



Virginia Organizing Annual Report 2024



In 2024, our chapters were hard at work advocating for statewide and local issues through a variety of campaigns. We celebrated several state wins for child care, environmental justice, housing, and restoration of rights. I am very proud of the growth and engagement of our chapters - they are making a big difference in all of our communities!

As I reflect back on the year, I am reminded of how much power we can build when we are building together. That's why this year's theme is "together we win," because our collective power is what will make change happen in Virginia.



Together, we held regional and statewide events to engage our members, including our statewide Grassroots Gathering in Richmond. We were thrilled to have Congresswoman Jennifer McClellan as our keynote speaker at the gathering, and we had great participation in our workshops. We appreciate everyone who attended the event or showed support for the gathering in other ways. We all make each other better!

Another great way that we grew this year was adding two new members to our State Governing Board, Brandy Faulkner and Addie Alexander. We also had the pleasure of reactivating three chapters this year, Albemarle-Charlottesville, Martinsville, and Lynchburg. This growth came with two new organizers as well, Cassandra and Mitxh. As we continue to grow our number of chapters, I am confident that we will see even more exciting changes that bring us closer to the Virginia that we want to see.

Since 2024 was an election year, each of our chapters focused efforts toward civic engagement, reaching out to community members about voter registration, restoration of voting rights, and educating the public on candidates and issues. Some of our chapters also held candidate forums for local residents, to learn more about the candidates running for office in their localities.

Many of our chapters also held meetings with current legislators, to begin sharing our legislative priorities in preparation for the 2025 General Assembly session. This was an opportunity for chapter leader development and to allow directly affected community members to share their stories with legislators. We thank our members for making their voices heard.

We ended 2024 with a number of events, including a 3-day Dismantling Racism event where almost all of our chapters were represented. Individual chapters also held end-of-year celebrations, engaged with city councils and boards of supervisors, and some even planned holiday-themed presentations for local officials.

From unprecedented state budget wins and a statewide week of action, to chapter meetings and 1:1 conversations, we made the most of 2024. Now, we are looking to do the same and more in 2025! We will continue to share our stories, and we will continue to shape our communities.

I am proud to build alongside each and every one of you, and I know that going into our 30th year of Virginia Organizing, we will make this our best year yet!

Thank you for all that you do to build power in Virginia with us,

A stylized, handwritten signature of Lily Hungarland in grey ink.

Lily Hungarland
Chairperson

In 2024...

Early in the year, our chapters held a **Housing Week of Action**, advocating for affordable and safe housing across the state. This included press conferences that our Richmond and Waynesboro Chapters held for their **"Sign the Bills"** actions.

Our chapters also visited the General Assembly session, and held public demonstrations in Richmond. These actions included the **"Don't Go Breaking Our Bank"** rally and participating in the **Affordable Energy Coalition Lobby Day** in February.



Our Wise County, Fredericksburg, and Richmond Chapters held **1-day Dismantling Racism Workshops** in their areas. In Wise County, the workshop was geared toward addressing concerns of systemic racism in the public school system. The workshop was rich with enthusiastic discussion, the sharing of personal experiences, and mutual respect amongst unlikely conversation partners.

In Richmond, the Fredericksburg and Richmond Chapters teamed up to facilitate a workshop where the members shared their experiences with racist systems and how to address them on multiple levels.

Our Richmond Chapter also held a **Political Education Workshop** to inform tenants about the history of housing conditions, code enforcement, and how we can utilize organizing and legal power to hold slumlords accountable.

Similarly, our Albemarle/Charlottesville Chapter held a **Bringing Down Utility Bills workshop** to educate residents about how energy efficiency measures can reduce energy costs, improve housing conditions, and make homes healthier, safer, and more comfortable.

Over the summer, our Eastern, Central, and Southwest regions held **Regional Grassroots Gatherings** that brought chapters together to celebrate chapter accomplishments, address local issues, and determine how to build power collectively as regions.

Each regional gathering featured workshops, speakers, and opportunities to interact with members of other chapters.

The Eastern and Central regions gathered for in-person events, while the Southwest region met virtually. These gatherings set the stage and generated enthusiasm for our statewide Grassroots Gathering in the fall.





Over 110 people attended the **statewide Grassroots Gathering** in October, where we hosted 8 workshops across two different time slots. The event featured a Restoration of Rights panel, chapter accomplishments, and our special guest speaker, Congresswoman Jennifer McClellan!

