually, the U.S. Supreme Court is expected to finally resolve the legal questions raised in this and numerous cases filed around the country.

Community leaders spoke out on the need to uphold the law and implement health care reform as soon as possible. "The law already protects Virginia consumers from egregious insurance company abuses, gives 2010 tax credits to small businesses in Virginia that provide insurance to their workers, helps young adults stay insured and sends checks to seniors with very high prescription costs," said Jill Hanken of the Virginia Poverty Law Center.

"The Attorney General should be working hard to rein in the insurance companies for Virginia's consumers," said Rabbi Ben Romer of Richmond. "Instead he is appearing on every national news program that will have him, putting politics ahead of the health of Virginia's families."

Leader of the Month:

Deborah Gentry



Deborah Gentry of Charlottesville is one of many community leaders engaged in Virginia Organizing's civic engagement activities.

Deborah has volunteered to make thousands of get out the vote phone calls to help reach our goal of getting young people, people of color and low-income communities civically engaged. Because Deborah has been unemployed for more than a year she understands the way that joblessness can fuel feelings of disenfranchisement with government and voting.

Despite this, Deborah finds ways to reach the people she speaks to on the phone. "I just try to relate to people one on one and let them know how they can make their voices heard. They are just frustrated and I was too before I got involved," said Gentry. "Now that I am more involved, I see that things are changing but there is so much more work to be done."

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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 Charlottesville Chapter is working with a group of law students from the UVA to do an Americans with Disability Act survey of school facilities in Fluvanna County.
- The South Hampton Roads Chapter is working on the passage of a protective policy in the cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach for residents of mobile home parks that are targeted for redevelopment.
- Fredericksburg members wore gas masks and brought signs to a Spotsylvania Board of Supervisors meeting to call attention to the toxic chemicals stored on CSX rail cars in their community.
- On Wednesdays in October, crowds of Virginia Organizing supporters can be found gathered in front of the DMV calling attention to Governor Bob McDonnell's anti-immigrant, discriminatory policies including his recent decision to make it difficult for legal immigrants to obtain a driver's license. Virginia Organizing has helped coordinate protests in Harrisonburg, Richmond, Norfolk and Williamsburg.