



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ January 11, 2016 – January 15, 2016

Threatened While On The Job? VSEA Wants To Know.

VSEA President Dave Bellini is asking all state employees who are threatened while performing your job duties to provide an account of the threat not only to your supervisor or the State, but also to VSEA.

“VSEA wants to begin to compile its own record of threats against frontline state employees, no matter your occupation,” explains Bellini. “I’m asking all employees who are threatened, especially those working in AHS, to take a few minutes to fill out an online form VSEA made to collect your report. The information will help us provide a firsthand account of the number of threats being made and where they are being made, in addition to some other things.”

Here are the questions:

Name:

Occupation:

Work Base:

Preferred Phone:

Preferred Email:

Date Of Incident:

Where Did Incident Occur:

Name & Relation Of Person Making Threat To Employee (i.e. client, client’s husband, unrelated stranger):

Was Threat Made In Person? If No, How Was Threat Made?

Description Of What Happened:

Incident Reported To: On (date):

Have You Received A Response To Your Report? If Yes, What Was The Response?

Have You Received Any Counseling? Other Help? To Deal With The Threat? Did This Help?

Are The Police Involved At All In This Incident?

If you are a state employee who is threatened on the job, please click [here](#) to find the online report form, **which will remain confidential**, unless otherwise approved by you.

VSEA & State In Fact Finding Again Today

VSEA Bargaining Team members, representing the Non-Management, Corrections and Supervisory Units, joined with staff negotiators on Monday to present extensive economic analysis to a fact finder; data supporting state employees’ position that money does exist, or could exist, to support many of the contract proposals being put forward by the VSEA Teams. The State, as expected, used its time to try to refute a lot of the union’s data, while using its own economic analysis to try and cast the state’s financial situation as more dire than VSEA members believe it is.

Today, the VSEA Teams and State negotiators returned to the fact finder to discuss a host of specific contract proposals from both sides (multiple Units), employees working to convince the fact finder why their proposals are valid, needed or desired, and management pleading its case. Both entities also arguing why a certain proposal(s) by one side or the other is possible or not possible.

Following today’s fact-finding session, the fact finder will take everything she has heard, read and collected and issue a report within 30 days. VSEA teams and the State will then have 20 days to try and

work out any differences in the fact finder's report. If no agreement can be reached, the process moves to a "last-best-offer" stage.

Your Bargaining Team members can provide you with updates on today's specific discussions. Also if you have immediate questions or comments, [please contact one of your Team representatives](#).

In Tough Negotiations, VSEA NMU Members Send Photo Messages To The State

VSEA members belonging to the Non-Management Unit have been sending in pictures of themselves all week. In the photos, members are holding signs of many sizes and shapes, each with a message for State contract negotiators. The NMU members were responding to a request from Unit leaders to demonstrate their solidarity by wearing green and snapping a photo-of-support on Monday, which was the NMU Bargaining Team's first day of fact finding.

The response was terrific. So much so, in fact, the Communications Department has produced videos that feature some and all and all of the photos submitted. Because the number of photos from AOT workers was so great, a special video featuring just them is also part of the mix.

To view the Facebook page, featuring the videos and photos, [click here!](#)

Judiciary Unit Members Also In Tough Bargaining

VSEA members belonging to the Judiciary Unit recently began negotiations on a successor agreement, and the initial non-financial proposals from Judiciary management on January 8 were very troubling to the Unit's Bargaining Team members. "Draconian" is how one member labeled the proposals to *WIA*. The two sides met again today in a follow-up session, and the Team is expected to publish a summary for members afterwards.

State's Budget Address Is January 21

VSEA members will learn more about how the State intends to fill a \$50 million-plus budget deficit on January 21 at 2:00 p.m., when the State's top official delivers his final budget address. It's been widely acknowledged that Medicaid expenses are the primary cause for this year's deficit. The State has already said that its budget proposal will include money to hire 35 new positions in DCF. VSEA members continue to hope that service and position cuts are not part of the budget resolution equation this year.

