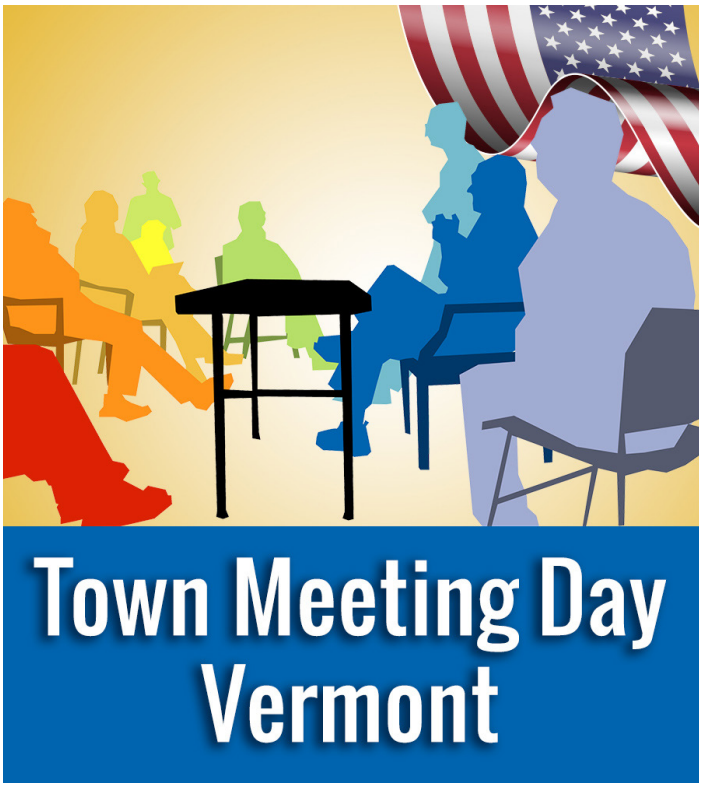
Week In Action Newsletter

February 28, 2020

Read the full newsletter with links and more content on VSEA.org



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< With Vermont's Town Meeting Day happening next Tuesday, March 3, The Commons posted a primer online this week for folks new to the meeting process or for anyone wanting a refresher. Find a link to the primer on VSEA.org.

VSEA Legislative Team Issues Update, Heading Into Town Meeting Day & Nearing Crossover

As Vermonters prepare to vote Tuesday on local issues, VSEA's legislative team is sharing a new update today with members about how VSEA bills are faring at the state level and which ones the team expects to make it to "crossover." Crossover is a crucial, self-imposed March 13 deadline, when lawmakers will decide what new laws could be made, and what bills could be left behind.

Please read this important legislative update to educate yourself about what your union's priorities will be as Vermont heads into this important time of the current session.

View Legislative Session Updates on VSEA.org

Language In Bill Directs Multiple State Agencies To Report On Employee Claims For PTSD & Other Work-Related Mental Health Conditions

The online site *Business Insurance* posted a story this week about the State recently signing a bill into law "to allow for investigation and sanctions for the misclassification of workers and require the development of a committee to study workers compensation claims for mental conditions filed by state workers." It's that second part that is of great interest to VSEA members,

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especially those who work in an occupation that can sometimes involve incidents that could cause an employee to suffer post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or some other mental health issue.

From the post:

The bill would also require several state agencies to collaborate on and submit a written report to the legislature on workers compensation claims submitted by state employees relating to post-traumatic stress disorder or other mental conditions on or before Jan. 15, 2021. The legislation would require the report to examine the occurrence and frequency of such claims, identify professions with a heighted risk of exposure to traumatic situations or stress, detail current prevention or education plans related to PTSD and identify specific training and materials that could be implemented to better recognize PTSD symptoms and educate workers on resources available.

VSEA welcomes this report, as it should identify which professions across state government are more at risk than others, which will then allow VSEA to target its safety and security fights where they are needed most.

VSEA Executive Director Talks State Employee Issues With *WDEV*'s Dave Gram

On Friday, February 21, *WDEV* morning talk show host Dave Gram spent some time on his show to talk about state employee issues with VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard. Among the topics discussed were:

- Woodside;
- State of Mental Health Services;
- Judiciary Bargaining;
- VSC Bargaining; and
- OSA Bargaining

Listen Online:
https://wdevradio.com/statehouse-2020-02-21/

Note: VSEA piece begins at 21:00 and goes to 40:30.

Steward's Box:

Upcoming Steward Trainings:

Colleges' Steward Training
Thursday, March 26, 2020
8:30 a.m. -3:00 p.m.
Montpelier - VSEA HQ
155 State Street

Please RSVP to VSEA Administrative Assistant Sue DeVoid at: sdevoid@vsea.org or call 802-223-5247.

House Votes To Override Veto Of Minimum Wage Increase

The Vermont House voted on Tuesday to override [the State]'s veto of a minimum wage hike for working Vermonters.

From a *WCAX* post on Tuesday:

The Vermont House has voted to override [the State]'s veto of a minimum wage bill, paving the way for the state's hourly wage to increase to $12.55 by 2022.

The House voted Tuesday morning by a narrow 100 to 49 margin, achieving the two-thirds majority needed by one vote. The bill -- now law -- calls for raising the minimum wage from $10.96 to $11.75 next year and $12.55 by 2022.

Meet The State Employees Who Inspect Vermont's Food Establishments

Nice post the week to *Seven Days*, titled, Health Inspectors Monitor the State's Kitchens, and the Public Can Online

From the story:

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Inspectors' days begin with an email and phone check, and their "do list" is updated every night. A typical week could include rounds of routine and unannounced inspections, as well as opening inspections for new restaurants, prescheduled inspections, checks of food processors (289 statewide, by last count), lodging establishments (580), home kitchens (257), schools (334) and children's camps (67). There are even a few Vermont shellfish facilities that need to be thoroughly trawled.

