



Voice

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How Low Can Vermont Go? *State Keeps Cutting, Regardless Of Impact*

Still reeling from the State's 150 job cuts on June 30—and its subsequent 50+ job cuts as part of two recent budget rescission plans—VSEA and many state employees are now warning that Vermont's public services can't be cut any deeper without serious ramifications. They're also cautioning that reduced staff levels are making it nearly impossible in some agencies and departments to adequately serve the growing number of Vermonters seeking advice and help during this difficult economic time.

"This entire exercise, to date, has been about cutting, cutting and more cutting," VSEA Director Jes Kraus told WDEV in a December 18 radio interview about Vermont's budget crisis. "Vermont's neediest populations and Vermont state employees are upset that so far we've had to bear all the pain of the State's budget cuts. VSEA thinks it's time now for our political leaders and the State to begin considering alternatives to cuts or ways to generate new revenue. Doing this would certainly help mitigate some of the adverse impact all these cuts are having on Vermonters and their public services."

Budget Rescission Proposals Add Up To More Pain For State Employees

Economically, things went from bad to worse in August 2008, when the State's Joint Fiscal Office (JFO) announced that Vermont was facing a new \$32 million budget shortfall. The remedy, State officials told the legislature's 10-person Joint Fiscal Committee (JFC) was to adopt its proposed rescission plan to make up the deficit by cutting 16 additional state employee jobs.

With little debate, the JFC approved the State's proposal. However, prior to voting on the proposal, JFC member Sen. Ann Cummings (D-Washington) asked the State to identify the 16 state employee positions it wanted to cut, but Finance and

Management Commissioner Jim Reardon said the State did not want to identify the employees now, just in case circumstances were to change. Cummings reminded the JFC that it is difficult to approve a proposal when you don't know what the impact is going to be after the cuts occur. Reardon closed his remarks by admitting again (after months of denial) that it would be "disingenuous" of the State to deny that these cuts would not have any impact on services. In a statement to the press, VSEA General Counsel Michael Casey (who, at the time was serving as VSEA's Interim Director) said: "Now that the State—after months of denial—is finally acknowledging that its cuts will have an impact on services, Vermonters deserve honest answers about how the services they depend upon will be impacted. With the State's additional 250 job cuts on the horizon, VSEA continues to call on the State, the Joint Fiscal Committee and the entire Legislature to provide—and require—a detailed plan of who is being cut and what impact that specific employee's vacancy will have on services."

Unfortunately, the bad economic news kept coming, and, on November 18 the JFC met to hear from the JFO and the State about the projected future of Vermont's economy. As expected, the news was not good. Vermont's projected deficit for fiscal year 2009 was going to be approximately \$60 million; \$37 million of which needed to be addressed right away. To make up the \$37 million deficit, the State was recommending a host of new service and program cuts, plus the elimination of even more state employee jobs.

The JFC met again on December 15 to begin debating the State's latest budget rescission proposal, but it had been pared down to just \$19.7 million because the State and the JFC were only able to agree in principle on that amount of cuts. Still, the rescission proposal called for the elimination of 35 more state employee

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Now More Than Ever, Your Voice Is Needed!



VSEA members across the state are urged to call, e-mail or visit your local legislators to remind them that it's wrong to rely solely on deep cuts to programs, services and the workforce to pull Vermont out of this tough economic downturn. Ask them why there isn't more focus on the other side of this economic struggle, which is to find new revenue by researching every available option. Let them know you support using VSEA's alternatives (see page 3) if it will help preserve our services, programs and jobs. If you are unsure who your General Assembly members are, go to:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/legdir2.htm>

VSEA members are also urged to write letters to the editors of your local newspapers and tell Vermonters what life is like at your workplace since all these job cuts started coming down. If you have a story about how a particular public service is suffering due to the cuts, why not share it with Vermonters? To find an online listing of local VT newspapers and their "letter to the editor" links, go to:

<http://www.vsea.org/send-letter-editor-your-local-paper>

Most important, share this message with your co-workers, friends and family!!!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Ed Note: The following letters were culled from Vermont newspapers. Both are from VSEA members, regarding state and national issues.

Appeared in the 12/18 *Rutland Herald*

Reject Draconian State Budget Cuts

As you know the state is facing a terrible problem. You've heard people saying that \$64 million must be cut to balance the state budget so that your taxes don't have to be raised. You've heard people saying the state has to be responsible and share the financial pain that you are feeling. This sounds sympathetic, but unfortunately, is the wrong thing to do.

If the state gets its way, entire programs will be cut; more Vermonters will be unemployed, and will need the very government services it used to provide. Think about the ways that you depend on the state, from keeping your roads and communities safe, to helping in your times of need with food, housing, health care or employment, or simply obtaining licenses and registrations. Think about how the state provides for your children's' education, and assists the disabled and elderly.

It is not true that if these cuts aren't made, your taxes will go up. Facing this problem does not have to mean tax increases. Not only because you can't afford more taxes, but because tax increases will undo any effort to stimulate the economy and end the recession. Likewise, draconian cuts will only make the recession deeper.

Please contact your legislators and the governor. Tell them to use the rainy day fund, and Vermont's unique ability to borrow. Tell them to close the capital gains tax loophole that makes you pay higher taxes than the rich. Ask them to stop outsourcing state services to temps and contractors. If the governor wants to share your pain, ask him to forego his entourage of media spokesmen and his \$14,000 meal per.

If we raise our voices and Montpelier listens, we can weather this crisis. If not, you can count on things getting even worse.

Arthur Hamlin
Braintree

Appeared in the 11/24 *Times Argus*

Why Pay Health Insurance Firms?

Health Insurance costs skyrocketing... has anyone else ever wondered why in the world we are paying insurance companies? Why are we paying a middleman for our health care. Insurance companies are for profit, and "profit margins" are their bottom line, not our health and well being.

The CEOs of these insurance companies are making all the profit while offering their employees low wages, with few if any benefits. Seems pretty simple to me: Cut out the fat, cut the insurance companies. We all pay huge premiums to be told by some insurance employee which drugs we can have and those decisions depend on the kickbacks they receive from the drug companies, not whether or not the drug works for you. They dictate which operations you can have - in general they decide what health care you get or don't get. Who are they? Personally I think those decisions should be made between you and your doctors.

If we took the millions of dollars paid to insurance companies for health insurance and instead helped finance our hospitals and doctors I think we would be getting a much better return for our dollar. Socialized medicine? Why not, we all wait for care now, some of us are dying before we get to see a doctor, if we can find one, some folks are dying in the emergency rooms through neglect and some can't get a doctor to take new patients. Seems the complaints here in the U.S. are about the same as in Canada. Get smart, get rid of the middleman here.

Catamount Health is a good example of a waste of time and money - all that effort to set up that program and now Vermonters can't afford it. Not enough "profit" margin? I say smarten up and dump the insurance companies, send the premiums directly to the hospitals and doctors. I'll pay a portion of my income in taxes to finance health care, and I think we'd all be way ahead of the game. We need another way to finance health care and paying "for profit" insurance companies isn't the way.

Bonnie Kynoch
Montpelier



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VSEA's Suggested Ways To Generate Revenue That Don't Include Cutting More State Employee Jobs And Services

TAP VERMONT'S RAINYDAY FUND!



Budget stabilization or "Rainy Day" Funds allow states like Vermont to set aside excess revenue for use in times of unexpected revenue shortfall or budget deficit.

When last checked, Vermont's Rainy Day Funds totaled more than \$80 million. VSEA believes this money should be used now to buffer the State's finances and prevent even more and deeper cuts to State services and employees.

As VSEA members know all too well, it's not only raining in Vermont, it's pouring!

CLOSE VERMONT'S CAPITAL GAINS LOOPHOLE FOR THE RICH

Targeting Tax Loopholes & Giveaways



A capital gain is income from the appreciated value of an asset (stocks, bonds, a business, art, etc.); not including primary residences); while income (if any) from such assets is taxed along the way, the increased value is not taxed until the point of sale.

For example, you buy a business or stock for \$3 million and hold it for 20 years; you then sell it for \$8 million; some of the increase is inflation but on the other hand you haven't paid tax on that during those 20 years so it's a wash.

Unlike regular wage & salary income, where you pay tax on the first dollar (after the personal exemption & standard deduction), Vermont currently excludes the first 40% of the capital gain from tax [note that the federal tax on long-term cap gains is only 15% while the top rate for income is almost 40%!]; so in the example cited above, the taxpayer realized a \$5 million gain; but instead of paying tax on \$5 million, he/she only pays tax on \$3 million (only a handful of states do this).

In 2007, legislative and State leaders said that closing Vermont's capital gain tax loophole would generate an estimated \$20 million in new revenue for Vermont. That's a lot of state employee jobs!

PRIVATE CONTRACTORS & TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES



The State's use of private contractors (sometimes out-of-state contractors) and temporary workers has grown a lot over the past seven years. Recent evidence of this problem is the State's 2008 flu shot clinic program, which until this year had always been conducted by state employees. But after VDOH informed the State in May 2008 that, because of staffing issues, they couldn't operate the clinics this year, the service was contracted out to a private company based in New Hampshire.

Through a public records request, VSEA learned in 2007 that the State spent more than \$100 million in 2006 to contract with private vendors like the one that ran this year's flu clinics. Meanwhile, the State spent approximately \$11 million in 2006 to employ temporary workers to perform state services.

VSEA contends that if the State was to cut back its use of private contractors and temporary employees by a mere 5 to 10 percent, tens of millions of taxpayer dollars would be saved and dozens of critical public services would be protected and made whole again.

GOVERNOR'S PERKS



While public services and state employee jobs are being cut, Vermont's Governor Jim Douglas' salary increase at a rate much faster than the average working Vermonters. In fact, Douglas' \$150,000+ salary makes him the nation's tenth highest paid governor. Keep in mind, Vermont is the nation's 49th largest state.

Seven Days reporter Shay Totten also uncovered recently that Douglas receives a \$54 meal allowance, five days a week, 52 weeks a year. That adds up to \$14,040 — just shy of what a Vermont minimum-wage worker earns in a year (\$15,662). It's also the rough equivalent of a VSEA member's yearly benefit package.

If state employees and services are being sacrificed due to Vermont's economic downturn, why isn't Governor Douglas offering to share in this sacrifice by forfeiting his meal stipend or refusing pay increases (like former Gov. Howard Dean did).

JOB CUTS

Job Cuts

Continued from page 1

jobs. This time around, the JFC invited the public to comment on the cuts prior to a vote.

The neediest Vermonters, their advocates, VSEA members and many citizens packed the State House on December 16 and 17 for two days of compelling testimony about the need for public services during times of economic downturn.

VSEA Director Jes Kraus testified on behalf of the union about the adverse impact of continued cuts to services, programs and jobs.

"[The proposal's] details do not bode well for the neediest Vermonters, espe-

Lawmakers will take up the additional budget shortfall when they assemble on January 7, 2009, to begin the new legislative session.

VSEA estimates that, already, Vermont's state workforce has been reduced by 6-7 percent since the State first acknowledged our tanking economy in November 2007.

"Master List" Released. Nothing Is Final!

Just hours after the initial \$19.7 million proposal was released to the public, VSEA and some members of the press were asking why the State wasn't releasing all of its proposals to achieve the full \$37 million budget reduction.

The "Master List" can be found at:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/jfo/Appropriations/Master%20List%20of%20Reduction%20Ideas%2012-17-08.pdf>

Or, you can log on to www.vsea.org and find the list there as well. The proposals that directly impact state employees can be found on page 2 of the list.

Details Forthcoming About The State's Next 250 "Position Reduction Exercise"

As the *VOICE* was going to print, there was little to no information available from the State about the next wave of 250 job



VSEA Director Jes Kraus warns the legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee in December about the adverse impact of even more cuts.



As Kraus testified, these VSEA members stood with him in solidarity.

cially those who depend on the State's child care, employment, health care and mental health services," warned Kraus. "Unfortunately, it looks like these critical services will suffer even deeper and more detrimental cuts. This is very bad news for all Vermonters." While Kraus testified, more than a dozen VSEA members in attendance stood silently in a show of solidarity.

Kraus also told the committee that VSEA was disappointed the State was continuing to dismiss the idea of tapping the State's Rainy Day Funds to help alleviate some of Vermont's economic pain.

"The situation facing Vermont today is exactly why the Rainy Day Funds were created," said Kraus. "How long can the State avoid using these funds to buffer Vermont's sagging economy and protect our critical services? Time is running out—and quickly."

Despite the testimony, letters, phone calls and all other communiqués, on December 19, the JFC signed off on the State's budget cutting package, voting to keep it largely intact.