The VSEA Difference: Retirement Security

Last week, [VPR aired a piece](#) about how 45 percent of Vermonters working in the private sector do not have any retirement benefit whatsoever. The scary finding was released by the AARP, and it was cited in a recent hearing at the State House, where a committee of lawmakers is exploring ways for workers without any retirement plan to save some money, including looking at if it's feasible to create a pension system for private-sector workers—possibly modeled on existing plans for state employees, teachers or others.

In addition to Vermont, 19 other states are currently working to address a similar lack of retirement security for their state's private-sector workers, and *VPR* reports that Oregon recently formed a public, state-run pension program for its private-sector workers without any coverage.

"This is something for VSEA members to remember, especially with the United States Supreme Court weighing a decision right now that could be pretty damaging to public-sector unions across America," VSEA President Dave Bellini tells *WIA*. "Your VSEA membership provides you with decades of state employee-negotiated—and sometimes hard-won—benefits, including a pension plan and retirement security that a lot of workers don't have now." He continued, "I don't apologize for having a good retirement plan because I personally know it didn't come easy, and I like that VSEA has negotiated to have representatives on the State Pension Board. so we're involved in the decision-making process.

That's part of the VSEA difference. Believe me, If some have their way, your union protection and advocacy will go away and our retirement security could go with it, and then we'll all be in this same sinking boat."

This boat is not a good place to be. In November 2015, Center for Retirement Initiatives' Director Angela Antonelli testified to Vermont lawmakers that in addition to pensions disappearing, workers' savings rates are also dropping and social security is not covering retirement expenses.

The State Treasurer's Office is leading the effort to identify ways private-sector retirees without a plan can save money.

Waterbury Group Welcomes Back Displaced State Employees

Several news outlets have recently published stories about how groups of state employees displaced by Tropical Storm Irene have begun returning to new office space in Waterbury. All the workers returning are expected to be moved in by April 2016. Greeting each group of employees as they arrive back is "Revitalizing Waterbury" Representative Karen Nevin, who explains to [the Stowe Reporter](#) that she is there to "welcome the employees to Waterbury personally, encouraging them to get out and explore our fabulous town."

The story explains that just 50 percent of the workers returning to Waterbury come from the pool of 1,200 workers originally displaced after Irene, hence the need to educate those workers who have never worked in Waterbury about the town.

In addition, Revitalizing Waterbury, in partnership with PC Construction prepared a "Warm Waterbury Welcome" to state employees. Together, the organizations put up welcome banners and prepared a comprehensive online directory of Waterbury businesses for employee use. Local businesses are extending the grand welcome by creating shopping incentives for state employees.

SCOTUS Hears Friedrich's Case

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments on a high-profile legal challenge (Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association) that could severely impact the ability of VSEA and other public-sector unions to effectively represent members. The initial reports from the Court are not positive, but VSEA members continue to hold out hope the Court will vote to uphold its decades-old decision that allowed public-sector unions to collect "fair-share" payments.

Here's some of the stories about the arguments delivered at the SCOTUS on January 11:

[Supreme Court Seems Poised to Deal Unions a Major Setback](#) – *NYT*

[SCOTUS looks at labor unions. Unions are worried. Here's why.](#) – *Washington Post*

[Conservative justices skeptical of union position in big labor case](#) – *CNN*

Background Piece:

[A Guide to 'Friedrichs,' the SCOTUS Case That Could Decimate Public Sector Unions](#) – *In These Times*

Vermont Senate Leader Pens Op-Ed, Favoring VSEA Position On Friedrich's Case

VSEA members concerned about the ramifications of an adverse SCOTUS decision on Friedrich's were heartened this week to read an op-ed penned by Sen. Kevin Mullin (R-Rutland) that takes VSEA's position. It was titled, "Supreme Court Education Case Threatens Local Control." Here's an excerpt:

"I happen to think that these fair-share arrangements make a lot of sense for the people of my state. They guard against the temptation for some employees to free-ride — in other words, to receive the benefits of union bargaining but pass the buck on to their fellow employees. That's why I sponsored legislation

in 2013 that ensures public employee unions can collect them. My colleagues and I in Vermont are not alone: Nearly half of states use a fair-share arrangement.”

