Housing

Protection Against Unlawful Evictions
Unlawful evictions rose dramatically during the COVID-19 crisis, with some landlords using illegal lock-outs and utility shut-offs to evict tenants. To address this, VPLC is advocating for any tenant who is unlawfully evicted to recover statutory damages from their landlord. We are also advocating that Virginia require courts to hear any petition filed by a tenant alleging that they were unlawfully evicted within five days of filing, preventing these tenants from being forced to live without access to their homes.

Reinforce a Tenant’s Right to “Pay & Stay”
VPLC is advocating for Virginia to allow tenants to “pay and stay” to avoid eviction as often as possible. Currently, a tenant’s right to pay the amount of past due rent, late fees, and other charges to avoid eviction in Virginia is limited. Tenants can “pay and stay” (called redemption) after a judgment for eviction has been entered against them—but only once every twelve months. Encouraging tenants to “pay and stay” as often as they can benefits everyone: tenants stay safely housed, and landlords are made whole when tenants pay what they owe.

Environmental Justice in Virginia
VPLC supports an omnibus environmental justice bill addressing environmental and health issues disproportionately affecting low-income communities and communities of color. It will require the government to better involve the public when considering permits for harmful projects such as power plants, landfills, and sewerage treatment facilities and adopt environmental justice policies in future comprehensive plans.

Consumer Rights

Protect Homeowners & Close the Racial Wealth Gap
VPLC is encouraging increased homeownership in Virginia with an emphasis on closing the racial wealth gap through the Preserving the American Dream Act. 2021 legislation will focus on sustaining homeowners in these difficult economic times through legislation that helps homeowners facing loss of their homes to creditors and foreclosure.

Balance in the Electric Utility System
VPLC is taking steps to create a more fair electric utility system for Virginians.
Family & Child Welfare
Access to Affordable Healthcare for Children of Divorced Parents
VPLC is advocating that Virginia identify whether children are eligible for Medicaid/FAMIS when making child support determinations.

Protect Children in Foster Care
VPLC supports increasing emphasis on kinship caregivers for children in foster care, improving legal representation for families of children in foster care, and a foster care bill of rights.

Domestic & Sexual Violence
Change Court Forms to Ease Process for Domestic Violence Victims to Request Protection from the Court
Currently, magistrates require victims to sign a criminal complaint form to request extended protective orders even if the victim is not asking for a criminal case to be brought against their offender. Having to sign a form that looks like you are completing a criminal complaint against your abuser could have a chilling effect on a victim seeking an emergency protection order for a violent incident.

Prevent Domestic Violence Victims from Losing Employment When They Must Be in Court
Domestic and sexual violence victims should not have to choose between keeping their jobs and going to court to hold an offender accountable or to seek protection from them.
**Health Insurance**

Improve Immigrants’ Access to Medicaid
VPLC supports Medicaid prenatal care for all financially eligible pregnant women without regard to their immigration status; a higher age limit (from age 19 to age 21) for “legally residing” immigrants; and expanded emergency services for immigrants that includes all COVID-19 testing, treatment, and vaccines.

ACA Marketplace Affordability & Stability
VPLC is advocating for reductions in Marketplace premiums through a new “Reinsurance” program that assists insurers covering medical services for very high-cost enrollees. VPLC will continue to oppose any larger role for non-ACA compliant health plans (such as Association Health Plans), which are risky for consumers and undermine the ACA risk pool.

**Public Benefits**

Increase Access to SNAP
Implementing broad-based categorical eligibility for SNAP will increase the number of Virginians eligible for SNAP by increasing the federal poverty level from the current minimum of 130% to 200%. This will bring in more federal dollars through the SNAP benefits, which will help inject revenue into Virginia's economy.

18% Increase in TANF Monthly Assistance
The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) monthly benefits have seldom increased and not kept up with inflation. We are advocating for Virginia to annually increase the monthly assistance by 18% for the next four years, and then attach it to 50% of the federal poverty limit.

**Elder Law**

Simplify Access to Birth Certificates
VPLC fields calls from many seniors who have discovered errors on their birth certificates. A problem impacting communities of color in Virginia, the issue has become more urgent as birth certificates are required for Real ID. Simplifying the process will lift the burden from Virginia’s low-income and elderly population.

Protect Nursing Home Residents
VPLC supports bills to improve nursing home conditions in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly Medicaid nursing homes, which had the highest rates of COVID-19 infection in 2020. Requiring adequate staff will ensure that spread of disease within a facility is limited.