This year's gathering featured the following workshops: Child Care, Barbershop Series/ Civic Engagement, Fighting for Mental Health & Criminal Justice Reform, Healing Justice, Housing & Tenants' Rights, Rural Organizing, How Environmental Issues Affect Everyday Living, and How to Prepare a Workshop.



In preparation for the November General Election, our chapters spent considerable time engaging their local communities through **tabling, canvassing, registering voters, and civic engagement actions and events.**



Our Newport News/Hampton, Portsmouth, and Wythe County Chapters all held nonpartisan **candidate forums** to highlight local candidates ahead of the election.



In May, our Norfolk Chapter held a **press conference** to urge the City of Norfolk to support affordable housing and fund the housing trust fund. The action received television news coverage.

In August, the chapter held another press conference to update the public on the proposed Mindfulness Program for Norfolk Public Schools. Along with the press conference, the chapter presented over 500 pledge cards in support of the mindfulness program to the Norfolk School Board.

In October, our Richmond Chapter also held a press conference to call for the City of Richmond to establish a rental inspection program, gaining media attention from television and print news outlets.



In November, we held a **3-day Dismantling Racism Workshop** attended by members from across the state. The workshop gave chapter members the opportunity to share and listen to one another's personal experiences, and to participate in exercises that explored how individual and institutional racism have affected our communities.

Activities were held in both small and large groups, giving participants the chance to hear from a variety of people. The weekend wrapped up with takeaways and action steps to bring back to our chapters, families, and friends as we work toward a more just Virginia.



To close out the year, several of our chapters held **holiday celebrations and events** where they recognized chapter leaders and accomplishments. Some chapters even used this time as an opportunity to pursue campaign goals in a festive way.

Our Richmond Chapter held a **"Naughty or Nice" Community Forum** with newly elected city council members to discuss the importance of a rental inspection program and present naughty and nice certificates to the officials based on their support for the program.

Our Newport News/Hampton Chapter went **"Caroling for a Cause"** at the Newport News City Council meeting, where chapter members sang carols about the need for a shelter on the peninsula and called out city council to address the much-needed resource.





Chapter Highlights & Statewide Wins

- The Wytheville Town Council voted unanimously to allocate \$10,000 of the town budget for the Open Door Community Warming Shelter Program that our **Wythe County Chapter** spent over a year advocating for.
- In April, 100 protesters gathered with our **Fredericksburg Chapter** in support of the Lloyd F. Moss Free Clinic.
- Our **Suffolk Chapter** partnered with a local collective to open a community garden that will provide free produce for citizens.
- Our **Newport News/Hampton Chapter** presented over 100 postcards to the Hampton City Council in support of a regional shelter. The city manager indicated that funds were “earmarked” to partially fund the shelter.
- For Juneteenth, our **Wise County Chapter** held two community celebrations for the holiday with activities for all ages.
- Our **Waynesboro Chapter** put pressure on city council by “yarn-bombing” the trees and city hall building. They also held multiple "Rent n Vent" forums for community members to discuss housing issues.
- Our **Halifax/South Boston Chapter** was able to help raise \$51,000 for the Henrietta Lacks statue that was unveiled in October.
- Our **Fredericksburg Chapter** held an impactful Restoration of Rights forum where panelists discussed how we can end felony disenfranchisement with a constitutional amendment to restore the voting rights of returning citizens.
- First meetings were held for our **South Boston/Halifax, Albemarle/Charlottesville, Lynchburg, Martinsville, and (newly-forming) Williamsburg Chapters**.
- This summer, our chapters collected **175 Climate-as-Cost-of-Living surveys** from our members and communities across the state to better understand the problem of affordable energy in Virginia.
- The General Assembly allocated a total of \$1.1 billion for **early childhood care and education (ECCE)** for FY25 and FY26.
- **The Emergency Utilities Protection Act** was passed and signed into law, protecting Virginians from utility shutoffs during extreme weather conditions. This win comes after several years of organizing on the state and local level.
- Virginia Organizing was presented with the **Torch Bearer Award** by the Sri Chinmoy Oneness Home Peace Run for our social justice work.
- Our **Restoration of Rights Statewide Strategy Committee** held its inaugural meeting.



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