

Invest in Change You Can See!

State Victories

Reforming Cash Bail in Virginia

In a move with national implications, VOICE played a leading role in Attorney General Mark Herring's agreement to pursue cash bail reform aggressively. Cash bail discriminates against poor people who cannot raise money for it, and leads to a loss of jobs, homes, and family support, punishing those who have not even been convicted, especially women and people of color.

Bold Reforms in Schools, Housing, and Criminal Justice

Governor Ralph Northam followed up on his commitments to 1,358 VOICE leaders at the October 21 VOICE State Action, in December proposing the following:

- 1) A \$36 million down-payment in 2019 on a three-year plan to increase the number of counselors in public schools to help with students' growing mental health needs. Youth with access to mental health service providers in their schools are 10 times more likely to seek care than others, and 1 in 5 experience the need during their school years.
- 2) \$19 million in additional funds over two years to significantly expand the state's housing trust fund to support increases in affordable housing. Today, teachers, first responders, and other workers commute as long as two hours so they can live affordably.
- 3) An end to the practice of suspending driver's licenses to punish low-income people who can't afford to pay court fees. People need their cars to get to work and earn money to pay back the state. Currently, 600,000+ Virginians are affected by this draconian policy.

The governor also committed to VOICE leaders that he would work with us on a multi-year plan to decrease mass incarceration, including reforming the cash bail system.

Local Victories

Alexandria City

- 1) Organized a non-partisan Get-Out-the-Vote campaign with public housing residents and doubled voter turnout in the precincts that are home to the most public housing residents.
- 2) Won \$4.3 million for affordable housing.
- 3) Got a commitment by the Mayor that public housing tenants will have oversight for the first time of public housing board appointments and new resident regulations.

Arlington County

- 1) Won near-parity in affordable housing funds with last year, even though the budget situation had deteriorated.

Metro DC Transit Investment

At the October Action, Governor Northam recognized the work of VOICE and our Metro IAF sister organizations in Washington DC and Maryland, saying, "Thank you so much for what you have done. Because of your energy and what you did last year...Metro now has a dedicated source of revenue. Virginia put \$154 million a year on the table. Washington and Maryland followed suit. That is because of you." This regional victory raised \$500 million per year for WMATA and is projected to yield \$15 billion in upgrades for transit infrastructure in the region.

Increasing Voter Engagement

More than 500+ Muslims, Jews, Christians, and Unitarians increased voter participation by 20%, notably more than the 14.38% in other District 10 Loudoun County precincts. VOICE leaders did strictly non-partisan Get-Out-the-Vote (GOTV) work door-to-door to get infrequent voters to the polls in the nationally watched District 10 midterm election.

- 2) Moved the school board to approve a new committee to ensure that school administrators and teachers pay attention to the needs of immigrants and refugee students and their families.

Prince William County

Won an additional 90 spaces for Pre-K programs – getting the total to 890 slots for low-income families with four-year-olds; VOICE leaders added to their previous victory establishing public pre-K programs.

Fairfax County

- 1) Led implementation of the school system's commitment to honor Muslim and Jewish holidays.
- 2) Won a commitment to restore bus service in a Vienna community where the loss of service is severely burdening children and older adults. Many residents there must walk more than a mile to the grocery store, the library, doctor's appointments, and jobs.
- 3) Is leading the effort in the historic African American community of Gum Springs, with parents, educators, and members of Bethlehem Baptist Church, to work together to address long-standing racial equity issues in their neighborhoods and schools.