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REPEAT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VIRGINIA INTERFAITH CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY
 Earthbound: 1716 East Franklin Street, Richmond, VA 23223
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Karen Cameron talks to the group gathered at Eastland UMC in Fredericksburg to hear more about closing the coverage gap.

Planning meetings underway in targeted legislative districts

VICPP has been ramping up district and community planning meetings with faith colleagues around the state to develop ways to work with and encourage legislators to expand health coverage in Virginia for the 400,000 people who could receive it if the General Assembly allowed health care expansion by drawing down federal Medicaid dollars.

Community planning meetings have been held or are being held in the Richmond area, Fredericksburg, Williamsburg, Hampton Roads, Roanoke, Northern Virginia and other places. The meetings are designed to help people understand the issues and plan how best to reach out and educate their legislators on the issues.

Even though the budget deficit is challenging for the state, it creates an opportunity for those advocating health care expansion. When the Affordable Care Act was passed, it created strong

incentives for states to expand health care for uninsured residents. For the last few years, the federal government has paid 100 percent of states' costs of expanding health coverage and thus 31 states and the District of Columbia have expanded coverage. Eventually, the federal government will only pay 90 percent of the expansion costs, but even so, the amount the state would have to pay out is offset by existing monies it pays for fully funded state health care, such as health care for inmates and health care provided through the university hospital systems.

The bottom line is that expanding health coverage in Virginia by drawing down federal Medicaid dollars will actually save the state money and reduce the state budget deficit. This is a very strong argument for legislators who pride themselves on being pragmatic

CALENDAR

- Sept. 10 RVA Peace Festival**
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church
- Sept. 15 District Planning Mtg.**
Districts 62 and 66; 6:30 p.m.; First Baptist Church Centralia, 2920 Kingsdale Rd, Richmond
- Sept. 16 VICPP Board Mtg.**
Virginia Holocaust Museum
- Sept. 26 Moral Revival event**
Virginia Union University
- Sept. 27 Social Justice Univ.**
Shiloh Baptist, Norfolk
- Sept. 29 District Planning Mtg.**
District 73; 5:30 p.m.; location TBA
- Oct. 13 District Planning Mtg.**
Senate District 10, House District 68; Time and location TBA
- Dec. 15 VICPP Annual Mtg.**
Virginia Holocaust Museum
- Jan. 25 A Day for All People**
Virginia State Capitol

Center convenes Wage Theft Task Force

On Monday, August 8, more than a dozen labor advocates gathered at the Interfaith Center to begin work on the issue of wage theft. This new Wage Theft Task Force was convened by VICPP executive director Kim Bobo and is comprised of the Commonwealth's leading experts on the subject, including union leaders, labor attorneys, worker center and immigration advocates, and public policy advocates.

Wage theft has long been a pressing issue in Virginia, especially in certain markets and sectors. As the name

suggests, wage theft involves unethical employers breaking the law by not paying workers all their legally owed wages. The most common forms of wage theft are not paying the minimum wage, not paying overtime when required, working people off the clock, stealing tips, and calling people independent contractors when they are truly employees. Wage theft not only does great harm to the individuals whose wages are stolen, but also harms other ethical businesses that compete against those companies with artificially low labor costs.

The Wage Theft Task Force will spend the next several years working collaboratively with the Department of Labor and Industry to ensure enforcement of existing wage laws, and also building grassroots campaigns to raise awareness of wage theft and make victims aware of their rights. They will also seek legislative remedies at General Assembly and in other municipalities. Together, the Task Force hopes to make Virginia a more hospitable place for all employees, and a national example for combating illegal wage theft.

-Owen Grey



Additions made to VICPP website

There have been incremental changes to VICPP's home on the World Wide Web in an effort to make things more user-friendly and interactive:

- Starting at the very top right corner of the home page, icons have been added that are linked to the social media accounts for the Center.
- The bar of blue headers has been expanded to include "Donate" and "Sign Up," and the "Sign Up" feature is linked directly to our database and includes more than just name and email address.
- There are now have some pictures in a rotation to make the page less static.
- Under the large photos will be

VICPP's main priority or featured project. Right now it's closing the healthcare coverage gap, specifically the "HEALTHCARE EXPANSION TOOLKIT" of resources that are available to supporters as the Center sponsors meetings around the state to mobilize its friends on this issue and create a groundswell of support.

- Beneath that there is a highlighted button to click on to add your information to the database, including home address so that you can be linked to your legislators.
- Scrolling down, bio sections have been added for all staff members.
- A section for the Board of Directors has been added, with photos and bios

for each of the Center's Board members.

