



Virginia Organizing Project

MAY 2010

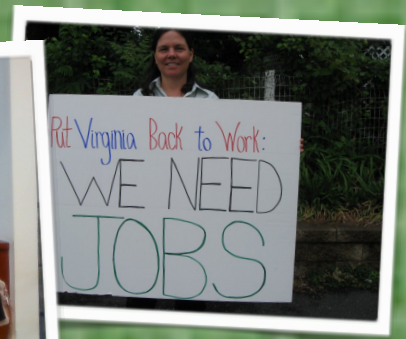
ISSUE FOUR



Dana Wiggins and Antionette Baylor represented the Commonwealth at the Showdown on K Street in Washington, D.C.



Virginia State University students highlight the impact the state budget has on higher education.



VOP is starting a new canvass to register voters and highlight the need for jobs in central Virginia.

News From the Grassroots

Main Street Over Wall Street

The Virginia Organizing Project continues to fight for the interests of Main Street over Wall Street. VOP has led lobby visits to Washington in support of strong financial reform legislation. VOP leaders joined thousands more at the “Showdown on K Street” — a day of action in Washington — calling on Congress to listen to the people over corporate special interests and Wall Street. A vote on the financial reform bill is expected by the end of May and Senators Mark Warner and Jim Webb will have a key role.

Virginia Needs Jobs Now!

VOP continues to support the Jobs for America Act, which would create local jobs while improving communities. Charlottesville and Martinsville

VOP leaders met with Congressman Tom Perriello on the need for jobs in the region. VOP leaders are also attending a Congressional briefing in Washington at the end of the month, spreading the word that Virginians need good jobs to keep our economy moving forward.

Health Care Reform

The VOP Health Care Reform Strategy Committee unanimously voted to work on implementation of health care reform at the state level and will continue outreach on the benefits of national health care reform legislation.

Once again, the spotlight turned on Anthem/WellPoint’s harmful business practices as representatives of Health Care

for America Now, the Virginia Organizing Project and the Main Street Alliance lambasted WellPoint Inc.’s CEO and board members this month at the insurer’s annual shareholder meeting.

Dr. Ken Brantley, an independent optometrist from Richmond, addressed Anthem/WellPoint CEO Angela Braly at the shareholder meeting as both a health care provider and a small business owner. “My own family used to be covered by Anthem. We were denied when we re-applied. We were informed my wife had a pre-existing condition — her pregnancy. Because Anthem denied our application on this pretense, my wife had to give birth without health insurance,” said Brantley.

Follow us on
Twitter:
[@VOP411](https://twitter.com/VOP411)



VOP has a Facebook Fanpage.
We would love to be friends!

We got a makeover! Visit our new website at:
www.virginia-organizing.org

Real People, Real Problems, Real Solutions

Spotlight on Housing Justice

Chesapeake

The Providence Mobile Home Park Campaign received a hard-sought victory this month when the Chesapeake Planning Commission denied a permit for the development of the Providence Road trailer park. This decision will help keep 170 people in their homes. The Chesapeake City Council will now consider the application on June 15 and activists are hoping they show the same moral conscience as the planning commissioners showed.

Richmond

VOP is supporting the efforts of Richmond public housing advocates, RePHRAME. On April 20, over 30 public housing residents and other

members brought their message of housing justice to the RRHA Board of Commissioners meeting. RePHRAME supporters gathered inside the meeting as RePHRAME representatives questioned RRHA's transparency and honesty in working with RePHRAME and called on RRHA to step up its efforts to provide job training and employment opportunities for public housing residents. The group also urged RRHA to institute local rent payment and to put energy into building housing for low-income residents, not just tearing it down. "Build one, then tear one down," said Vanessa Valentine. RePHRAME's impact was immediate and the RRHA agreed to look into their demands.

VOP Leader of the Month:

Linda Powell



Linda Powell got involved with VOP through a friend of hers who put her in touch with her local organizer.

Recently, Linda has gotten involved with the Fredericksburg CSX campaign. She was also involved with the "bake sale for the budget" and even brought her 12-year-old son Samuel along. "I wanted my son to understand that you don't just complain, you get active. I think it was a great experience for both of us," said Linda.

Linda attended the VOP Leadership Institute where she met leaders from all over the state become aware of "the issues her neighbors are affected by."

Having recently moved back the states after living in South Asia, Linda saw VOP as a way to connect to individuals in her community who are looking to make change on local and state issues. As an African-American woman, Linda feels passionately about social justice issues and she hopes to eventually see a world that is not divided by race and gender.

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING PROJECT

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

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

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,
UVA, E&H, U of R

- VOP, along with many other groups and individuals in the Valley, celebrated the recent clemency for two African-American men given disparate, disproportionately long, prison sentences.
- Once the Lee/Scott/Wise drug court is up and running, every jurisdiction west of I- 81 will have a drug court.
- Come out for a drink and a good cause. VOP will be hosting a fundraiser at Sips Wine Bar in downtown Charlottesville on Thursday, May 27, 5:30-7:30 pm. Al Weed and Jay James will be guest bartenders.
- The Fredericksburg CSX Railroad campaign to remove cars containing hazardous materials is moving forward with a community meeting to address environmental and health concerns.
- VSU students held two events this month: one event on the state budget and higher education and another concerning racial profiling.
- The Williamsburg Chapter is working with local leaders to add a policy demanding non-discrimination for students and staff in the local schools based on sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.
- The Danville and Martinsville Chapters continue to grow and are organizing around the Local Jobs for America Act-to bring much needed jobs to Southside.