[Read Sen. Mullin’s entire op-ed here!](#)

Dr. King’s Words Resonate As SCOTUS Decides Case

Dr. Martin Luther King said the following during a December 1961 speech to the AFL-CIO. His words seem prophetic, as they could apply to the mentality behind the Friedrich’s case currently being decided by SCOTUS.

“In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as ‘right to work.’ It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and our job rights. It is supported by Southern segregationists who are trying to keep us from achieving our civil rights and our right of equal opportunity. Its purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone. Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer and there are no civil rights. We do not intend to let them do this to us.”

Mark The Date! VSEA State House Day Is Thursday, February 25, 2016!

VSEA’s annual State House Day will be Thursday, February 25, 2016.

This is the perfect venue for frontline state employees to meet face to face with their local lawmakers to talk about the service you provide and the challenges that confront you daily, especially when it comes to safety.

Register to attend VSEA’s State House Day by **clicking here!**

State Wellness Program Announces 2016 Incentive

WIA is happy to share the following information with members about the State’s 2016 Wellness Incentive Program, which kicked off on January 1.

2016 Wellness Incentive Program

Wellness Core: 750 points/\$75

Personal Health Assessment – 250 points

Health Exam – 500 points (November 2, 2015 - November 1, 2016)

Explore Wellness: 1000 points/\$100

ONE Wellness Challenge – 500 points

Discover Your Wellness Workshop – 250 points

Explore Your Wellness Survey – 250 points

Please read the Incentive FAQ for complete details.

Completion requirements:

- Access your account at: <https://mybluehealth.bcbsvt.com>
- Complete all components of “Wellness Core” and/or “Explore Wellness” to earn incentive
- Complete one or both – it’s up to you! (“Wellness Core” and “Explore Wellness”)
- Complete components between January 1, 2016 and November 1, 2016 to be eligible for incentive (with exception of Health Exam)

Eligibility requirements:

- Must be active permanent state employee at time of payment

- Must use employee ID# as username to be eligible for incentives
- Eligible for cash incentive if insured with SOV Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Vermont (BCBSVT)
- Eligible for drawings if not insured with SOV BCBSVT

Incentive period: January 1, 2016 – November 1, 2016

- Incentives awarded twice per year: June 23, 2016 and December 8, 2016
- Limited to \$175 per employee annually
- Incentives available until funds/drawings depleted or by November 1, 2016
- Cash incentives and drawings taxable under federal and state tax law
- Accommodations available for employees with disabilities

Please update your email address in your profile on the portal to receive wellness communications

Questions?

Contact LiveWell Vermont: (802) 828-2804
or DHR.LiveWellVermont@vermont.gov

First Sign Sightings See A VSEA Yard Sign? Snap A Photo And Post It To VSEA’s Facebook Page

VSEA began distributing yard signs to Council members this week, in hopes the signs will soon start springing up in the communities where VSEA members live and work.

In the coming weeks and months, if you spot a VSEA yard sign, snap a photo and post it to VSEA’s Facebook page or send it VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson at dgibson@vsea.org, and he’ll post it for you.

If you need signs, they are available for pickup at VSEA headquarters in Montpelier. VSEA will also be urging leaders, members and retirees visiting HQ to take some signs back to their worksites and their communities.

VSEA Labor Educator Announces Winter/Spring 2016 Training Schedule

VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lenocho asked WIA to announce a new round of trainings he has scheduled for winter/spring 2016. If you are interested in registering to attend one or more trainings, you can do so by [clicking here](#). Please direct your training questions to Tim at tlenoch@vsea.org.

Trainings in blue are for all members.

Steward Training: Judiciary Unit

Wednesday, January 20
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Department for Children and Families: Workplace Safety

Wednesday, February 3
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Chittenden & Lamoille County

Thursday, February 11
DVHA Conference Room
312 Hurricane Lane, Suite 201
Wilmington

Steward Training: Supervisory Unit

Wednesday, February 17
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward 1: Introduction & The Basics

Friday, March 4
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Health Care Facilities

Wednesday, March 9
VTrans District Office,
61 Valley View
Mendon (five miles east of Rutland)

Steward 2: Protecting The Contract & Building The Union

Friday, March 18
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: The “Hostile Work Environment”

Wednesday, March 23
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward 3: The Contract & Challenges in the Workplace

Friday, March 25
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Investigations & Working With Human Resources

Wednesday, March 30
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Corrections Unit

Wednesday, April 6
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: The Grievance

Wednesday, April 13
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: The Labor/Management Committee

Friday, April 15
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Diversity & Solidarity For Public Sector Union Members

Friday, April 22
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Subscribe To VSEA Today!