In a *Burlington Free Press* story, VSEA Director Jes Kraus criticized the State for failing to initially make public all its ideas to save money. "The [State] isn't showing us the entire \$37 million," he said. "I think Vermonters deserve to know what is in store for their public services."

Soon afterward—in response to VSEA and others' inquiries—the State did release a "Master List of [Budget] Reduction Ideas" that could be considered to reach the \$37 million. The list includes a myriad of budget reduction ideas, including several that would directly impact state employees' wages, benefits and work hours. Ideas for the list were generated by both the State and Joint Fiscal Committee members.

"These are just ideas right now and nothing more," cautioned VSEA Director Jes Kraus. "But I urge VSEA members to read through the list and pay special attention to the proposals that pertain to state employees."

cuts that are coming soon. The 250 additional job cuts complete the State's 400 "position reduction exercise" that began in June 2008.

"VSEA still believes that with all the job cuts being made by the State outside of this particular 'exercise,' it will be virtually impossible for it cut an additional 250 job cuts in the mandated time frame just by not filling jobs left vacant through attrition and retirement," says VSEA Director Kraus. "VSEA and its members will be scrutinizing the list very closely, once it's officially released."

On the upside, at a November 13 meeting of the legislature's newly created "Government Accountability Committee"—part of whose charge is to monitor the State's job cutting process—Secretary of the Administration Neale Lunderville reassured the committee that "no one will lose their job" as a result of the next round of 250 job cuts.

JOB CUTS

VSEA Members Rally In Montpelier Against Job Cuts

On September 12, more than 100 sign-toting VSEA members lined State Street in front of the Pavilion Building in Montpelier to rally against the State's 400 job cuts. For 45 minutes, members chanted loudly and held signs that said things like: "My Back Hurts From Balancing The Budget," "Where's The Plan?" "Forget The Bone, We're Down To The Marrow," and many other things. The demonstration received good television coverage on WCAX and WPTZ.

VSEA thanks everyone who participated in the rally. If you want to be contacted about—or involved in—a future VSEA action, please contact your Chapter president or VSEA Organizing Coordinator Gretchen Naylor at gnaylor@vsea.org, or by phone at 223-5247.



VSEA members Helen and John Cross let their signs do the talking.



VSEA members Shelley Martin and Sue Baird protest in front of the Pavilion Building. More than 100 VSEA members rallied in September against the State's 400 job cuts.



VSEA AOT members Jerry Comstock and Bernie Peters send a message to Montpelier and all Vermonters concerned about the state's crumbling roads and bridges.



The VSEA rally stretched from the Vermont Supreme Court Building...



...all the way up State Street and around the corner of Gov. Davis Way to the Pavilion Building's front doors.

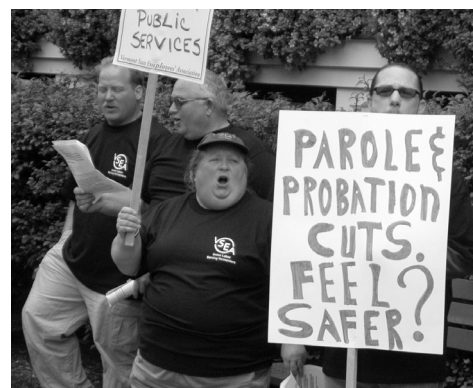


Many people walking past the VSEA demonstration stopped to inquire about the issue and to voice their support for state employees.



Left – Anthony Pollina (right), VSEA's endorsed candidate for Governor, stands side by side on the picket line with VSEA member Tim Cropley.

Right – VSEA members like Terry Lefebvre (center, hat) and those around her chanted their frustration with the way the State has implemented its job cuts.



Know Your Reduction-In-Force Rights!

Ed Note: The VOICE is running this important information as a way to help educate VSEA members about their contractual rights in the event of a State reduction in the workforce. Please review the information so you are better prepared for new rounds of State job cuts. As always, this information is available every day on the VSEA website (www.vsea.org).

Note: When the State of Vermont lays off any of their State employees, here are the rules that come into play.

A. What is accomplished by the reduction in force / re-employment (recall) rights articles in your collective bargaining agreement?

- The contract establishes a fair and equitable system for determining the order of layoffs.
- Both seniority and past performance are factors which management must take into account when identifying the affected employees.
- Seniority is the only factor for employees with at least five (5) years continuous State service.

B. When layoffs are necessary, who determines which job titles will be affected?

- The individual department (appointing authority) makes the determination.
- VSEA receives five (5) days prior notice and is given the opportunity to discuss alternatives.

C. Who determines the order of layoff?

- The Department of Human Resources in Montpelier determines which employee(s) in the affected class(es), or series, will be laid off.
- The order of separation is controlled by the contract.

D. What if there are vacancies in your department or agency, will you still be laid off?

If vacancies exist in your department or agency which management intends to fill, at the same or a lower pay grade and if you meet the minimum qualifications and can do the job, you will be offered that position in accordance with the recall provisions of the contract.

E. What is the order of layoff?

A RIF is accomplished on a geographic basis by class, series, and department. A geographic basis is that area within a 35-road mile radius of the positions regular duty station. The order is as follows:

1. Employees with less than three (3) years continuous State service who have a current annual rating of "Unsatisfactory".
2. Employees in their first year of service. This is based upon their end of probation evaluation.
3. Employees who have received only one annual evaluation. This is based upon ratings.
4. Employees who have received only two annual evaluations. This is based upon ratings.
5. Employees with more than three (3) years but less than five (5) years of continuous State service will then be separated. Layoffs will be based upon seniority with consideration given to performance rating evaluations. Those employees with

"above average" ratings with a three (3) year period will be separated last.

6. Employees who have five (5) or more years of continuous State service will be separated last. This is based solely on seniority.

F. Can you "bump" other employees with less seniority?

The contract provisions on displacement ("bumping") are confusing, and we encourage our members to discuss these questions with their steward or field representative. All determinations on displacement options are made by the Department of Human Resources after extensive review of all the issues such as seniority and vacancies. Employees have five calendar days to exercise their bumping rights.

In brief, the following displacement path is followed:

1. Vertical and horizontal displacement rights will apply within a series of classes and within a department and within a 35-mile geographic area.
2. Employees will first be notified of any displacement options within their job class, i.e. bumping less senior employees in the department and within the 35-mile geographic area.
3. Employees will next be notified of horizontal options (associated classes) for which the laid-off employee has pre-registered.
4. Employees will also be notified of vertical displacement options within the approved series of vertical displacement; first displacing the most junior employee in the next lower series.
5. Employees are then offered options to displace (in this order) original probationers in permanent or limited service positions, provisional employees, or temporary employees who fill positions at the same or lower pay grade when you meet the minimum qualifications for the position.

NOTE: A list of vertical classes within series is maintained as part of the contract. It is updated quarterly.

G. What is your status if you displace a temporary employee?

You will retain your recall rights and Health Insurance Benefits as described below.

H. How will you be notified of your layoff?

You will be notified, in writing, by your department or agency at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the effective date. This notice will advise you of the following:

- a) to file an updated employment application with the Department of Human Resources;
- b) to define your reemployment parameters (explained below);
- c) to schedule a personal interview, if you wish, to discuss reemployment opportunities;
- d) to inform you of any vertical bumping rights you might have.

I. What is the effective date of layoff?

The effective date of layoff is your last day of work.

J. What are recall rights?

- Recall Rights are mandatory rights to a permanent classified position with State government.
- Recall Rights begin thirty (30) days before your last day of work and continue for two years.
- Recall Rights mean that you have mandatory rights (based on seniority on the recall list) to position vacancies which management intends to fill.
- The position vacancy must fall within your pay grade or lower; you must meet the minimum qualifications and you must have indicated your willingness to work in such a position through the parameters you set up with the Department of Human Resources.
- "Mandatory Rights" means that management has to offer you the position, not that you have to accept the position. You are entitled to three (3) offers of reemployment following the effective date of layoff.
- Recall Rights do not extend to promotional opportunities, which you should monitor and pursue on your own.

K. What if you were previously laid off from a higher pay grade?

If you receive a RIF notice, and you were laid off from a higher pay grade position within the preceding two years, you will have recall rights to jobs at the higher pay grade.

L. What are re-employment parameters? How do you set them?

Re-employment Parameters, set by the employee, spell out the types of work, hours and geographic areas that the employee will consider for re-employment. An employee on recall status is required to notify the Department of Human Resources of these parameters before they will make any re-employment offer to the employee. Call Human Resources to establish your parameters as soon as possible following your notice of layoff.

The parameters that you set limit your mandatory re-employment offers to jobs that you find acceptable. You will only be offered jobs that fall within the parameters you set. To set parameters you must specify the following:

- Geographic area;
- Pay grade range (from your current pay grade and lower);
- Type of work you are seeking (titles or more general);
- Status of work you will consider (full-time, part-time, permanent, limited);
- Hours of work (shifts).

You may restrict your availability further, if you desire, by specifying particular departments or fields in which you will accept offers. This does not exclude you from pursuing, under the recall article, other positions outside the

RIF RIGHTS

parameters you set up. Declining positions outside your parameters do not count against you.

M. How do recall rights work?

Starting thirty (30) days before your last day of work, you are eligible for mandatory rehire rights to vacancies in State government that management intends to fill, and for which you are eligible and fall within the reemployment parameters that you have set with the Department of Human Resources.

Once you have set your employment parameters, any job offers you turn down will count as a "strike" against your three offers. You must accept a third offer or lose your mandatory recall rights. You will be offered jobs only within the parameters you have set.

Note: If you receive a call at home from a department asking if you are interested in a job, you may assume that they have been told by the Department of Human Resources that you are on recall status, meet the minimum qualifications and have rights to the job. You are entitled to receive all job offers in writing. You have five (5) work days from the date that you actually receive the written notice of the offer to decline the offer.

N. Can you lose your recall rights?

Yes, under the following conditions:

1. Decline three offers of reemployment. Failure to respond to a written offer within five work days constitutes a refusal.
2. If you inform the Department of Human Resources that you are unavailable for work. Recall Rights may be "frozen" if you are physically unable to accept work.
3. If you fail to set your employment parameters and update your employment application with Human Resources

Note: You can accept a Limited Service position without forfeiting your remaining mandatory offers; however, if you accept a limited position on your last offer, you will no longer have RIF rights. Acceptance of a limited position counts as one offer.

O. Can you accept a job outside of state government without forfeiting your recall rights?

Yes, provided that the Department of Human Resources has been notified that you are available for a State position that falls within your reemployment parameters.

P. Can you maintain insurance coverage if on recall status?

Yes, you can retain your health insurance coverage at the 80-20% co-payment rate for the first six pay periods after you are laid-off. After that, you must arrange to pay the entire premium, on a bi-weekly or monthly basis, in order to maintain coverage.

Q. What will you receive for pay and benefits once you are reemployed by the state pursuant to the recall provisions of the contract?

PAY: You will receive the same salary you were receiving at the time of layoff plus any negotiated salary increases, provided, however:

1. If you accept a job in a lower pay grade, you cannot make more than the maximum salary (Step 15) of the pay grade to which you are reemployed;

2. If you accept a displacement offer (meaning that you "bump" another employee) into one or two lower pay grades, your salary will be treated as a voluntary demotion and will be red circled (held at your current rate). If you bump three or more pay grades your salary will be treated as a voluntary demotion and subject to a reduction in pay (not less than 1.5% and then downward slotting) and subject to the maximum of the grade to which you are reemployed (Refer to Salaries & wages Article, Section 12 (a) and (b).

ANNUAL LEAVE: When you are laid off, you will be paid off for a maximum of 20 days (160 hours) of Annual Leave (provided you have that amount in your leave balance). Up to 10 days (80 hours) may be retained by you, to be re-credited if you are rehired within four (4) months after you are laid off. If you are reemployed within 2 years you will accrue leave at the rate applicable to your years of service. See Section 13 of the "Reemployment Rights" Article of the contract for more details.

R. Are you entitled to unemployment compensation while on recall status?

Yes. Apply by calling the Unemployment Claims Center toll free line 1-800-983-2300. Although the Dept of Labor Career Resource Centers can not help you in filing an unemployment claim, DOL staff can assist you in re-employment services.

S. Does the department of Human Resources monitor local hires of each department?

All departments must check with the Department of Human Resources to determine if there are any eligible RIF employees who have rights to the job before filling a vacancy.

T. Can a department decide not to fill a vacancy?

Yes, a department may withdraw a vacancy at any time.

