



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ARLINGTON VIRGINIA

A Place to Connect, Grow and Serve

January 25, 2018 - Connections article

VOICE Being Heard Loud and Clear in High Places

UUCA's social justice partner VOICE (Virginians Organized for Interfaith Community Engagement) is gaining influence with local and state power brokers. Governor Ralph Northam agreed to meet with our leadership and promptly designated his chief of staff as our liaison. Our goals intersect on raising Virginia's felony threshold for petty theft, which unfairly penalizes youth, lower-income, and minority populations with a cut-off point of \$200, the lowest in the country. Northam pushed for \$1000 and the state senate compromised at \$500 on January 18. Although this is short of our goal of \$1500 (on a par with Texas at \$2500 and South Carolina at \$2000), we are feeling confident that our political power can give Northam the backing he needs to make his case in Richmond for further reform.

Arlington County Board Member Christian Dorsey has also connected with us on our agenda, addressing a January 16 VOICE caucus meeting on his "number one issue," affordable housing. Dorsey hopes to implement Housing Conservation Districts in order to stave off reckless development and address zoning ordinances that promote larger new-construction homes and lower density over housing that benefits low-income and middle-class Arlington residents.

Dorsey and Northam have apparently recognized the power in VOICE as an ally, giving us an opportunity to achieve our goals. Now that we have their ears, we strongly urge UUCA members and friends to tell us their concerns, so we can pass them on! Please contact Pat Findikoglu, patfindikoglu@gmail.com.