Inspectors might hit four to six establishments in a day, or take all day to go through a single manufacturing facility. This time of year, restaurants are buzzing around ski destinations, so inspectors in resort areas may spend more time near the slopes.

Note: VSEA thanks these state employees for the essential public service they are providing to Vermonters.

VSEA Legislative Dinner Series Wraps After Weather Forces Fourth Cancellation Of 2020

For the fourth time this winter, weather caused the cancellation of a VSEA legislative dinner meeting; this the final meeting of 2020, where privatization was to be the topic.

The Committee is again thanking VSEA members and retirees who participated in one of the two dinner meetings held this session and apologizing for any inconvenience caused to anyone by this year's numerous weather cancellations.

Next Council Meeting:

Friday, May 29
Castleton University
Castelton, VT
8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Mark The Date!

It's About Your Safety!

BGS' Safety & Security Division's Employee Tip

Do you know what these devices are or how they work?

A.)



B.)



State Safety & Security utilizes these devices to ensure the safety of state employees and visitors in state office buildings.

A.) A lockdown button will put the building in "Lockdown". When activated, the exterior doors lock, and badge access into the building will not . Buildings without lockdown buttons can still initiate a lockdown by calling the 24/7 Security line 802-828-0777.

B.) A panic button is a device that can be mounted under desks or on a wall or on a lanyard to take to meetings with clients. The panic button does not activate any alarms in the building. It communicates

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with a central monitoring system who contacts police. Whenever a security devices is activated, it should be followed up with a message to the entire building indicating what device was activated, why, and what you expect the response to be, i.e. "Police are on the way", "911 has been called and emergency services are en route", or "State Security has been notified and advises…".

If you have questions about what devices are in your building or want to learn more about emergency procedures, please contact Kristen LaJeunesse, State Safety & Security Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, 802-828-5553 or kristen.lajeunesse@vermont.gov



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Quote Of The Week!

"The response from all officers involved was swift and professional, bringing a dangerous and escalating situation quickly under control."

Line from a Vermont Corrections Department statement, issued shortly after an inmate took another inmate hostage on Wednesday at the Northern State Correctional Facility in Newport. As reported in the *Caledonian Record*. Great job to all involved.

Talking Points:

Article Confirms State & Local Tax Incentives Are A Losing Gamble

Governing posted a story this week to its site that confirms an argument Vermont's State Auditor and others have been making for years; state and local tax incentives aren't achieving the desired result.

From the story:

Perhaps there's no government policy or program that's as widely reviled, yet universally pursued, as tax incentives.

Study after study demonstrates that when states and cities give out tax breaks to companies looking to relocate or expand, they typically get very limited bang for their bucks, if any. Yet such incentives remain central to development strategies in most jurisdictions.

A study published last summer found that three-quarters of local economic development dollars are devoted to tax incentives, with the amount spent on them tripling since the 1990s.

Whereas Vermont's tax incentive programs include little to no accountability at present, the article reports that some states are requiring it to receive incentives.

Utah has an incentive program based on rebates. Once a company meets the criteria for receiving incentives — creating a given number of jobs that pay a minimum of 110 percent of the county average in relevant job categories, for instance — it gets a rebate. The average over the past year has been 20 percent of a company's overall tax bill dating back seven years. About two-thirds of the rebates have gone to companies that were already based in the state but have expanded.

Oregon TV Station Reports On Cost Of Lengthy State Employee Investigations

It'a an issue readers have seen highlighted in *WIA* several times; the cost to put a state employee out on paid administrative leave for a lengthy period of time.

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This week, an Oregon television station, KGW, aired a story, titled "Paid to Stay Home," and here's what the reporter found:

- Oregon paid 288 employees a total of $3.2 million to stay home from work in 2019;
- Over half of these state employees were on paid administrative leave for over a month; and
- 25 state employees were on leave for six months or longer.

Note: **This is an issue that VSEA has been raising for years at the State House, and, in January 2020, Seven Days wrote about Vermont's own lengthy investigation problem in a story titled, *"Cost of Misconduct: State Employees Placed on Leave Get Paid While Investigations Drag On."***

Getting Ready To Retire? Retired Already? Join The VSEA Retired Members' Chapter!

Long-time VSEA activist and leader Terry Lefebvre is asking VSEA members getting ready to retire to join the VSEA Retirees' Chapter to continue to be an active and engaged union member, even in retirement. Lefebvre also appeals to VSEA members to talk up the co-workers they know who might be preparing to retire. If you already belong to the Retired Members' Chapter, a big thanks to you.

Learn more about the VSEA Retired Members' Chapter by calling 802-223-5247 or emailing VSEARetirees@gmail.com. You can also log onto www.vsea.org/retirees

Next Week's Calendar:

March 3
Town Meeting Day
VSEA HQ & Most State Offices Closed

March 4
Labor / Management Committee Meeting
Northern State Correctional Facility
Conference Room
2559 Glen Road
Newport
10:00 a.m.

March 5
OSA Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
155 State Street
Montpelier
8:00 a.m.

March 5
White River Junction Chapter Meeting
State Office Building
Downstairs Conference Room
1118 Prospect Street
White River Junction
12:00 p.m.

March 5
Springfield Chapter Meeting
State Office Building
First Floor Conference Room
100 Mineral Street
Springfield
4:30 p.m.

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