U. What happens if you cannot do the job you accept under the recall rights provisions in the contract?

- If an employee is re-employed under recall rights, and later decides that (s)he cannot perform the duties of the position, (s)he can resign and have the opportunity to go back on recall status. You will have only rights to the remaining time (limited up to two (2) years and number of recall offers that are left).
- If you accept an offer of re-employment in a new agency or department you will be placed in a 90-day probationary period. If you do not successfully complete the probationary period, your Recall Rights will be reinstated as if you had never accepted the position.

V. What if you refuse to bump another employee out of a job -- do you have recall rights?

Yes. You are not required to displace another employee even if that option is offered to you.

W. Which employees do not have recall rights?

1. Employees who do not have permanent status and/or who do not occupy a classified position in State government;

2. Employees in their original probationary periods;
3. Employees with less than 3 years combined Limited Status or Permanent Status.

X. Any other questions?

Check with your worksite steward, or call your VSEA Field Representative at VSEA HQ, (802) 223-5247.

Document Revised: 4/22/08; RIF info has been posted on VSEA website (www.vsea.org).

Layoffs and Permanent Part-Time Employees

The Contract states that, "Permanent part-time employees shall not be included with permanent full-time employees for the purpose of layoff selection."

This means that the employing department or agency may treat part-time employees as a separate class and therefore can choose to layoff the part-time employees either before or after the full-time position class layoffs. If, however, the department/agency chooses to lay off part-time position classes first, the order for layoff within the part-time employee group would still go by seniority and the other factors as applicable outlined in the Contract for layoff selection.

However, once layoff has occurred, any part-time employee can set their employment parameters for any permanent full-time or part-time state position. This means that once a part-time employee is on the layoff list—and if that employee opts to compete for full-time State positions—that part-time employee would be in the same re-employment pool, based on qualifications and seniority, as any full-time position.

VSEA ANNUAL MEETING 2008

More than 100 VSEA members from across Vermont were at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier on September 13 to attend the union's 64th Annual Meeting. In addition to voting on several bylaw changes, the members also supported the VSEA Council and Board of Trustees' recommendation to endorse Independent Anthony Pollina in the race for governor.

This year's Annual Meeting banquet featured a keynote address by newly appointed Secretary of Administration, Neale Lunderville, who told the crowd that he operates differently from his predecessor and that VSEA would be invited into his office to discuss ways to work better together to arrive at similar goals. But Lunderville, who was good natured about the irony of him being selected to address a VSEA gathering, did admit that there would probably still be areas where there would be disagreement.

Here is a summary of substantive changes made at this year's VSEA Annual Meeting:

Bylaw Changes

At the VSEA Annual Meeting, several changes were made to the Master Articles of Association and Bylaws. The following were approved:

- Article 3 was amended to ensure that only a dues paying member may be a candidate for VSEA elected office;
- Bylaw 1 was changed so that VSEA Trustee election ballots will not be sent if a seat is uncontested. This change is expected to save VSEA members two thousand dollars in ballot mailing and preparation costs;
- Bylaw 11 was amended to add the Judicial Board to the list of committees eligible for release time under the collective bargaining contracts;
- Bylaw 19 had language added to ensure confidentiality of cases before the Judicial Board by members of the Board. A new section was added to the bylaw that requires the Judicial Board Chair to file an annual meeting report regarding the number of cases heard by the Board and the disposition of them; and
- The Supervisory, State Police, Judicial and the State Colleges Units all added language to their bylaws to allow the Units to elect their officers and bargaining teams for either one-year or two-year terms.

Budget Changes

The membership approved a 30-cent dues increase per paycheck (bi-weekly) that became effective November 6, 2008. The additional revenue will cover increased operating expenses, such as: utilities; taxes; maintenance; insurances; postage and phones; incremental increases associated with personnel; as well as program initiatives to strengthen union bargaining and legislative initiatives.

Mazza Award



Monte Mason (above) was awarded the "Mazza" Award, which is named for past VSEA President Frank Mazza. The award acknowledges a VSEA member who has served VSEA through their time and efforts helping to achieve the goals of improved wages, benefits and working conditions for VSEA members. Mason is a diehard trade unionist and is always actively trying to educate people on the importance of "buying American" and belonging to a union. He is an electrical inspector with the DPS's Division of Fire Safety.

Macaig Award



Shelley Martin was awarded the "Macaig" Award, which is named for past VSEA President Terry Macaig. The

award acknowledges a VSEA member for outstanding contributions or actions that directly or indirectly promote the positive image of VSEA and/or public employees. Martin constantly promotes VSEA positively to members and the public, and she is a top recruiter of new businesses for the union's Advantage Discount Program. She is an administrative assistant with the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Steward of the Year



Terry Lefebvre was awarded the "Steward of the Year" Award for her dedicated and unwavering advocacy for VSEA members at worksites throughout the Chittenden Chapter. Lefebvre (left, shown here receiving her award from Janis Henderson, who is a member of the VSEA Awards Committee). Lefebvre is financial resources coordinator with the Vermont Department of Health.

Chapter of the Year



The Waterbury Chapter was awarded the "Chapter of the Year" Award for the proactive way its members are engaged in both their union and the community. Pictured here receiving the award from VSEA First Vice President Bob Hooper (far left) are Waterbury Chapter officers (left to right): President Shelley Martin, Vice President Tracey Harrington, Treasurer Tim Cropley and Secretary Vicki Conti.

VSEA ANNUAL MEETING 2008

Legislator of the Year

Every year, VSEA awards a "Legislator of the Year" Award to a member(s) of the state legislature who has been a leader on VSEA issues and who has worked with the union to help advance our causes.



Outgoing Senator Jim Condos (D-Chittenden County) was awarded VSEA's "Legislator of the Year" Award for his historic dedication to fighting to ensure Vermont workers were treated fairly and were receiving the economic and social justice they have earned. Condos announced in the fall of 2008 that he was retiring from the legislature and would not be running for re-election. For many years, Condos was chairperson of the Senate's Government

Operations Committee; a key committee for hearing and advancing VSEA issues and concerns. After receiving his award, Condos remarked to the banquet crowd that he will miss working with the VSEA membership and he thanked VSEA members for the hard work they do every day.

Special Recognition Award



Longtime VSEA Director Annie Noonan, who resigned from her position earlier in 2008, was presented with a "Special Recognition" Award for her 28 years of dedicated service to the union. Pictured here presenting her with the award is VSEA President Bill Harkness, who echoed many VSEA member's feelings when he told the crowd, "Annie will be dearly missed." An emotional Noonan thanked VSEA members for their support and dedication and encouraged everyone to continue fighting the good fight.

Coan Award



VSEA Legislative Coordinator Conor Casey received the "Linda Coan" Award—and a hug—from Janis Henderson, who is a member of the VSEA Awards Committee. The award, which is named to honor the memory of VSEA staffer Linda Coan, is presented annually to a VSEA staff member deemed to be performing "outstanding" work for VSEA members.

VSEA Special Events Committee Thanks Annual Meeting Vendors And Prize Donators

The VSEA Special Events Committee wishes to thank the following vendors, Chapters and members for contributing money and prizes to help make the 2008 VSEA Annual Meeting a great success!

Vendors

CIGNA
Delta Dental
Employee Assistance Program
Express Scripts
Great West
Liberty Mutual
R.K. Tongue Insurance *
Vermont State Employees Credit Union *

* Added thanks for your meeting sponsorship

VSEA Chapters – Prize Donation

Addison – Basket of Local Vermont Products
Central Vermont – (3) \$40 Gas Cards
Chittenden – (2) \$50 Door Prizes
Franklin/Grand Isle – Gas Cards
Newport/Island Pond – Nelson's Fudge
St. Johnsbury/NEK – (2) \$25 Prizes
Vermont State Hospital – 1 Portable DVD Player & 1 Gas Card
Waterbury – (4) \$50 Prizes
White River Junction – (4) \$25 Gas Cards

Business/Member – Door Prize Donation

Credit Union of Vermont
Capital Stationary – 1 Stationary Set
East Side Restaurant –
2-Person Buffet Gift Certificate
Fuller Family Farms (Lisa Fuller, VSH Chapter)
– 1 Gallon Maple Syrup

Hampton Inn –

Gift Certificate For 1 Night's Lodging
Kathy Henry, Chittenden Chapter Member –
Mary Kay Cosmetic Products
Kathy Henry, Chittenden Chapter Member –
Basket Of Award-Winning Jams
Ruthie's Cakes (Ruth Leithead, VSH Chapter) –
Pedestal Cake Plate & Cake Gift Certificate
Milne Travel – \$100 Gift Certificate Towards
Selected Motor Coach Tour
Pizza Putt – Gift Certificate
Tony Pike – 1 Pint & 2 Quarts Maple Syrup
R. K. Tongue (Joanne Woodcock) – Friday
Night Entertainment Sponsorship (\$1200)
Sambels Restaurant – (2) \$50 Gift Certificates
Sutton River Electrical – Energy Efficient
Light Bulbs/Tool
Uncle Mike's Deli – (3) Gift Certificates
VSECU – Luncheon Sponsorship (\$750)

State Outsources 2008 Flu Clinics To Out-Of-State, Private Vendor

For the first time in recent memory, the Vermont Department of Health decided this year not to conduct the State's annual flu shot clinics for state employees. The clinics were instead administered by a private firm called Healthy Achievers, which is based in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Healthy Achievers was paid a maximum of \$92,800 to perform the service.

Shortly after the flu clinics commenced, VSEA began to hear a number of disturbing reports from VSEA members statewide, complaining about the way the clinics were being conducted. There were a few compliments as well, but the complaints far outnumbered them—and VSEA wasn't the only one hearing them. Members of the legislature's newly created Government Accountability Committee (GAC) were hearing them too.

Prompted by calls and e-mails to their offices with complaints and concerns about the administration of this year's State flu clinics, several GAC members requested that the State appear before the committee in November to explain how the contract ended up with Healthy Achievers.

Testifying on behalf of the State was DHR Commissioner David Herlihy. He told the GAC that he was contacted by the VDOH at the end of May 2008 and told the department would be unable to conduct this year's flu clinics. He explained that because of the late notice, the State was up against a time constraint to secure an administrator that had the necessary personnel, could conduct the needed number of clinics and had the amount of vaccine required for all who wanted a shot. Herlihy testified that, prior to contacting Healthy Achievers, the State did reach out to the Vermont Nurses Association (VNA) to try and procure their services, but VNA told the State it could not do it. That testimony was later refuted by a VNA representative, who told the GAC that VNA never said it could not do the service. The VNA representative also said that he believed the State contacted the for-profit Professional Nurses Services Inc., before contacting VNA to see if it could help. Finally, the VNA representative made it clear that the firm wanted to work with the State again in 2009, saying he hoped discussions would start soon on how to conduct the 2009 clinics. Many legislators supported the idea of the discussion happening sooner, not later.

In his testimony, Herlihy did say the one of the reasons the flu clinic administration may have broken down this year was the "surprise" retirement of the individual who had coordinated the State's program in the past. And Sen. Diane Snelling (R-Chittenden) added that the timing of VDOH Commissioner Moffat's resignation could have impeded the process as well.

Several legislators did press Herlihy about why the VDOH decided it could not handle the clinics this year; some wondering if it might have something to do with unfilled vacancies resulting from the State's job cuts. Herlihy said he did not know the exact answer, and he deferred to the VDOH, who, unfortunately, did not have a representative present. Several committee members did say they wanted to hear why from a VDOH representative at a future GAC meeting, and, hopefully, that will happen.

Finally, Sen. Kevin Mullin (R-Rutland) suggested that the Health and Welfare Committee hold a hearing on the flu shot clinics shortly after the new legislative session kicks off in January.

A majority of the GAC members did openly state their opposition to contracting this annual State service to an out-of-state company. "In this economy, we should be striving to keep these dollars in Vermont, not sending them to New Hampshire," said Sen. Anne Cummings (D-Washington).

Here Is What Some VSEA Members Reported About This Year's Clinics:

From Brattleboro:

"Upon arrival, we knew immediately that something was not "right." There was a very long line and the door to the room where the shots were being administered was wide open. I must admit that the line moved quickly. There were far too many people in the room while you were receiving your flu shot. There was so much chaos, I questioned whether or not the "nurse" (I have no idea if she was a nurse) even loaded the syringe with anything! She appeared so overwhelmed. I was never asked a single question by the nurse. After received the shot (or simply being stuck with a needle) I stood around for a minute waiting to receive further instructions. Nothing. She just took the next person. Usually, we receive a notice that lists a number to call if you should have a reaction; the notice lists the "lot number"

State Looking for Feedback on 2008 Flu Clinics

On the heels of the many complaints filed with VSEA and the GAC about the State's 2008 flu clinics—which, for the first time in recent memory, were conducted by a private, for-profit, out-of-state company—the State's Wellness Program is conducting a short survey to determine how state employees felt about this year's clinics.

