

Jan. 21, 2023: Statewide Day of Action & Prayer How to Plan a Prayer Vigil on Affordable Housing

Background: Virginia has an affordable housing crisis. Very low-income families spend more than half their incomes on housing. Approximately 29 percent of families spend more than 30 percent of their incomes on housing. Rents have increased dramatically, and home prices have skyrocketed, making the American dream of home ownership out of reach for many families. Thousands of families are on waitlists for public housing programs and evictions are rapidly increasing the number of people who are homeless.

The Governor has said he is concerned about housing affordability, but despite huge budget surpluses, his proposed budget amendments offer little new money to build more affordable housing, provide rental assistance, or stop evictions. Instead, Governor Youngkin proposes \$1 billion in tax cuts that will mostly benefit affluent Virginians and corporations.

Budget Goals: VICPP and Virginia Organizing believe Virginia's budget should include the following allocations for affordable housing:

- \$75 million to the Virginia Housing Trust Fund to build more affordable housing and help prevent homelessness.
- \$738 million to the Housing Stability Fund to fund a rental voucher program to assist families with low incomes.
- \$12.5 million to the Virginia Eviction Reduction Program (VERP) to reduce evictions with short-term financial assistance to at-risk renters or homeowners.

Organize the Vigil: Organizing the vigil is easy and because the action is part of a broader set of actions taking place during the same weekend around the Commonwealth, your vigil can help ensure more money for affordable housing. Here are the simple steps for organizing the vigil:

1. **Choose a location.** You can hold the vigil in your congregation's parking lot, near a homeless shelter, outside a nonprofit affordable housing building, or at the site of a current affordable housing struggle, such as at a building where lots of people are getting evicted. A site that symbolizes the need for affordable housing is good for photos, but your congregation's parking lot is fine, too. Please be sure to clear it with any organization(s)/group(s) who use a building outside of which you plan to hold your vigil – some are visited by people who cannot be photographed due to safety and/or confidentiality reasons.
2. **Choose a date and time.** We are suggesting 10 a.m. on Saturday morning, Jan. 21, but feel free to adjust the time and even move it to Sunday, Jan. 22, if that works better for your group.

3. **Recruit a few leaders.** You will need people to:
 - a. Lead an opening prayer and closing prayer
 - b. Lead the litany – serving as the MC for the vigil
 - c. Share a story or two
 - d. Take pictures and/or videos. Be sure to send to VICPP.
4. **Print copies of the litany.** This will be based on the number of people you invite, but make sure to print an extra 5-10 to make sure you have copies for any additional people who join.
5. **Practice getting to petition.** The litany includes a QR code so people can sign a petition on affordable housing by using their phones. If you are not used to using QR codes, please try it ahead of time.
6. **Inform VICPP or Virginia Organizing of your event.** Please let both VICPP Faith Organizer Sheila (sheila@virginiainterfaithcenter.org) and VICPP Director of Communications Ayesha Gilani Taylor (ayeshaGT@virginiainterfaithcenter.org) know of your event's date and time, so we can promote it. Please confirm by 6 p.m. on Jan. 19 so Ayesha can include it in the press release. We will also be sharing in Virginia Organizing's monthly newsletter.
7. **Connect with VICPP Director of Communications about media coverage.** Pitch your local TV, radio, and press. Ayesha will also help line up local coverage of your event. Please be sure to get contact info of any interviewers that come to your event and share with Ayesha to follow up.
8. **Recruit people to participate.** Invite your friends, family, and congregants to participate. You can also invite your legislators who will likely be in the district over the weekend.

After the Event: Immediately after the event, please:

1. Post photos on social media, and tag VICPP (@vainterfaith) and Virginia Organizing (@VirginiaOrganizing). Include the following link to the petition:
tinyurl.com/vicpphousing2023
2. Send your photos and any news coverage to ayeshaGT@virginiainterfaithcenter.org who will be using the photos for press coverage and advocacy.
3. Follow both Virginia Organizing and VICPP's social media to keep informed about future opportunities to support affordable housing in Virginia.

Tip: Visit tinyurl.com/vicppquick or use this QR code to quickly access VICPP petitions, social media links, and more.