- Continuing down, the Priority Policy section has been updated to reflect an emphasis on three main issues: closing the healthcare insurance coverage gap, ending wage theft in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and liberating the driver's licenses of approximately 170,000 Virginians who are not able to get their licenses because they owe court fines and costs.
- There is now an Events list, and a list of all latest postings, appeals and news items. Below that is an aggregator of the Center's social media posts, and finally there is an opportunity to sign up for the newsletter and an archive of past newsletters.
- Coming soon are pages for each of the Center's Chapters.

'Toolkit' available for download

Expanding health coverage by tapping into federal Medicaid dollars makes good sense, but Virginia's legislators often claim they are not hearing from constituents on this issue. It is our job to change that!

Download VICPP's new Healthcare Expansion Toolkit from the VICPP website. It provides tools to help you:

- Meet with your Delegate and Senator.
- Organize a letter-writing opportunity in your congregation.
- Ask your city, town or county to pass a resolution calling upon the General Assembly to expand access to healthcare coverage by drawing down federal Medicaid dollars.
- Answer questions people may have about the issue.
- Learn what your faith tradition says about expanding healthcare.

VICPP and VCV can't wait till the General Assembly convenes in January, so we are ramping up our advocacy now! Currently Center staff members are organizing meetings with legislators, pushing for local resolutions and congregations in letter-writing. To be effective statewide, we need the engagement of all of the Center's supporters.

To that end, download the toolkit at <http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/healthcare-expansion-toolkit/>. Then, let Karen Cameron (Karen@VAconsumervoices.org), who coordinates healthcare advocacy, know how you can help.

Tell us which Delegate or Senator you can contact (if you don't know your Delegate and/or Senator, you can use the link in the toolkit to identify your representatives). Tell us from which city, town or county you can seek a resolution. Or, tell us when your congregation will organize a letter-writing opportunity.

The Center has booked the meeting space of the Virginia Holocaust Museum, 2000 East Cary Street in Richmond, for its Annual Meeting, to be held on Thursday, Dec. 15. There will be a Board meeting that afternoon to work on business, followed by the Annual Meeting, which includes both awards and recapping the year's work.

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held on Friday, Sept. 16, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., also at the Holocaust Museum, to allow Board members to see that space.

On Aug. 12, Kim Bobo spoke to the Virginia State Convention of the AFL-CIO meeting at Colonial Williamsburg.



The board will review the progress made on its priority issues – expanding health care, restoring drivers' licenses and stopping and deterring wage theft, and plan ways to increase revenues to support the work, particularly through the event in December and the year-end appeal.



Following a very successful House Party held at the home of Debbie and Michael Linick in Annandale, with special guest State Sen. George Barker, a second House Party has been scheduled. Board member Dr. John Copenhaver and his wife, Marsha Childs, have scheduled a event for the Winchester area on Monday, Sept. 19, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Executive Director Kim Bobo will be available for conversation during this meal at their home at 1536 Dalton Place. A request for contributions will be made.

Please RSVP by Sept. 15 to jcopenha@su.edu, or call John at (540) 327-6771 for more details.

VICPP has a toolkit for hosting house parties. Please be in touch with Kim (Kim@virginiainterfaithcenter.org) if you are interested in hosting one.

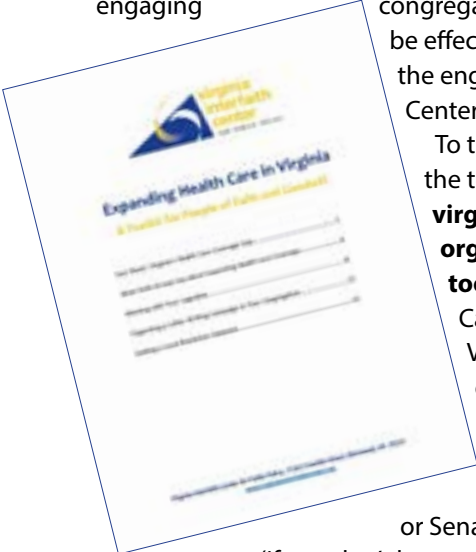


VICPP has gathered hundreds of signatures from faith-based leaders from all corners of the Commonwealth to appeal to the General Assembly to take advantage of the federal dollars to expand healthcare coverage for more than 400,000 of your neighbors, something signers understand as a moral imperative.

The Center will continue to make this its top priority as Virginians prepare for and enter the 2017 General Assembly session. This appeal letter continues to attract clergy and other faith leader signatures.