The survey can be found at:
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB228KX7XW5NA>.

VSEA urges members to fill out the survey and ask as many of your co-workers as possible to do the same.

or something that identifies what was administered to you. Nothing. I will also add that another State employee received a flu shot in Brattleboro. Her shot location in the arm turned red, swelled quite a bit and burned. She did not have anything to refer to, to see if this was a "normal" reaction.

I hope the situation is resolved before next year's flu season!

&

"I had a flu shot last Wednesday in Brattleboro. It was a very different experience than clinics I have attended in the past. They had 2 (I assume) nurses giving shots to people approximately five feet from each other. I don't think that the person who gave me my shot looked at my questionnaire. While the person across the table from me was offered a seat, I was not. My shot hurt while being given and for a few days after. No band-aid was offered. After the shot I was instructed to fill out my name and insurance. When I finished doing this I had to wait to get out of the room as someone was being given a shot between me and the door. There was no encouragement to have a seat to watch for reaction or information about possible reactions.

When I got to the clinic I was told that things were running behind schedule

FLU SHOTS

because the 'shot givers' were late getting there.

"In short, if the flu shots are given in the same way next year I will arrange to have my shot administered by my primary care provider."

From Rutland:

"I had my flu shot in Rutland. There was no distribution of the Vaccine Information Statement (VIS), which is required by federal law to be given to a person prior to any vaccination. Also they did not ask me to wait 10 minutes after shot. I did arrive with my paperwork filled out, but they did not review it with me. But that was OK with me, I understood the questions. Perhaps not everyone does though. From personal nursing experience I know this is not always the case.

I think VDH nurses were more thorough last year."

From Middlebury:

"I attended the flu shot clinic in Middlebury at the Dept. of Health. This is the first year that I attended the clinic and I can assure you it will be the last. I was absolutely appalled at the way the site was administered. It was quite a humiliating experience.

I normally obtain my flu shot at a clinic sponsored by my primary care physician. At that clinic, which takes place in the doctor's office waiting room, there is a privacy screen, discussion with the nurse about any health concerns, and the utmost cleanliness. It only took a minute more to afford privacy and professionalism.

Hopefully the State will not contract with this company again.

From Burlington:

"I have to say that I was totally shocked on how the "clinic" was set up. First of all, there was no privacy whatsoever and we are all standing in line waiting and watching. This was very uncomfortable to me. Someone in line actually went across the room to move some writing boards (on wheels) to block the nurses giving the shots. There were no chairs for anyone to sit down to have their shots. The only plus side is that the shot did not hurt

I understand that they were short staffed because one of the nurses broke her forearm setting up the clinic and I am not

complaining waiting in line. My biggest complaint is that the state hired outside help, which is such a let down to VT. Dept. of Health as there was no notification to the health department asking if anyone to help with the flu shot days. There were so many of us that would have volunteered a couple of hours to help with the scheduling, planning and doing the clinic. I have been getting my flu shots for years at the health department and this was the worst I have ever seen. I plan to continue to get my flu shots, but as long as my co-workers at the VT. Dept. of Health are the ones that will be doing the clinic as they know what we like to see at the clinic. Thank you for letting me vent...."

From Barre:

"I attended the Barre flu clinic at McFarland on Friday. I will not be attending the flu clinic next year if run by the same company without major changes. I had an appointment, only to find out no one had a list of appointments, so there were people who came ahead of me that actually had appointments after me. There was a large amount of people in the waiting room. The person running the clinic had no name tag and was not well prepared. I was taken into a room with another person to get a shot, and when I refused, was taken into another room, where the nurse attempted to pull yet another person in with me. She had no name tag. She did not wear gloves, and said I didn't need a band aid, as I wasn't bleeding after getting the shot. I had to ask for one. She did not confirm my identity, nor did anyone make me stay to be observed. I walked right out. I was hesitant to get the shot, but did so. In retrospect, I should have refused. I will not go next year, I will take sick time and go to my doctor, costing more time and money for the state, unless I can be assured I will get the treatment I had year before last. Although it was a pain to have to stay fifteen minutes after the shot, the difference in how I was treated was huge, and the fifteen minutes is nothing compared to the comfort I felt with the Dept of Health running the program prior to this year."

From St. Albans:

"My appointment was for 10:30 a.m. When I arrived the room was filled with people, all of whom had an appointment for either 10:15 or 10:30. There must have



been about 35 people who all had an appointment for either 10:15 or 10:30, and more kept arriving.

The person administering the shot was late. There was only one woman. She did not wear gloves, did not review paperwork submitted by people and there was no privacy. There were two people in the room getting a shot at the same time. She used a small amount of Purell to clean her hands between giving shots. People waited up to two hours to receive a flu shot. If the intention was to save money one must take into account there were state employees waiting around for a long time to receive the shot."

From Springfield:

"I had the same concerns as many regarding the flu shots. When I asked the person (who I assume was a nurse) if I should wait ten minutes, she told me no because I had the flu shots in the past (which I found odd since I am sure they change the type of shots each year and who knows...I could have had a reaction).

I did not like the fact that I could not tell who these people were and honestly I would much prefer to have the nurses from VDH (who I know and trust) to give me this type of shot. If the company comes in the future I will most likely not get my shot."

VSEA-Endorsed Candidates Successful In 86% Of Races

On November 4, VSEA-endorsed candidates were successful in 115 of the 135 races where the union made endorsements. Through phone-banking, envelope stuffing and door-knocking, VSEA was particularly active this election season with many members playing key roles in House and Senate campaigns.

“We have a difficult road ahead,” said VSEA Legislative Coordinator Conor Casey. “The State will no doubt continue targeting additional positions and services over the course of the next legislative session. Thankfully, we won’t be alone in our fight as we were able to help elect some excellent legislators who support state workers and the services they provide.”

Among the biggest wins this year were Paul Poirier’s upset over incumbent Leo Valliere in Barre City. As former chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Paul has a long history of supporting organized labor and will be a powerful ally in the State House.

In St. Johnsbury, IBEW activist Bob South had a decisive win (1,483 votes!) in a traditionally conservative district. “As a frontline worker himself, Bob is exactly the kind of guy we need to be sending to Montpelier,” said VSEA Legislative Committee Chair Jeff Briggs, who spent hours on the campaign trail with Bob.

And not to be forgotten, VSEA’s own Terry Macaig will be the new junior representative from Williston. “As former president and current staffer at VSEA, no one understands the issues facing our membership better than Terry,” said VSEA Director Jes Kraus. “Both our organization and Terry’s constituents will be well served by the institutional knowledge he brings to the Legislature.”

Here is a list of other victorious VSEA-candidates statewide (**bold=newly elected**):

Treasurer Jeb Spaulding	Statewide	Rep. Jason Lorber	Chittenden 3-3	Rep. Tom Stevens	Washington Chittenden 1
Sen. Claire Ayer	Addison Senate	Rep. Rachel Weston.....	Chittenden 3-3	Rep. Patty O'Donnell.....	Windham 1
Sen. Harold Giard	Addison Senate	Rep. David Zuckerman.....	Chittenden 3-4	Rep. Ann Manwaring.....	Windham 2
Sen. Bob Hartwell	Bennington Senate	Rep. Johannah Donovan.....	Chittenden 3-5	Rep. Gini Milkey	Windham 3-1
Matthew Choate	Caledonia Senate	Suzi Wizowaty	Chittenden 3-5	Mollie Burke	Windham 3-2
Sen. Jane Kitchel.....	Caledonia Senate	Rep. Ken Atkins	Chittenden 3-6	Rep. Sarah Edwards	Windham 3-3
Tim Ashe	Chittenden Senate	Rep. Ann Pugh	Chittenden 3-8	Rep. Michael Obuchowski	Windham 4
Sen. Edward Flanagan	Chittenden Senate	Rep. Sonny Audette	Chittenden 3-9	Rep. Carolyn Partridge.....	Windham 4
Sen. Virginia Lyons.....	Chittenden Senate	Rep. Helen Head.....	Chittenden 3-10	Rep. David Deen.....	Windham 5
Sen. Doug Racine.....	Chittenden Senate	Kate Webb	Chittenden 5-1	Rep. Mike Mrowicki	Windham 5
Sen. Diane B. Snelling.....	Chittenden Senate	Rep. Joan Lenes	Chittenden 5-2	Rep. Richard Marek.....	Windham 6
Sen. Vincent Illuzzi.....	Essex-Orleans Senate	Rep. Debbie Evans	Chittenden 6-1	Rep. John Moran	Windham Bennington 1
Sen. Robert Starr.....	Essex-Orleans Senate	Rep. Tim Jerman	Chittenden 6-2	Rep. Rick Hube	Windham Bennington Windsor 1
Sen. Sara Branon Kittell	Franklin Senate	Rep. Jim Condon	Chittenden 7-1	Rep. Kathy Pellett	Windsor 1-1
Sen. Mark Macdonald	Orange Senate	Rep. John Zenie.....	Chittenden 7-1	Rep. Alice M. Emmons	Windsor 1-2
Sen. Bill Carris.....	Rutland Senate	Rep. Kristy Spengler.....	Chittenden 7-2	Rep. Cynthia Martin	Windsor 1-2
Sen. Ann E. Cummings	Washington Senate	Rep. Richard Howrigan	Franklin 2	Rep. Ernest Shand.....	Windsor 2
Sen. Bill Doyle	Washington Senate	Rep. Kathleen Keenan	Franklin 3	Rep. Donna Sweeney	Windsor 3
Sen. Peter E. Shumlin.....	Windham Senate	Rep. Mitzi Johnson	Grand Isle Chittenden 1	Rep. Alison Clarkson	Windsor 5
Sen. Jeanette White.....	Windham Senate	Rep. Ira Trombley	Grand Isle Chittenden 1	Rep. Mark Mitchell.....	Windsor 6-1
Sen. John Campbell.....	Windsor Senate	Rep. Linda J. Martin.....	Lamoille 2	Charles Bohi	Windsor 6-2
Sen. Dick McCormack.....	Windsor Senate	Rep. Floyd Nease	Lamoille 3	Rep. Margaret Cheney.....	Windsor Orange 2
Sen. Alice Nitka.....	Windsor Senate	Rep. Richard Westman	Lamoille 4	Rep. Jim Masland	Windsor Orange 2
Rep. Steven Maier	Addison 1	Rep. Peter Peltz	Lamoille Washington 1	Rep. Dennis J. Devereux.....	Windsor Rutland 1
Rep. Betty Nuovo	Addison 1	Rep. Shap Smith	Lamoille Washington 1	Rep. Sandy Haas	Windsor Rutland 2
Rep. Willem Jewett.....	Addison 2	Rep. Susan Hatch Davis.....	Orange 1		
Diane Lanpher	Addison 3	Rep. Sarah Copeland Hanzas	Orange 2		
Rep. Michael Fisher.....	Addison 4	Rep. Patsy French.....	Orange Addison 1		
Rep. Dave Sharpe.....	Addison 4	Rep. Robert Lewis.....	Orleans 1		
Rep. Christopher Bray.....	Addison 5	Rep. Dave Potter.....	Rutland 1-2		
Rep. Bill Boizow.....	Bennington 1	Rep. James L. McNeil	Rutland 4		
Rep. Tim Corcoran.....	Bennington 2-1	Rep. Peg Andrews.....	Rutland 5-2		
Rep. Joseph L. Krawczyk.....	Bennington 2-1	Rep. Steve Howard.....	Rutland 5-3		
Rep. Anne Mook.....	Bennington 2-2	Rep. Gale Courcelle	Rutland 5-4		
Rep. Mary Morrissey.....	Bennington 2-2	Rep. Peg Flory	Rutland 6		
Rep. Alice Miller.....	Bennington 3	Rep. Joe Acinapura.....	Rutland 7		
Rep. Leigh Larocque.....	Caledonia 1	Rep. Maxine Grad	Washington 2		
Rep. Lucy Leriche.....	Caledonia 2	Paul Poirier	Washington 3-1		
Robert South	Caledonia 3	Tess Taylor	Washington 3-2		
Kitty Beattie Toll	Caledonia Washington 1	Rep. Topper Mcfaun	Washington 4		
Rep. Scott Orr.....	Chittenden 1-2	Mary Hooper	Washington 5		
Terry Macaig	Chittenden 2	Rep. Warren Kitzmiller	Washington 5		
Rep. Jim Mccullough.....	Chittenden 2	Rep. Janet Ancl	Washington 6		
Rep. Bill Aswad.....	Chittenden 3-1	Rep. Tony Klein	Washington 7		
Rep. Mark Larson	Chittenden 3-2	Rep. Sue Minter.....	Washington Chittenden 1		



VSEA past-President Terry Macaig was newly elected in Williston.

