

VIRGINIA ORGANIZING

News from the Grassroots



October 2025

Issue 154



It's not a trick! You're in for a treat with this month's n-o-o-o-wsletter

Protesting for Change Ahead of the Election

Our chapters showed up to table and clipboard at the No Kings protests around the state this month! Let's carry that same energy forward and make our way to the polls. Election day (November 4) is this Tuesday - make sure you are ready to cast your vote and make your voice heard even louder!

Remember: Saturday, November 1 is the last day for early voting. Reach out to your local organizer for information about other upcoming actions.



New River Valley Field Day



Our New River Valley Chapter had a fun-filled Field Day Fundraiser where participants competed in various outdoor games, participated in activities, ate food, and enjoyed community engagement! The day featured competition between individuals and teams in a potato sack race, apple race, pull for justice, Corn Hole, Bingo, Uno, and more!

Way to go, New River Valley Chapter!



Help Protect Medicaid: Sign the Petition



Congress has voted to reduce funding to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act. The Trump administration has severely cut support to programs that support medical research, vaccine development and public health. These actions have put all Virginians at risk of losing access to reliable and affordable health care.

We the undersigned urge our Virginia Federal representatives to commit themselves to the following actions:

1. Work toward reversing the cuts to the Medicaid that could result in over 180,000 Virginians losing their coverage and may result in closures of rural hospitals in the state;
2. Fight the reduction in funding to the ACA that will cause thousands of Virginians to lose their health insurance;
3. Support legislation that pushes back against unaffordable drug pricing in this country;
4. Health care is a public good: Support health care financing reform leading to a publicly financed system that provides affordable coverage for all Americans;
5. Restore funding for medical research and public health that has been slashed by the current administration.



Congress has voted to reduce funding to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act, as well as severely cutting support to programs that support medical research, vaccine development, and public health. These actions have put all Virginians at risk of losing access to reliable and affordable health care.

SIGN THE PETITION! Alongside Physicians for a National Health Program - PNHP, we are asking that you add your name to help rescue healthcare in Virginia!

[Sign Here](#)

Stand up for SNAP - Write an LTE

This month, Gov. Youngkin issued a state of emergency in Virginia to provide emergency hunger relief during the shutdown, as the USDA has ordered states to stop SNAP benefits on November 1. While the governor used the state of emergency to assign blame for the shutdown, we want to call out this behavior and hold all responsible parties accountable for failing to reach a fair agreement to end the shutdown that includes an extension of tax credits to keep health insurance on the Marketplace affordable.

That's why we are asking for our members to write letters-to-the-editor (LTEs) emphasizing the following:

- Pointing out that OBBBA (Big Beautiful Bill/HR1) will make it harder for Virginians to access SNAP because of work requirements;
- That the OBBBA increased VA's administrative cost share of SNAP, which will cost VA \$90 million each year (not to mention the additional administrative costs of implementing the work requirements);
- That the OBBBA will require VA to pay matching funds possibly as high as \$270 million each year, and that it will prevent SNAP benefits from being increased even if food prices go up;
- That the federal government has a SNAP reserve fund that can be tapped to pay for most of November's benefits; and,
- (If you're feeling spicy) That the president probably could have made up the difference instead of sending it to Argentina.

If you're interested in writing an LTE, please reach out to your local organizer or Michelle at mtabbanor@virginia-organizing.org.

Waynesboro Listening Session



On October 29, our Waynesboro Chapter hosted a community listening session to share stories about how community members have been impacted by federal cuts to social services. During the session, members listened to information about how changes imposed by the OBBBA will impact Medicaid, Medicare, and SNAP, and were given the opportunity to express concerns, ask questions, and share experiences.

"We wanted to get people together to share their stories and also local organizations that could be of help to people in the future," said Andrea Jackson of the Waynesboro Chapter.

Representatives from Renewing Homes for Greater Augusta and the Waynesboro Education Association also shared about the impact of the cuts to affordable housing and education, respectively. This is to be the first of many community listening sessions that will continue as Waynesboro constituents continue to be impacted by federal cuts to social services.

The chapter urged attendees to consider the impact of the cuts as they cast their votes for the November election.

"If we cannot have the federal government helping, then our state government needs to start helping Virginians on a wider basis," said Andrea.

Read WHSV3's coverage of the session [HERE](#).

Wise County Chapter Press Conference



Our Wise County Chapter, alongside other members of the Southwest Virginia Nuclear Watch, held a press conference at the Wise County Court House this month. This action was organized in response to the Wise County Electric Authority referendum that is on the local ballot, and to call out the lack of transparency from local officials.

The proposed electric authority would be "created by the County to operate within the County," according to Wise County Administrator Mike Hatfield.

This preemptive move has been described as a benefit to the County's economy that would work directly with large industries that want to come to the county and build their own power plants that require large amounts of electricity. In actuality, it could also lend toward increased energy costs, construction of small nuclear reactors, data centers, and other energy drawing structures. Protestors gathered to advocate for more openness about the proposal and to urge constituents to vote "no" on the referendum.