There are two ways to add your name:

You can fill out this electronic form found at <http://goo.gl/forms/SfyAl7Sj5o> or you can download, print and mail the copy found at: http://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/appeal_letter-for-religious-leaders-hard-copy-2.pdf.



Aggressive agenda needs your support

The following letter went out at the first of September as part of a direct mail appeal:

Dear Friend,

I've now been in Virginia as the new director of the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy for six months. It has been an exciting time for me and the organization. I want to share a bit about why I am excited about the work, where we are going and how you can help.

The number one question I've been asked is "Why did you take this job?" I sought out the position and, once offered, accepted because:

I love the mission and history. The Virginia Interfaith Center has a history of effectiveness. Its mission of educating and engaging the faith community on key economic and social justice issues resonates with my spirit. If you've taken action, attended an event, or made a contribution, you've helped make that history.

I love the deep interfaith and multiracial roots. The Virginia Interfaith Center is committed to being truly interfaith and truly multiracial. Both are hard to do and yet deeply important. I know you share my belief that building faith and racial diversity is critical for any organization that wants to reflect our society and be effective.

I love the people. From the first interview, I was impressed with the board of directors and the staff members. Now that I've met many of the volunteer leaders around the state, I am wowed. The people involved, like you, are passionate, generous and humble.

I want to make a difference. I am convinced that Virginia Interfaith Center can continue to help make a difference in Virginia. By educating and engaging people of faith and goodwill throughout the state, and with your support, we can make a difference for all members of our communities.

Together, we can help create fairness and opportunity in the Commonwealth.

So, where are we going?

At the June board meeting and chapter retreat, we collectively agreed to work on three issues in the coming year: Expanding health coverage for low-income Virginians by drawing on federal Medicaid dollars; restoring drivers' licenses to low-income people who have had their licenses suspended because of their inability to pay court fines and fees; and improving enforcement of and deterring wage theft. Our website gives details on all three issues.

These three issues will significantly raise family incomes for low-income Virginians. But, we can't move such an aggressive agenda without your help.

How can you help?

First, I ask you to pray for me and the organization. Leadership changes are exciting, but require extra prayer. Although I'm not new to the mission or social justice work, I am new to Virginia, so I will need extra prayer and guidance in learning the people (and politics!) of this fine state.

Second, please make a generous contribution to support the work today. Every Virginia Interfaith Center board member contributes and many are hosting house parties to raise support. I've made a substantial gift and will be putting the organization in my will. We can only do serious work if we are also serious about raising money. Please make a financial contribution today. You can contribute by check, online at www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/give, or by making stock or IRA gifts. In whatever ways you choose to contribute, we will be grateful.

Third, help us expand health coverage in the state to the 400,000 Virginians who fall in the healthcare gap because the General Assembly has prohibited the Governor from drawing down

federal Medicaid dollars that could be used to expand health coverage for low-income people. You can organize a meeting with your Delegate and Senator to talk with them about what role they can play in the General Assembly. You can find people who fall in the coverage gap and are willing to share their stories. You can get your city, town or county to pass a resolution calling on the General Assembly to expand health coverage by drawing down federal Medicaid dollars. Our online "Healthcare Toolkit" offers suggestions on how to engage your congregation, organize a meeting or letter-writing campaign, and a sample resolution.

Fourth, participate in our Day for All People advocacy day, scheduled for Jan. 25, 2017. Put this day on your calendar and plan on joining us.

I am thankful for all you've done to build and support the Virginia Interfaith Center. Please pray for us, make a contribution today and get involved.

With peace and justice,
Kim Bobo, Executive Director

P.S. If you want to invite one of our staff or board to your congregation, meet about getting involved or have suggestions for expanding financial support, please email me at Kim@virginiainterfaithcenter.org. Thank you.



Government files suit against mergers

Healthcare access for all citizens picked up a win last month with the U.S. Department of Justice announcing its suit to block the mergers of four large health insurers.

Anthem has submitted a response to the suit, and Virginia Consumer Voices for Healthcare has fielded this commentary from the D.C. Anti-Trust Law on the holes in Anthem's logic:

- Anthem denies virtually all of the DOJ's factual allegations of market share. However, these market shares are well vetted and the product and geographic markets they dispute have been widely used, including in state department of insurance investigations of the Anthem-Cigna merger.

- Anthem claims that the complaint fails to adequately allege any relevant product markets or geographic markets. However, the DOJ carefully lays out relevant markets in commercial health insurance, national accounts, large-group employers, and commercial health insurance sold on the public exchanges.