VSEA Will Urge Legislature To Revisit State's Boiler Inspection Program

A week after a boiler exploded on the campus of the University of Vermont, VSEA issued the following press release:

Last week's boiler explosion on the campus of the University of Vermont is prompting the Vermont State Employees Association (VSEA) to call on the legislature to fully vet the State's boiler inspection program in the upcoming session.

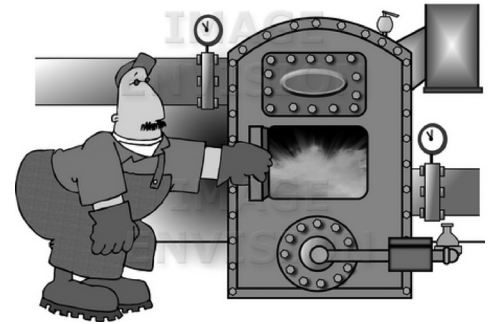
"It's far too early to determine if a boiler inspection might have prevented the explosion at UVM last week, but the incident does illustrate why VSEA thought it was important to begin educating Vermonters, legislators and the press last year about what happened to the State's boiler inspection program in 2005," said VSEA Director Jes Kraus. He explained that a VSEA member testified to the House Institutions Committee about the issue in April 2007.

"A state employee who is very knowledgeable about the State's boiler inspection program told the Committee that, in 2005, a decision was made by the State to privatize boiler inspections and turn this public service over to insurance companies and other private entities," said Kraus.

"He added that the State also relinquished its oversight authority over the private boiler inspectors as well in 2005. This VSEA member cautioned the committee in April 2007 that he believed the State's boiler inspection protocol had become too lax, and he warned that a boiler incident at a place like 'a larger institution such as a school' should be a concern to every Committee member. Today, unfortunately, his prediction came true, but, thankfully, without the catastrophic outcome he feared. That said, he and VSEA remain concerned that without State oversight of boiler inspections, future boiler explosions may have far more tragic results than what happened last week at UVM."

Kraus said he understands that for many years prior to the State's decision in 2005 to privatize the boiler inspections, there were no serious boiler incidents like the one at UVM, or boiler issues like the ones at the Labor Department in Barre, where employees had to be relocated in 2007 after some were sickened by fumes from a faulty boiler.

"When the State had oversight of the inspection program—and National Board (of Boiler & Pressure Vessel Inspector)-



commissioned state employees were performing the required inspections—VSEA believes boilers across the State were safer," said Kraus. "Today, because of privatization, VSEA is concerned that there will be more incidents like the one at UVM, so we are again sounding the alarm about this issue."

Ed Note: State boiler inspectors used to receive a fee from clients to inspect boilers, so the State was earning revenue. Since 2005, however, the revenue the State used to receive is now going in the pockets of private insurance companies.

State Employees Raffle Wood To Raise Money For Guard Families

While many state employees were enjoying their Battle of Bennington holiday, a group of state employees from the State Fire Marshal's office in Williston were splitting and stacking a cord of firewood at the home of Wally Stone in Underhill. Shortly after, they raffled off the wood to raise money to help heat the homes of the families of National Guard members currently serving abroad—and try and make their holidays a little brighter.

Pictured here holding a check for \$400 is Joyce Cloutier, a representative of the Vermont National Guard Charitable Foundation. The check was presented to Ms. Cloutier by Wally Stone (bottom row, third from left). Surrounding Stone are the state employees who



helped him gather the firewood. They are: (front row, l to r) Kara Bissonnette, Cloutier, Stone, Robert Stone (back row, l to r) Richard McGrath, Robert Patterson, William Brown, Monte Mason, Chris Boyd, Gary Palmer. Missing from the photo are Joe Benard and John Vergin. Photo taken by Alissa Ganje.

VSHA Employees Ratify New Contract

On October 8, VSEA Vermont State Housing Authority Unit members voted 23-4 to ratify a new three-year agreement that affords them a 5% wage increase in the contract's first year, 4% in the second year and 3% in the final year. The pay scale maximums will change at the same rate, ensuring those at the maximum will receive the full amount of the changes to their base pay, rather than receiving part of the COLA as a one-time payment. Terms and conditions of the new agreement began retroactively on October 1, 2008.

Here are some of the contract's other highlights:

- Strengthened language in the contract's "Discipline Article" to better protect employees during investigations and any or all disciplinary actions;
- Additional compensation consideration for employees who opt out of State health insurance plan; and
- Ability to purchase long-term care insurance at group rate if three or more employees enroll.

State's Bennington State Office Building Employee Relocation Plan Hits Snag

Months after the State announced a tentative plan to move a majority of employees who used to work at the sick Bennington State Office Building (BSOB) to new downtown Bennington office space; the plan has hit a snag.

Employees and VSEA staff attended a November 6 stakeholders' meeting to receive an update from BGS Commissioner Gerry Myers on the State's plans to move employees out of leased trailers and into new office space. The State moved the BSOB employees into the trailers in 2007 after VSEA and the employees raised serious concerns about the alarming number of employees throughout the complex contracting sarcoidosis; a rare disease that, on average, afflicts 1 in every 10,000 people, but, in the BSOB complex, had afflicted 6 (possibly more) of 135 employees.

At the stakeholders' meeting, Myers told the BSOB employees that BGS had identified several sites to relocate employees to, including a building located at 210 South Street, the Bennington Brush Building, St. Francis Academy and completely refurbished space inside the 1992 portion of the existing BSOB. Myers said in September that it was highly probable the AHS employees would relocate to the 210 South Street Building, but, at the stakeholders meeting, he announced that recent discoveries about potential environmental issues at the 210 Building could jeopardize the move.

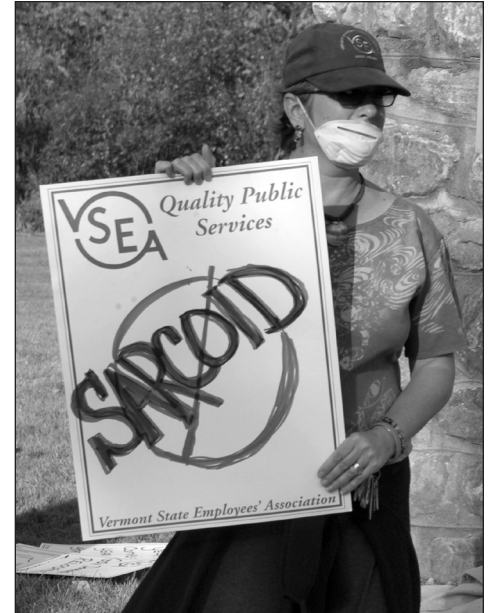
"There are some indications that there may be some issues with the former brownfield that is there," Myers told the *Bennington Banner*, following the meeting. A brownfield is land that may be contaminated by low concentrations of hazardous waste of pollution.

A Department of Environmental Conservation employee is also quoted in the *Banner* story, explaining that the 210 site may potentially contain contamination from TCE (trichloroethylene), a solvent used in manufacturing processes. "We got results that show positively that [the TCE] is there," the employee tells the paper. "The next step is to look at what's causing it, and there's any number of things that could be the problem."

Myers assured the paper: "The State would not lease space that is not deemed safe for our state employees," said Myers.

VSEA Communications Coordinator Doug Gibson attended the meeting with VSEA Organizing Coordinator Gretchen Naylor. Gibson told the *Banner*: "VSEA thinks it would be ludicrous for the State to send these employees from a bad situation to an equally bad—or worse—situation. We feel strongly the State will feel likewise and will opt to do the right thing and only move these employees to worksites with safe and healthy environments."

VSEA also remains concerned about plans to move employees back into refurbished



space inside the sick BSOB's 1992 portion, but Myers told stakeholders that the 1992 section would undergo an extensive renovation and comprehensive environmental testing prior to any employee reoccupying the space.

Vermont State Colleges Staff Federation Unit Ratifies New Four-Year Agreement

In September, VSEA members of the Vermont State Colleges Staff Federation Unit voted 84-17 to ratify a new four-year agreement that affords Unit members a 4 percent wage increase each year of the contract. Terms and conditions of the new agreement began on July 1, 2009.

"These are tough economic times for all Vermonters, but—to everyone's credit—both parties at the negotiating table were able to agree on a new contract that grants VSEA members in the State Colleges Unit a 4% cost-of-living increase," said VSC Unit Chair Janis Henderson. "In addition, the State College Unit's negotiating was able to maintain employees' seniority step raises. The team did a really great job. But to me, the most amazing part of the whole process is that we were able to sit at the table with the Chancellor and his legal counsel and come to an agreement in one day. I believe this is an all time record."

Henderson added that she believes the VSC Unit negotiating team was so strong because its individual members each brought a different skill set to the table, including the ability to research wages and benefits, the ability to coherently articulate staffing issues, and the ability to accurately crunch the numbers when needed.

"We came to the table prepared, and we made reasonable requests," said Henderson. "I think all these factors resulted in the excellent

contract we were able to secure for our State College Unit members."

Here are some of the contract's other highlights:

- **Wages:** Consolidates the salary range chart with the UPV Unit for new hires, effective July 1, 2009. Any existing employee who is below the minimum at the time the chart is implemented will be brought up to the new minimum and adjusted 2 percent above the new figure;
- **Continued Benefits:** Maintain insurance retirement benefits for current employees with a 65 and 10 requirement for new hires after July 1, 2008. Adds language to provide a 50 percent credit for previous VSC service. Adds a death and disability benefit for spouses when the employee is otherwise eligible. Vacation leave pay out for beneficiaries capped at total accumulation. Limits spouse benefits in the case of divorce and for new spouses after retirement. Allows buy in at full insurance cost; and
- **Uniforms and Gear:** Provides safety shoes for all physical plant employees up to \$100 maximum per year.



Taking part in the official contract signing ceremony were (front row, l to r) Bob Clarke, VSC Chancellor; Janis Henderson, Staff Federation Chair; Walt Reeve, Staff Federation Vice-Chair; (middle row, l to r): Monique Morris, Staff Federation Secretary; Mary Giordano, CSC Bargaining Rep.; Lucinda Kirk, VSEA Staff Rep.; Ingrid Van Steamburg, (former) Staff Federation Unit Steward; Jes Kraus, VSEA Director; (back row) Charlie Sjolander, Staff Federation Treasurer.

Legislature Needs To Clarify Intent On Direct Deposit

The Vermont legislature passed a law in the 2008 session mandating the State to implement paperless payroll notification to state employees who use direct deposit. The Administration, however, has interpreted the language to mean that all state employees must receive their pay through direct deposit.

"VSEA does not believe the language mandates all state employees to use direct deposit," explained VSEA General Counsel Michael Casey. "Even legislators disagree as to what the language means. While the vast majority of our members prefer to use direct deposit as a convenient way to receive their pay, there are some who, for various reasons, prefer to receive a paper check."

The legislature's direct deposit language reads:

"The secretary of administration is directed to initiate a program by September 30, 2008, which requires all state employees to receive paperless notification of their direct deposit payroll advice. The secretary and representatives of the Vermont State Employees' Association are encouraged to meet to determine the most expeditious and efficient means of implementing this section."

As of the printing of this publication, here is what VSEA is advising its members about the supposed direct deposit mandate:

- VSEA does not believe that the law requires you to sign up for direct deposit;
- The State cannot refuse to pay you your wages because you do not sign up for direct deposit;
- If you are disciplined or otherwise adversely affected for not signing up for direct deposit, VSEA wants to hear from you *immediately* at 223-5247; and
- VSEA hopes the legislature will clarify its intent of the law in the upcoming legislative session.

State Answers Electronic Pay Advice Leave Balance Question

HR Commissioner David Herlihy sent this e-mail in early December:

"DHR has received word that some employees are concerned that leave balances appear only on the current copy of the electronic pay advice. Older versions that are saved in the system do not reflect leave balances. The concern that we have heard is that employees feel the need to print the pay advice for the purpose of tracking their leave accruals and use. The lack of leave

history in the older advices is something that we have to live with at present. We acknowledge that it is less than ideal, but the inability to show past leave balances is a shortcoming of the software product on which our system runs. We hope that issue will be addressed with upgrades to the software. For the time being, employees who want to track leave balances have some options. The simplest and "greenest" alternative is to make note of the balances, either on a scrap of paper or in an electronic document. Printing is another option, but then your private information is on paper where others might see it and it's a little less environmentally friendly. For anyone worried about having to show what those earlier balances were in order to correct a leave balance, DHR and Finance and Management maintain records and documents with leave balances, that are distributed to all departments each pay cycle. In addition, that leave history can be taken from the HCM system by your HR administrator. The bottom line is that you are free to print, but we still believe that most employees will prefer to rely on the ability to look at all past advices on line, saving paper, saving money, and ensuring that it's not on a piece of paper that could be misplaced.