Don't forget:

We are redesigning our website and would like to hear from you!

We ask that you take a few minutes to complete an online survey and share your thoughts. Your input is invaluable as we consider improvements to our website, and we want to redesign it in a way that allows you to engage with us how you would like and need. Note: Your responses will be anonymous.

[Take the Survey](#)

Last but not least, as we reminisce on the past 30 years of Virginia Organizing, we also want to take this opportunity to look to the future. That is why we are asking you to share your hopes and dreams for the next 30 years with us! Tell us what you want the future of Virginia and Virginia Organizing to look like!

Submit your hopes for the next 30 years!

[Share here!](#)

Meet Our New Organizers!

Francisco Lopez - (developing) Tri-Cities Area Organizer

Francisco joined Virginia Organizing as the organizer of the (developing) Tri-Cities Area (Hopewell/Petersburg) Chapter in September 2025. With a previous background in social justice initiatives, particularly language justice and work with immigrant communities, he



brings with him knowledge and first-hand experience with helping directly-affected community members. He attended Benedict College for Music before transferring to Virginia State University, where he graduated with a B.A. in Social Work. He specifically credits his time in his music program with developing his leadership skills.

He has worked extensively with the Virginia Language Justice Collective, doing immigration work throughout the state since 2016. Specifically, he worked with immigrant community members in the Richmond area. He was also a part of the Sanctuary Movement in Richmond, where undocumented community members were able to find safety in churches. During this time, Francisco worked in Spanish language interpretation, written interpretation, and spent time with the individuals he had the privilege to watch “grow up.” He considers this work to be the stepping-stone for him to pursue organizing.

While many of his experiences were positive, he also saw the negative impacts of the broken system. He shared that his time working with immigrant communities was his “first time seeing the immigration system not working properly” and “people running from persecution.” He watched people live through “a lot of horrific issues, but also got to see how the resistance gets to become a public place and hub for community at the end of the day.” He also appreciated the skills and knowledge that he learned, specifically surrounding immigrant paperwork and applications. “While others were learning about jobs and college, I was learning about intersectionality.”

Francisco’s passion for organizing and immigrant rights has shone even through other work that he has done in the Greater Richmond Area. He looks forward to continuing to grow and transfer his skills to his work with Virginia Organizing. He also looks forward to continuing to build the (developing) Hopewell Chapter, which he likened to “making bread from scratch.”

In addition to his organizing work, Francisco also considers himself to be a “music nerd,” enjoying multiple styles of music and playing seven different instruments.

Preston Graves - New River Valley Organizer

Preston joined Virginia Organizing as the New River Valley organizer in September 2025. He is a native of Southwest Virginia, growing up and living in Christiansburg. He has extensive experience engaging with the public, having most recently worked as a supervisor for a major retail



company and through a background in multiple sports. He is passionate about social justice and helping people, and was first introduced to Virginia Organizing after receiving a brochure during civic engagement activities in the New River Valley.

Preston considers his familiarity with the area to be a strength stepping into this organizing role. Not only does he know the locale and demographic well, but he has also experienced some of the racial dynamics and challenges first-hand. He has also volunteered for other local organizations helping low-income families and serving the larger community. Before joining Virginia Organizing, he was looking for more ways to give back to and progress the community using his valuable talents.

Working with Virginia Organizing, he most looks forward to “getting to know people and helping people.” He shared that he wants to “make a difference and move the needle forward,” and is thankful to have the opportunity to pursue one of his passions as his primary role.

“There’s no better time to [do this work]. If you truly want to help people, why would you want to do it when it’s easy? Easy or hard, there’s always a good time to do it,” said Preston.

Leader of the Month

Megan Shepherd - New River Valley Chapter



Megan has been an active member of the New River Valley Chapter for eight years. She was instrumental in the success of the chapter’s school-to-prison pipeline campaigns and has worked diligently on its housing campaign. She also played a key role in coordinating the chapter’s Know Your Rights Housing Forum.

Megan regularly canvasses with the NRV Chapter’s outreach team, writes letters to the editor, attends local and statewide events, and has spoken at School Board and Board of Supervisors meetings.

Most recently, Megan took the lead in planning the chapter’s fall fundraiser—an Adult Field Day for the community to enjoy. She led a fundraising team of six members, facilitating bi-weekly meetings for the past four months. Her leadership ensured a fun, engaging, and problem-free event day.

“Megan has been an extraordinarily vital member of the NRV chapter and has shown an incredible commitment to our work,” said Brandy Faulkner, Virginia Organizing State Governing Board member and New River Valley Chapter leader.

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Local Chapters and Areas Served:

Charlottesville/Albemarle County, Danville, Eastern Shore, Fredericksburg Area, Harrisonburg/Rockingham County, Halifax County, Lee County, Lynchburg, Martinsville/Henry County, New River Valley, Newport News/Hampton, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond Area, Suffolk, Waynesboro, Wise County, Wythe County