- Anthem denies that it has a reputation for having poor consumer service, being slow to innovate, and being difficult to work with. Last November 2015, the company was fined by California for maintaining inaccurate provider directories. Moreover, the California Department of Insurance found that Anthem had very high rates of complaints concerning plans, and below-average ratings for consumer satisfaction. Both California and Missouri fined Anthem for numerous consumer protection violations.

VCV's testimony at the State Corporation Commission's hearing in May to consider the Anthem-Cigna merger noted 2015 and 2012 Virginia-specific violations and fines by Cigna and Anthem, respectively.

A number of states have joined in the DOJ's complaint, including Virginia. Attorney General Mark Herring said that "the proposed mergers of Anthem/Cigna and Aetna/Humana would threaten the cost and quality of healthcare for Virginia seniors and working families."



The Virginia State Corporation Commission's General Counsel issued an economic analysis report on the impact on Virginia consumers of the proposed mergers, saying, "the Bureau's position is that Anthem has not made a sufficient showing in favor of the merger. The competitive impact analysis shows a lessening of competition. This finding presumes competitive harm that the detrimental impact analysis — while inconclusive — has not overcome. The burden is to demonstrate — upon a showing of competitive impact — that the lessening of competition as a result of the merger will not harm policyholders or the public in general. The burden has not been satisfied based on the information available and the Bureau recommends at this time that the merger is not in the best interests of policyholders or the public in general."

Virginia Consumer Voices for Healthcare is celebrating the State Corporation Commission's decision to protect Virginia's consumers.

A recent in-depth report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, "The Cost to States of Not Expanding Medicaid," clearly outlines how closing the coverage gap impacts state economies and budgets.

The report's key findings:

- For every \$1 a state spends on Medicaid expansion, it draws in \$7 to \$8 from the federal government.
- By expanding Medicaid, the 19 states [note: this number includes Virginia] that have yet to expand Medicaid would see an estimated \$27 billion drop in uncompensated care spending.
- If the 19 holdout states expanded

Medicaid, the federal government would spend \$43 billion less on uncompensated care and \$129 billion less on marketplace subsidies.

Specific findings for Virginia include:

- Savings of \$1.3 billion, 2017 through 2026, with moderate Medicaid enrollment.

- Savings of \$1.6 billion in the same time period with high Medicaid enrollment.

The report's authors say, "Thus far, expansion states have found that state cost increases resulting from higher caseloads are outweighed by state cost savings and revenue growth that result from expansion. For most states with relevant analyses, net fiscal gains are expected for the foreseeable future, even after states begin paying 10 percent of expansion costs."



Recently more evidence appeared to support the principle that coverage expansion has a positive effect on the lives of people living at or below the poverty line. The Journal of the American Medical Association reported on a study of the impact of coverage expansion in Arkansas, Kentucky, and Texas. Both Arkansas and Kentucky have expanded coverage, drawing Federal funding available for Medicaid expansion; Texas has not. Both Arkansas and Kentucky have significantly reduced the number of low-income people in their state locked out of access to quality, affordable healthcare.

DISTRICTS continued from pg.1 and fiscally conservative.

In addition to the planning meetings, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Norfolk is planning a community forum on coverage expansion on Sept. 29 at 6 pm in the Social Hall.

If you are interested in getting more involved and helping communicate your concerns about the need for Virginia to expand health coverage by drawing down federal Medicaid dollars, please contact Karen Cameron (Karen@virginiaconsumervoices.org) or Rev. Cassandra Shaw (Cassandra@virginiaconsumervoices.org).



The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy

invites you to

The National Moral Revival Tour

“TIME FOR A MORAL REVOLUTION OF VALUES”

with Dr. William Barber II and Dr. James Forbes Jr.



Monday, Sept. 26, Richmond

Register Now: <https://fs7.formsite.com/VACouncil/form51/index.html>
(There is no cost for these events)

Learn More: <http://www.moralrevival.org/>

Moral Political Organizing Leadership Institute & Summit Training Session

with Dr. Barber & Dr. Forbes

Monday, Sept. 26, 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Virginia Council of Churches headquarters
1214 W. Graham Road, Richmond, VA 23220

National Moral Revival Tour event

with Dr. Barber & Dr. Forbes

Monday, Sept. 26, 6:30 p.m.

Virginia Union University's Coburn Chapel
1500 N. Lombardy Street, Richmond, VA 23220

For more information, call (804) 321-3300.