David K. Herlihy
Commissioner

Happy 64th Anniversary VSEA!

In March 1944, Governor William Wills met with state employees from across Vermont and voiced his support for employees to "vote to investigate a plan to form a State Employees Association." The employees worked closely with Gov. Wills to form the association. In fact, it was the Governor who encouraged the association to form a "Grievance Committee," establish organizational independence and exclude "Department heads" from membership. The association then drafted a Constitution and By-Laws for the Vermont State Employees' Association, and a copy was given to the Governor for review. He read them and sent this note back to the VSEA: "I am heartily in favor of the formation of the Vermont State Employees Association. I appreciate the opportunity you have given me to look over the Constitution and By-Laws of the proposed organization, and it would appear to me that they very adequately meet the needs and requirements of such an organization. It also seems to me that a splendid purpose can be served by such an organization, and you have my best wishes for success in its operation." A ballot went out to the State's 1,400 full-time employees. The VSEA Constitution required 51 percent of them to join, and 62 percent of them did. On Nov. 18, state employees from across Vermont came to the State House to witness the official adoption of the VSEA.

VSEA's first "Annual Meeting" was held in September 1945 and nearly a third of the VSEA membership attended. Annual dues were established at \$1.



Longtime AOT Employee Calls It Quits

After 41 dedicated years working for the Vermont Agency of Transportation, long time VSEA activist and member Larry Young retired from State service on October 31, 2008.

Young, 62, started work for the AOT after returning to Vermont following three years of military service in Viet Nam. For a majority of his working life, Young was active in VSEA, serving as a steward, Board of Trustees member and Council member. He also sat on many VSEA committees, including the AOT Labor/Management Committee. In September, Young spoke out forcefully against the State's job cuts at the VSEA "Speak Out" at the State House.

Just after leaving State service, the VOICE conducted an interview with Larry. Here's what he had to say:

Q: What prompted you to retire now?

A: [laughs] I was sick of getting up at night and going out to plow snow. Seriously. Working for the transportation agency is not an old man's game. I reached the point where I knew I was done. My heart just wasn't in it anymore.

Q: How has AOT changed in your 41 years?

A: When I first started, we had a lot more people in all the AOT districts. Probably double what we have now. Nowadays, we don't do nearly what we did when I started. We used to do all our own garbage collection, all our own hot mixing, crack filling, culvert repair and we made our own cold patch. We were self sufficient. In the time I've been there, the hot mixing has been contracted out, we don't crack fill anymore because it's been contracted out, we still pick up a little garbage but most of that is contracted out and the garbage truck we used to have is gone. When I started we used to mow all the roadsides by hand, but now a lot of the mowing is contracted out. Even a lot of the bigger projects—like the highway project in Newport—are contracted out.

Q: What happened?

A: We've been downsized so much that AOT couldn't do most of this stuff anymore anyway. The workforce has been cut and so have our budgets. I mean, if you don't fund something, you can't do anything. I felt we are being set up to fail. Make it look like we can't do the work, but the truth is, we can't do the work the way they're asking us to do it. If you give us the same amount of people and money as the private contractors you hire, then we can do the work. What the State has done is downsize AOT to just the point where we can barely slip by. AOT no longer goes out and does the job before it needs to be done. We wait until something happens and then correct it. AOT is now reactive, not proactive.

Q: Where do you see AOT if it continues down its current path?

A: Totally privatized, and I see the agency heading towards that fast. AOT leadership knows the problems that are out there on our roads and the bridges, but when they first told the Douglas Administration about them, nothing was done. I think the Administration waited until the issue was helpful politically and used it as a tool to get re-elected. They aren't using it for the safety and well-being of the state, or the way it should be. It's politics, and I'm sick of it. Do what's right, and the heck with the politics. Do what's supposed to be done, the way it's supposed to be done.

Q: What did you like most about working for the AOT?

A: Getting done [laughs]! To be honest, I used to enjoy going to work. I actually felt like I was contributing something to the State and to my neighborhood, but now there's so much politics and not enough common sense. When they cut a budget and don't send someone out to plow or take care of the road when it needs it, the people that see us, complain to us and not the people who caused this to happen. We're on the front-line getting the brunt of it, while they are sitting back saying "See how much money we saved." This makes the general public say "The State's not doing its job." Vermonters don't understand. Sometimes the public will call the main office, but, for the most part, it's the guys in the garages hearing the complaints. This coming winter, they want to cut back on the help—at least a 20 percent reduction in overtime. If they cut back 20 percent, somebody will see it somewhere. Better get ready to slip and slide.

Q: Anything you will miss about the job?

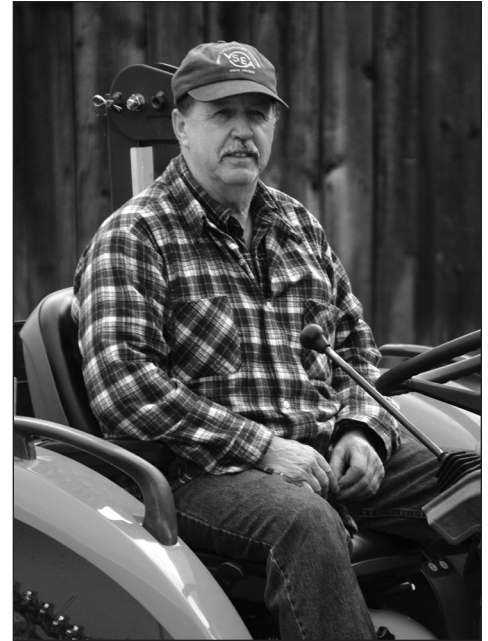
A: Not really, but I did miss my AOT job the way it was when I first started. Nowadays though, I won't miss the politics that are now involved, the lack of common sense, the underfunding and the State asking AOT employees to do a job that's impossible to do without giving us the people and equipment to do it.

Q: What do AOT employees hear from the public these days that makes them angriest?

A: That AOT doesn't take care of the roads the way we should. A lot of AOT employees aren't happy with their jobs now and morale is way down. I think this is created by the current work atmosphere. When I first started, it was a loose ship, but it was a happy ship. The help all got along, and the public got along with AOT. As the money got tighter and services started to be reduced, the public's aggravation with AOT grew.

Q: Any lessons you've learned about state government?

A: Absolute power corrupts.



Q: Why did you get involved early on with VSEA and what kept you involved?

A: As I worked more and more years, I saw the need for there to be communication between AOT labor and management, and it didn't seem to be going the way it should be. VSEA was there, acting as an intermediary, so I got involved for that reason. I started as a steward and worked at that for a while, and then I got on union committees, the Council and the Board of Trustees. When I first got active in VSEA, there seemed to be more member involvement and everyone seemed to get along better. Whatever happened, and we all stood together. Now, it seems like management has been instructed to try and drive a wedge between employees, so they can control them—and this is exactly what they've done. Employees are so busy fighting with each other at work, over a job or some other little thing, that they are forgetting the bigger picture. The snitching that goes on anymore is what's killing people getting along. We need to give up the snitching and finger pointing. We have to get back to the "we're all in this together" thinking.

Q: Why do more VSEA members need to get involved in the union now?

A: I would warn that this next contract we negotiate is going to determine what kind of pay we get, what kind of health care we get, and how many hours we work. We know that the State is probably not going to be offering a lot this time around, if anything. I worry that everything I and other older workers fought to get state employees over the last 25 or 30 years will be lost if more members don't get involved. We could lose quite a bit. Getting involved doesn't just mean being

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AOT Employee Calls It Quits

Continued from page 16

on the bargaining team. Getting involved means when the word goes out that we need bodies on the street for a demonstration, or bodies for a contract campaign, that you show up and participate. Isn't it worth your time to come out one or two nights to say: "I want to save my job and my benefits?" Or do you not care enough and are willing to sit at home and say let someone else do it. If you sit home, don't complain to me. Honestly, I don't think the reality of Vermont's economy has hit home yet with many employees. Maybe they haven't lost enough yet, but I'm hopeful they will wake up soon before it's too late. We've had it pretty good over the past 25 or 30 years, and we've been able to get quite a lot of stuff, but that could all go away very quickly if VSEA members don't get involved. I might be retired now, but if there's a VSEA contract campaign or demonstration, I'll be there.

Q: You've been on a bargaining team, how has that process changed since Governor Douglas was elected?

A: The governor hasn't really bargained the last couple of times the way we used to bargain. We used to go in and sit across the table and proposals would go back and forth and somewhere we would try to find some common ground. There's none of that anymore. You go in there now and it's "no, no, no." They do enough to say they bargained like they should have, but they know where it's heading—fact finding. That's their idea of bargaining.

Q: What do you think more younger employees aren't involved in VSEA?

A: The younger employees today seems to think that if you're involved in the union, your

career is shot. I guess it's the way they were raised. Kind of a blind obedience to the powers that be. And a lot of the younger employees have always had what they wanted so why rock the boat? The older employee didn't have as much, or feel like they had to make a big showing at the expense of somebody else. Nowadays, some younger workers feel like "if it makes me look good, especially to management, screw the other person." It used to be if we had a problem in the garage, we'd go to management and say "we've got a problem here and it needs to be corrected." We all went together because there is power in numbers. That doesn't mean one or two people, buy everyone. Damn lucky if you can get everyone to do that now.

Q: Can you give me an example of when the employees at your garage stood together?

A: When I worked at the Derby garage, a fellow retired one time. We took up a collection for this guy, and he says to me one day "Larry, maybe the guys didn't think too much of me. Didn't they take up a collection for me?" I said "We sure did" and he says "I never saw it." So I went back and talked to the other employees, and we approached the foreman and asked where the money was and he says "Oh' I just forget." The point is, we stood together as one on it and the guy got his retirement present. Today, I think they'd say "I'm not going to get mixed up in that."

Q: How does VSEA need to change in your opinion?

A: We need to get some more younger people involved. But, at the same time, there has to be enough of the older guard around to show them how things are done and to share their experience. I think it's time for some of the older VSEA members to step back and give the younger folks a chance—or I worry we'll be done!

Q: Any advice for management?

A: Listen to the older employees. Talk to them. Have it open enough that they feel comfortable talking and listen to their advice when they give it. I remember sitting on the AOT labor/management committee and offering ideas to save money, but it didn't seem like management wanted to hear them. A lot of the managers anymore are afraid to be open. They've got their mandate and they're following it. If you're going to be a manager, and do it the right way, you're going to have to do what you feel needs to be done.

Q: Any particular AOT story stick out in your mind?

A: The Phish concert in Coventry in 2004 [laughs]. The amount of garbage we had to pick up on I-91 was unbelievable. You had to see it to understand how much garbage was there. We were picking it up with bucket loaders and dumping it in dump trucks.

Q: What will you do in retirement?

A: I'll putz around the garden and drive my wife crazy.

Q: Any final thoughts?

A: Yeah. A lot of these legislators who are elected say they are going down to do the people's business, but state employees do the people's business. We aren't elected, but we do the people's business. Whether the legislators realize it or not, we're doing the same job they are doing.

VSEA Welcomes New Field Representative Peter Garon

Peter Garon is the newest addition to the VSEA staff, joining the union in September as the new field representative for worksites in Addison, Rutland, and Bennington counties.

A return to VSEA for Garon is a return to his union activist roots. In 1980, he was hired as a state employee, and he immediately made sure he belonged to VSEA as a full-fledged member. Garon was very active in the union, serving as a trustee and a bargaining team member for both the Supervisory and Non-Management Units. In 1998, he was promoted to a personnel position with AHS, but the promotion meant he would no longer be a VSEA member. Garon didn't let that stop him from continuing to pay his union dues.

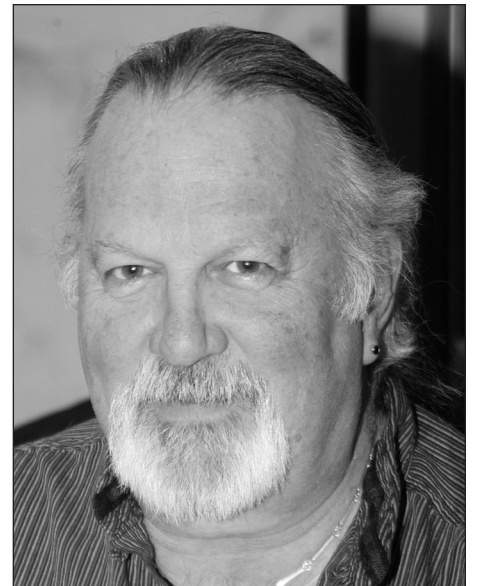
"My VSEA membership meant something to me, and social and economic justice have always been important to me," explains Garon. "Continuing to pay my dues seemed like the right thing to do."