VSEA's Communications Department is happy to disseminate any and all communications the leadership, Chapters, Units, and others request, however, the lists the Department currently pull from are provided to the union by the State of Vermont. VSEA's Communications Department has found the lists to be dated, incomplete and sometimes lacking key information that was entered by a VSEA staff person but later overwritten or deleted during a State data dump.

To help VSEA more effectively reach active members—and really all those members who want to know what's going on in their union—VSEA will be working hard in the coming months to collect members' emails on its own and begin to build contact lists that cannot be altered by a State download.

You can help us get started by [clicking here](#) and signing up for the VSEA communications you are interested in receiving.

Thank you in advance for subscribing. Please urge your colleagues to do the same.

Want Instantaneous Push Notifications From Your Union? Sign Up Today For The VSEAUnite App!

With the 2016 legislative session fast approaching, VSEA is excited to be employing a new push notification tool to message members faster about important hearings, meetings, testimony, events and other union matters. Any member who has already downloaded the VSEAUnite App does not to do anything, but if you haven't downloaded the free App yet, you can do so very easily.

VSEA's Communications team is stressing that it will not be overloading members' phones with push notifications. Members will also have the option to easily turn off the notifications, if the volume of notifications ever becomes an issue.

“We'll be working in the coming weeks and months to increase the number of VSEA members using the VSEAUnite App, with an emphasis on getting a few users from each work site,” explains Communications Director Doug Gibson. “We'll be aiming to limit the notifications to just information that is important to the entire VSEA membership, as opposed to Chapter- or Unit-specific messages, which, for the time being, will continue to be sent to members via email message.”

VSEAUnite is available for most mobile devices, including I-phone and Android. Once you download the App, you simply register with your name and your VSEA bargaining unit and location. VSEAUnite then allows you to view your Unit's contract, find contact information for your nearest VSEA steward (to report contract infractions), see a calendar of upcoming VSEA events and read the latest news about working people to hit the wires.

The download is free, so your union hopes all VSEA I-phone, Android and other mobile users will download it today!

Quote Of The Week!

“I’m glad that the decision, regardless of whether you view it in a positive or negative light, will cause members of the public and state government to realize the long hours and dedication that our employees in state’s attorneys offices put into their job.”

Newly sworn Windsor County State’s Attorney David Cahill to [VtDigger](#) on the Vermont Supreme Court’s decision last week to overturn a 2014 VLRB ruling. The decision clears the way for VSEA to organize Deputy States Attorneys, Victims Advocates and Secretaries in the State’s Attorneys Offices under the Municipal Labor Relations Act (MERA). Cahill helped VSEA launch its original drive to organize the State’s Attorneys’ offices, prior to being promoted to Director of State’s Attorneys and Sheriffs and now to State’s Attorney.

Attention VSEA Members Whose Union Representative Is Rachael Fields

VSEA members working in Chapters/Units currently served by VSEA Union Representative Rachael Fields are urged to note the following, as Rachael is returning to the State House to serve in her role as an elected lawmaker, representing the citizens of Bennington.

Bennington: Rachael will continue to represent
Brattleboro (including the Rockingham PSAP): report to David Van Duesen
White River Junction (including the Windsor “work camp” facility): report to Bob South
Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH): report to Brian Morse
Addison: report to Mike O’Day

[Contact Info Here!](#)

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

January 18

Dr. Martin Luther King Holiday
Most State Offices & VSEA Closed

January 20

Steward Training: Judiciary
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

January 21

Budget Address
State House
2:00 p.m.

January 22

Chapter Presidents’ Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

January 22

Budget Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

10:00 a.m.