Garon left his AHS position in 2008*, and he says that although he worked in management ("the other side") for a long time, he is proud of the reputation he earned for wanting to work closely with VSEA to resolve workplace conflicts in a fair and humane manner.

"I view returning to VSEA as an opportunity to put my understanding of state human resources to work for members," says Garon. "Knowing what to expect from management gives me a great advantage. I can anticipate their moves and reactions. This will help me represent VSEA members better when I have to respond to their issues and concerns. Honestly, I look forward to the opportunity to help keep management honest in their dealings with state employees, particularly in this difficult economic climate," says Garon.

Garon received a B.S. in Political Science from Middlebury College in 1966 and his M.A.T. in Social Studies from Antioch-Putney Graduate School in Putney, Vermont in 1967. He is a native Vermonter from the Northeast Kingdom.

*For two years, Garon worked as a VDOH Laboratory Administrator.



VSEA Diversity Committee Back Up And Running

After a seven-year hiatus, the VSEA Diversity Committee was reconvened in 2007 by President Harkness, and, already, VSEA members are contacting the committee with questions and concerns about situations in their workplace.

"It didn't take long for a couple of state employees to contact our committee and ask for advice and assistance on how to deal with some workplace diversity issues," said Committee Chairperson Jean Lowell, an investigator in the Attorney General's office. "We responded to the employee requests, serving as an information resource and making referrals."

Asked to explain the types of situations that might prompt an employee to reach out to the VSEA Diversity Committee, Lowell explained: "Have you ever felt uncomfortable, disliked or isolated at your workplace simply because there is something about you that might be a little 'different'? Did it make you dread going to work or make doing your job more difficult? Have you wondered what you can do about it? Have you felt afraid to even try? You're not alone. This is the experience a lot of state employees who have some personal characteristic that makes them stand out from their co-workers, or makes them the target of jokes, exclusion or even outright hostility. If you've ever wished there was someone available to help your supervisors and co-workers understand and appreciate your 'difference,' or if you want to learn more about what can be done to help you rectify

the situation, please contact the Diversity Committee and let us know."

In the past, Lowell explains, the Diversity Committee produced educational material for employees, like an informational brochure. The committee also helped draft contract language promoting a harassment-free workplace, and it conducted a comprehensive survey to measure the impact of diversity issues at the workplace.

Since reconvening, the five-member committee has been hard at work discussing and formulating its purpose statement, defining its goals, drafting a plan of action and getting the word out about the committee. The committee is also hoping to sponsor and/or participate in area programs and events that raise awareness about diversity and celebrate it.

"I have spent 20 years investigating complaints of harassment and discrimination in private-sector workplaces, and I believe there are public-sector employees experiencing the same work environment," says Lowell. She adds that employee issues fall into the category of "legally protected" (sex, race age, sexual orientation and disability) to not legally protected (weight, height, social or economic status).

"The VSEA Diversity Committee can serve as a valuable resource for state employees looking for confidential help and guidance with diversity issues," says Lowell. "You don't have to go it alone anymore. We want to help."

New To The VSEA Advantage Discount Program

Thanks to the hard work of the VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee and several individual VSEA members, many new businesses have joined the VSEA Advantage Discount Program in the past few months. Here are the businesses that have come on board:

The Chimney Smith

Chimney Cleaning & Repair
39 Bailey Street
Barre, VT 05641
Phone: 802-479-3559
10% off chimney liner installations

Otter Creek Awnings, Sunrooms and Custom Closets

19 Echo Place
Williston, VT 05495
Phone: 802-864-3009
Contact: Megan Houston
Website: www.ottercreekawnings.com
E-mail: mhouston@ottercreekawnings.com
Save up to \$1500 on sunrooms! Save 10% on awnings and custom closets May 1-August 31, 2009! All other dates, save 20%!

Creative Memories

101 S. Main St.
Hardwick, VT 05843
802-472-5473
Contact: Karen Richardson
Website: www.mycmsite.com/karenrichardson
Free shipping on orders of \$30 or more!
Products must be ordered directly through Karen Richardson.

FitnessZone

28 North Main St.
St. Albans, VT 05478
Contact: Thomas Murphy
Phone: 802-527-1234
E-mail: tmurphy2007@verizon.com
Website: www.fitnesszonevt.com
A 15% discount on regularly priced membership

The Sleep Rite Shop

101 S. Main St.
Hardwick, VT 05843
Phone: 802-472-6716
Contact: Karen Richardson
Website: sleepriteshop@verison.net
10% off regularly priced items!

VSEA Diversity Committee Still Looking for Members!

By Jeannie Lowell,
Diversity Committee Chair

VSEA President Bill Harkness has reinstated the VSEA Diversity Committee. The goals of the Diversity Committee include: assisting VSEA members in understanding the benefits of a diverse workforce; advocating and promoting management policies/procedures that promote diversity; ensuring that VSEA is offering harassment and diversity training to its activist and members; encouraging VSEA to sponsor and participate in diversity programs and events; and serving as a resource and providing support to VSEA members pertaining to diversity issues.

The committee is hoping to recruit members who can bring to the committee the experience and perspective of someone whose color, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, national origin, age, sex, economic or social class, gender identity, or any other background, trait or characteristic, has left them feeling marginalized, oppressed or isolated, especially in their experience as a state employee.

The Diversity Committee meets on the first Tuesday of every month, from 2:30-4:30pm. It presently meets at VSEA headquarters in Montpelier. However, in the interest of attracting other committee members—and being accessible to workers who need assistance on diversity issues—the committee is prepared to attend meetings at other worksites around the state.

Please contact VSEA staff member Abigail Doolittle at 802-223-5247 to let us know if you are interested in joining the Diversity Committee, or want to host a Diversity Committee meeting at your worksite.

Steward Profile

Each issue, the VOICE profiles a VSEA steward who is making a difference in their Chapter and for their co-workers.



Candace Patience
Licensed Nursing Assistant
Vermont Veterans Home
Bennington

Candace Patience is a veteran employee at the Vermont Veterans Home (VVH) in Bennington, which is not as common as you might think. In her 11 ½ years working as a licensed nursing assistant and scheduler at the VVH, Patience has seen a

lot of employees come and go, but in her role as VSEA steward, she's been a steady constant for all the employees, no matter short- or long-term.

"A lot of times I'll advocate for an employee who is still on probation," says Patience. I know [management] has the right to let a probationary employee go, but that doesn't mean that employee shouldn't get a fair hearing...give them another chance maybe."

It's that sense of justice that guides Patience as well when she's advising her VSEA co-workers about a problem or issue.

"I became a VSEA steward because I wanted to make sure people are treated fairly across the board," she explains. "I have a lot of conviction, and I like walking away with a good resolution. It makes me feel good. Some employees want to give up without a fight because they don't want to deal with the problem; they just want it to go away. As a steward, part of my job is to make sure our people know their rights and are making good decisions."

Patience says that she also advises VVH employees to read and understand their VSEA contract with the State.

"Sometimes, an employee will think I'm a miracle worker and can make something that's blatantly wrong—and against the contract—simply go away," she says. "I'm not afraid to tell these people that they are outside the bounds of the contract. Honestly, I think if more employees took some time to read and understand their contract, the need would drop for my services as a steward."

Because the VVH is a unique work environment, meaning the facility is open 24/7 every day of the year, Patience says attendance and staffing issues are a larger here than in most state workplaces.

"Our residents can't take care of themselves; they depend on us for help every day," she explains. "That means if, for some reason, we're short-staffed, someone has to pick up the slack to make sure our resident's are getting what they need. Working to maintain this level of continuous 24/7 service makes it so employee attendance and staffing issues move right to the top."

Patience adds that because the VVH is such a large facility—and one that operates 24/7—there are other stewards to help her address employee issues and concerns, but not enough in her opinion.

"I never feel like I'm on my own down here," says Patience. "The stewards we do have consult with each other and work well together. It's a collaborative effort, but we really don't have enough stewards right now. We need more."

Finally, Patience offers this bit of advice to VSEA members who have issues or problems and want everything to be resolved right away.

"You can't fix every problem, right then, right there," she explains. "We have a process to resolve things, and people need to be patient and let the process work the way it's set up to. If you have a question about the process, ask a steward."

VSEAid Member-Volunteer Program Launches With Very Successful Food Drive!

VSEA members know that state employees don't just help Vermonters while at work, many of us also volunteer our free time helping out in our local communities. But until now, there's never been a coordinated



effort to coalesce many state employee bodies into one unified volunteer force. That's why VSEA recently created "VSEAid"; a program dedicated to uniting VSEA members to volunteer their time and energy in communities across Vermont.

The VSEAid Program launched on December 2 with a food drive.

"State employees have always been generous contributors to their communities, both through their work and their volunteering, but all too

often it's an individual effort," explained VSEAid Coordinator Katie Boyd. "VSEAid will work to bring more and more public employees together as one collective body, working towards a common goal, like helping Vermont families in need. I think the large contribution VSEA members made to the Vermont Foodbank is evidence of the power a collective effort can have."

VSEAid volunteers also helped out at a December 16 blood drive at Montpelier High School.

If you would like to volunteer your time to a VSEAid event, make a recommendation about a deserving volunteer effort or have a question about the program, please contact VSEA Organizing Coordinator Gretchen Naylor or VSEAid Coordinator Katie Boyd at 223-5247. You can also send an e-mail to vsea@vsea.org. Please write "VSEAid" in the subject line.



VSEA Council members from across Vermont were asked to bring food donations to the Council's quarterly meeting in Montpelier. A whopping 425 pounds of food was contributed and delivered on December 3 to the Vermont Foodbank in South Barre.

CHAPTER & UNIT NEWS

Chittenden Chapter Holds Successful Advantage Day Event

VSEA Chapters across Vermont held a series of "Advantage Day" events throughout the Fall 2008. The events were designed to build Chapter solidarity, introduce unknowing members to the union's Advantage Discount Program and provide the VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee with a vehicle to try and convert agency-fee and grandfathered members to full-fledged member status.

On October 10, the Chittenden Chapter held the second of two Advantage Days events it sponsored; an ice cream social that saw a steady stream of VSEA members come through the door to enjoy both the ice cream and the fellowship.

Pictured here (l to r) lining up to make their own personal ice cream creation are VSEA members Cheryl Brinkman and Joan Maclay. Chittenden Chapter President Kathy Henry (far right), manned the ice cream creation table and was responsible for coordinating the event.



"The Chittenden event was one of the most popular Advantage Program events," said VSEA Organizing Coordinator Gretchen Naylor. "Not only did every one have a good time, but the Recruitment Committee was also able to convert 14 agency-fee payers to full-fledged status, which is huge."

VSEA Central Vermont Chapter Braves Cold To Host Advantage Day Event



VSEA members from the Central Vermont Chapter joined with VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee members and staff on December 5 to host a successful Advantage Day event on the State House lawn in Montpelier. With the temperature hovering around freezing, it was appropriate that the event featured free hot cocoa and homemade cookies for full-fledged VSEA members who dropped by the tents that housed the event. Membership Recruitment Committee Chairperson Shelley Martin reports that five agency-fee and grandfathered VSEA members signed up at the event to become full-fledged members. Congratulations to all involved!

VSEA Board Of Trustees Meeting Attendance

To provide VSEA members with a full accounting of their elected Board member's attendance at VSEA Board of Trustees' monthly meetings, the VOICE will begin publishing this table in all future issues.

This first installment reports the individual Board member's attendance at each meeting during the period October 2007 through September 2008.

Explanations:

- District 1 = Barre, Central Vermont (includes Montpelier)
- District 2 = Waterbury, Vermont State Hospital
- District 3 = Newport/Island Pond, Lamoille, NEK, St. Johnsbury
- District 4 = Franklin/Grand Isle, Chittenden, Addison
- District 5 = Rutland, Bennington
- District 6 = Brattleboro, Springfield, White River Junction

Combined Units = Defender General, Judicial and Housing

P - present	A - absent did not call		VSEA BOARD OF TRUSTEES ROLL-CALL SHEET OCT. 2007 - SEPT. 2008												
P (L) - present, late	P (LE) - present, left early		Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Sept
A* called - excused from meeting															
**** - participated by phone for part of meeting															
NAME	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Sept	Sept	
PRESIDENT - Bill Harkness	A*	P	P(L)	P	A*	P	A*	P(LE)	****	A*	P	P	P	P	
1ST V-PRESIDENT - Bob Hooper	P	A*	P	P	P	A*	P	P	P	P	A*	P	A*	P	
2ND V-PRESIDENT - Lucas Herring	P	P	P	P	P(L)	P	P	****	P	P	P	P(L)	P	P	
CLERK - Ruth Leithead	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	
TREASURER - Dave Turner	P	P(LE)	P(L)	A*	A	P	P	P(LE)	P	P	P(L)	P(L)	P	P	
PAST PRESIDENT - Ed Stanak	P	P	P	P(L)	P	A*	A*	P	P	A*	P	P(L)	P(L)	P	
DISTRICT #1 - Susan Baird	P	P	P	A*	P	P(L)	A*	P	P	A*	P	P	P	P	
DISTRICT #2 - Dave Clark	P	P	P	A*	P	P	A*	P	****	P	P(LE)	A	A*	A*	
DISTRICT #3 - Tim Simoneau	P	P	P(L)	P	A*	A*	A*	A	P	A*	A*	A	A	A	
DISTRICT #4 - Pam Barney	A*	A*	****	P	A*	A*	P	P	A	A*	****	A*	A*	A*	
DISTRICT #5 - Linda Bunker	P	A*	A*	P	P	P	P	****	P(LE)	P	P	A	P	P	
DISTRICT #6 - Mike Orticari	P	A*	A*	P(L)	A*	P(L)	A*	P	P	P	P	P	P	A*	
N.M. UNIT - Larry Young	P	A*	A*	P	P	P	A*	P	P(LE)	A	A*	A*	A*	A*	
SUPERVISORY UNIT - Goldie Watson	P	P(L)	P(L)	P	P(LE)	P	P	P	P	P	P	P(L)	P	A*	
CORRECTIONS UNIT - Dave Bellini	****	A*	P(L)	P	P(LE)	A	P	A*	****	A*	****	****	P	A*	
ST. POLICE UNIT - Gary Shuhart	P	P	P	P	P	P	A*	P	P(LE)	P	P	P(L)	A*	A*	
VT ST COLLEGES - Janis Henderson	P	****	P	P(LE)	A*	P(L)	P	A	P(LE)	P(LE)	P(LE)	P	P	P	
COMBINED UNITS - Chris Frappier	P(LE)	****	A*	P	P	P	P(LE)	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	

Packed House For Retirees Chapter Annual Meeting

By Retirees' Chapter President Jane Osgatharp

As I write this, we have around a foot of new snow on the ground and we are just 'digging out'. For those of you who have moved to more temperate climates, I thought you'd like to know.

I want to report to you on the Retirees Chapter Annual Meeting on August 26, 2008.

More than 100 VSEA retirees turned out for the business meeting and the excellent luncheon at the Montpelier Elks Club. The meeting combined business with a chance to reconnect with many old friends and colleagues. We also had a chance to hear, in person, from the major gubernatorial candidates. Governor Douglas and Anthony Pollina addressed us in person. Candidate Gaye Symington was unable to come personally as our meeting was the same week as the Democratic National Convention. However, Representative Floyd Nease, spoke for her and her candidacy.

The primary speaker on the program was Cynthia Webster, the State's Director of Retirement Policy and Outreach. Cynthia announced that the 2009 COLA for Groups A,B,C, & D will be 5%. The COLA for Groups E & F will be 2.5%. She emphasized that the State Employees Pension fund was in no danger from the gyrations of the stock market as it continued to be funded at 100%.

She also explained that a 2008 legislative change to the Retirement System will eventually permit Group F members who retire after July 1, 2008, to receive up to the full COLA as currently received by Groups A,B,C, & D. The other major legislative change in retirement benefits was an increase in the life insurance benefit from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Terry Fields, from the Vermont State Employees Credit Union, spoke about the Home Heating Fuel Buying Plan being offered through the Credit Union by Irving Oil. This year's plan offered fixed price and variable pricing options. However, at the time he spoke, there was no information on the actual prices for fuel oil with their plan.

Other speakers were: VSEA Legislative Coordinator Conor Casey, who spoke on the impact of proposed and actual job cuts on the ability of State government to provide essential services to the people of Vermont. He urged us to ask candidates for legislative and statewide offices what their positions are on this critical issue—and to hold them accountable. VSEA's position is that we should vote for candidates who are supporting state employees and the services that they provide to us as state citizens.

Shelley Martin, president of the VSEA's Waterbury Chapter and chairperson of VSEA's Membership Recruitment Committee, spoke to us about the union's Advantage Discount Program and the scheduled "Advantage Days" being held in several Chapters around the State. Retired members are invited to these functions.

In fact, retiree volunteers to help with the Advantage Day programs are very welcome. It's a good opportunity to learn more about the program and to reconnect with your former work site friends and colleagues. The Advantage Program offers discounts at businesses and some professional services for VSEA members and retirees. You show your green membership card to obtain the discount. A discount directory is available at VSEA headquarters and online at VSEA's website.

I gave an update on our issue with the VSECU, regarding its decision to drop the life insurance benefit associated with a VSECU savings account. Our perception was that the VSECU, a membership organization, was not being responsive to its members. In the best democratic fashion, VSEA members Terry Macaig, Tom Joslin and Giovanni Peebles, were elected to the VSECU Board. It is now possible for VSECU members to attend board meetings without having to request permission to do so. Congratulations to the new board members.

I also reported that members Terry Macaig is running for State Representative from Williston, John Bloch is running for State Senator from Washington County, and Marge Power is running for Secretary of State. We are proud that our Retirees continue to actively work to serve the people of Vermont.

Elections were held for the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and Trustees from Districts 1 & 4. Elected were:

Jane Osgatharp, President
Joan Maclay, Vice President
Frances Mills, Secretary
Wally Farnum, Treasurer
Charles Perry, Trustee, District 1
(Central VT, Barre)
Roger Cram, Trustee, District 4
(Chittenden, Addison,
Franklin/Grand Isle)

Elected retiree representatives to the VSEA Council were Joan Maclay and Chet Briggs.

The Retirees Chapter annual meeting is held in August each year. We hope that you will join us at the next one!

Recent News from the Retirees' Chapter

Terry Macaig was elected to the House of Representatives from Williston! Way to go Terry. Are there any more retirees who are willing to join him?

As of 12/08 our membership was over 800 strong!

Current activities:

- Supporting the new VSEA project, VSEALD. If you are a volunteer in your community, or an elected or appointed member of your town's government, etc., let Katie Boyd at VSEA headquarters know (kboyd@vsea.org or 223-5247). VSEA wants to let the people of Vermont know that state employees, both active and retired, are genuinely involved with improving Vermont and its people.
- Lobbying our legislators. In this period of severe program cuts, our official VSEA lobbyists are working hard to preserve jobs and programs, but they would welcome some help. If you are willing to volunteer your time to observe the legislature, especially key committee meetings during the session, you can provide our lobbyists with valuable information and a valuable service. They do their job well but there is so much happening that they can't be at all meetings, hearings, etc at all times. If you are interested with working on VSEA legislative activity, contact Conor Casey at VSEA headquarters (ccasey@vsea.org or 223-5247). Conor is developing a list of people who are willing to help. We know how effective our lobbyists can be since we did get our life insurance benefit increased 100% last year and Group F benefits were improved for those who retired after 7/1/08. Let's give them some payback support!
- Increasing retiree communication. Retiree communication is difficult because we live in many different places around these United States as well as abroad. If you have e-mail, please send me your e-mail address (annajane@aol.com). It's the only economical, efficient and environmentally friendly way to keep in contact. By doing so, we can keep you updated on important news which affects us as well as the active state employees. You can also check the VSEA website (www.vsea.org), if you have internet access. The Retirees Chapter has a listing on the website where you can post information or questions. Other ideas for improving our access to communication/information would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks for listening to me rant. Stay well and, if you still live in the north, warm.



Employee & Family Assistance Program

Uncertain Times ~ EAP as a Partner

All of us, across the board, are affected by the plummeting economy, and we are uncertain when it will bottom out. We are in this together, and we will get through it together. At times though, the going can seem very lonely, and when these times hit, EAP is there for us. It is available to all classified state employees and household members. Here are some of its offerings:

- **Free and confidential counseling** with professionals for any concern;
- **Financial and Legal** consultation;
- **Resources and Referrals** for any concern. Worried about your elder parent, your college teenager, tenant issues, daycare concerns? Give EAP a call.
- **Workshops** on a wide array of topics for your workgroups; and
- **Web-based resources** and tools at www.vtstate.investeap.org, password: vteap.

While there is no quick fix for the economy or workplace downsizing, remembering to do the things that are truly important can—and will—increase our emotional and physical fitness. Here are just a few: connecting with loved ones, playing with children, being outdoors to connect with each other and our environment ~ chopping wood, going for walks, helping neighbors shovel their walks or carrying in groceries, and noticing wildlife. These activities don't put food on the table or fuel in the furnace, but they do enhance our sense of well-being. As one wise teacher says, "Sweating and laughing every day leads to a healthy, happy and whole life."

As a state workforce—and as individuals—we will eventually get through this tough time. If you need help developing a game plan for coping in the meantime—or if you just feel like talking to someone objective—give EAP a call.

State Employee Assistance Program: 888-834-2830, available 24/7

Healthcare Is A Human Right *Vermont Workers' Center Campaign Is Growing*

The Vermont Workers' Center (VWC) launched a campaign in May 2008 to educate the public about the need to establish healthcare as a basic human right.

The VWC is working to achieve its goal by organizing a grassroots network influential and strong enough "to expand what is politically possible." We have already identified hundreds of Vermonters who collectively share this basic value, and who agree that any healthcare policy must be guided by this basic tenet.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights—adopted in 1948 by the United Nations—proclaims: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of oneself and one's family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care." Despite the fact that these principles were adopted at the urging of the United States—and that many politicians say they support the beliefs—our national and state policies still fail to assure these rights to all of us. In fact, more than 11% of all Vermonters—including more than 11,000 children—currently lack health insurance. Thousands more are underinsured and finding it increasingly difficult to afford their rising premiums and co-pays. What good is government if it does not help its citizens accomplish together what we cannot do individually?

Today, the only people who can truly afford "cradle-to-grave" healthcare are the wealthy, and this is just one example of how the private health insurance "system" has failed Americans. Our current healthcare delivery system treats healthcare as a market commodity upon which a few get rich by denying care, while many die, suffer and amass huge debts. This is not only a crisis for the uninsured; it's a crisis for the insured as well. More than half of all bankruptcies in America are a result of caused by out-of-control healthcare costs—and 50% of those filing for bankruptcy have

health insurance! The VWC believes it is morally imperative that we create a new system that recognizes this basic human right of health care for all.

In order to better understand the system's failings, the VWC has been soliciting stories from Vermonters about their experience(s) with the healthcare system. The survey responses collected so far from hundreds of Vermonters have been real eye openers.

They include:

- Approximately two-thirds of respondents have refrained from getting treatment or drugs because they could not afford it;
- More than half have avoided changing jobs for fear of losing their health insurance;
- Nearly one in five experienced discrimination accessing care; and
- More than one in 10 stayed in an abusive relationship to retain health insurance.

The VWC is collecting surveys by knocking on doors in many neighborhoods and talking about the issues with the general public at worksites, community events and house parties hosted by volunteers. If you or a friend, neighbor or co-worker have had a terrible time navigating our healthcare "system," and would like to share your story, we're listening. Fill out a survey for yourself and encourage others to complete the survey as well.

The VWC has also begun hosting human rights hearings around Vermont, where we "put the healthcare system on trial" by having local residents who have had their basic rights testify before a panel of community and religious leaders. The Workers' Center held hearings in Septem-



ber in Brattleboro, Burlington in October and Barre, St. Albans and Lyndonville in November. If you and your friends want to organize a human rights hearing in your town, contact us right away.

In early 2009, the VWC will hold more hearings in Barre (1/29), Rutland (2/12) and Bennington (2/19). During this time, the VWC will also be building regional organizing committees to build and support the healthcare campaign. All this activity leads to a huge May 1, 2009, rally at the State House. The goal is to get two thousand people to turn out. We believe if that if that goal can be reached, it will be a giant step forward to helping expand what is politically possible. The rally marks the end of the first phase of the campaign.

The campaign's second phase will be to work with supporters to turn the right of health care into policy. To get there—starting at the hearings—VFC organizing committee volunteers will be asking Vermonters to sign a pledge, reading "I'll Be There For The May 1 Rally."

If you're not already active in this campaign, the VWC hopes you will be soon! This issue impacts all of us, but, together, we can make healthcare a human right in Vermont.

