



Week In Action Newsletter

November 22, 2019

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

Buy Union Made This Thanksgiving!

When you buy union, you're supporting good jobs in American communities, jobs that provide living wages and benefits, safe working conditions, and dignity and respect for work. Look for these quality products, produced by union members, when preparing for your Thanksgiving feast.

Set the Table:

- Anchor Hocking (GMP)
- Bennington Pottery (UNITE HERE)
- Clauss knives (USW)
- Corning-Ware (USW)
- Fiestaware (GMP)
- Homer Laughlin china (GMP)
- Libbey glassware (USW and GMP)
- Pyrex (USW)

Fresh Whole Turkey:

- Butterball (UFCW)
- Foster Farms (UFCW)

Stuffing:

- Manischewitz (UFCW)
- Stroeckmann bakery products (BCTGM)

Potatoes:

- Betty Crocker specialty potatoes (BCTGM)
- Dole fresh potatoes (IBT)
- Mann's fresh culinary cuts sweet potatoes (UFCW)

Vegetables:

- Andy Boy (UFW)
- Birds Eye (UFCW)
- Eurofresh (UFCW)
- Mann's (UFCW)
- Muranaka Farm (UFW)
- Sunripe (UFCW)

Cranberries/Cranberry Sauce:

- Dole (IBT)
- Ocean Spray (IAM)

See a full list of Union-Made Thanksgiving products online: AFLCIO.org/thanksgiving



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Contract Ratification Vote Result Being Certified Monday Morning

The deadline for VSEA members belonging to the Executive Branch Units (Non-Management, Supervisory and Corrections Units) to vote yay or nay on the tentative agreement is this afternoon at 4:30 p.m.

VSEA's Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee will be at headquarters first thing Monday morning to certify the vote count, after which, VSEA will immediately post the results to the union's Web Page (VSEA.org), Facebook page, Twitter page, and Instagram page.



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instagram.com/vseaunite

VSEA Pension Fight Tour To Continue

Keep an eye on the VSEA web page calendar for upcoming VSEA pension fight worksite meetings that might be scheduled between now and when WIA publishes again on December 6.

Learn More:

- View the "VSEA Retirement Security Fact Sheet" on page 7.

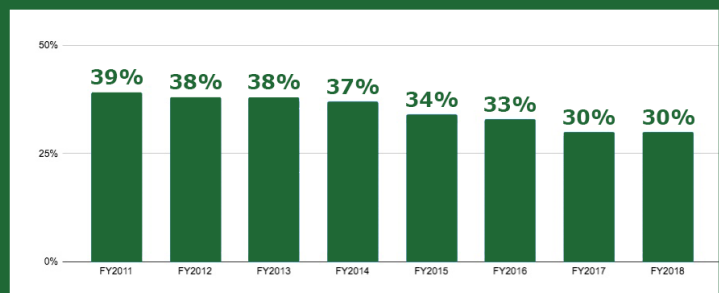
Protect Pensions! Share This Image!

VSEA is urging members and retirees to share the image below with your colleagues, family and friends. Let them know that even exempt state employees greatly prefer a defined benefit pension plan, and this is a fact that lawmakers and State officials cannot ignore.

When Given A Choice...

**Vermont's Exempt State Employees
Choose A Defined Benefit Pension Plan!**

**Percent of exempt employees
opting for 401k is shrinking...**



**Most sticking with defined
benefit pension plan!**





VSEA Investigating Attack On Springfield CO

Another Example Of Why Improved DOC Safety & Security Is A Priority!

Just a week after a recent visit by lawmakers belonging to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee to the St. Albans prison to hear from frontline corrections officers about their issues and concerns, including safety and security, several news outlets reported this week on a vicious Tuesday attack on a corrections officer by inmates at the Springfield prison.

From a November 20 WCAX story:

According to a police report, an inmate attacked an officer at the Southern State Correctional Facility with a blunt object. While that was happening, two more inmates attacked a third inmate. An officer used pepper spray to control the situation.

Since learning of the attack, VSEA has had staff at the facility, checking on the members there and working to gather all the facts to determine next steps, in consultation with VSEA Corrections Unit leaders.

Here's what VSEA told WCAX (we've changed from an association to a union, it appears):

The Vermont State Employees Union, which represents corrections officers, said it is extremely alarmed. Union staff are talking with DOC workers to determine from their perspective what exactly happened and if the DOC is being factual with the public about the severity of the attack.

"We'll also be asking DOC about things like staffing levels and shakedown frequency. I would expect we'll have more to say soon," said VSEU President Dave Bellini in a statement.

Safe Ratio?

This is also an interesting pull from the story:

[DOC Commissioner Michael] Touchette says the incident happened in the close custody unit at the Springfield prison, where there is a higher level of security. "This has more staffing than the typical correctional units around the state," he said.

Two officers staff the unit, which can hold up to 50 inmates.

Note: 2 to 50 in a unit with higher security than most? Makes you wonder.

State Seeking Input On 2021 Budget

Given the State's charge this summer to department and agency heads to come up with a 20% reduction in spending by August 30 (VTDigger, June 2019: State Asks Agencies for Plan to Cut Growing Spending Gap by 20%) to "help close the gap between the projected growth in spending and available revenues," VSEA members are urged to share any and all cost-savings ideas you have with the State.

The State's is asking Vermonters with input to submit comments about state expenditures through an online forum and survey.

- **FORM FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE BUDGET PROCESS :**
<https://finance.vermont.gov/about-department/contact-us/public-comments-budget-process>
- **Public Budget Forum Survey for FY 2021 State Budget:**
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DSH38CS>



Nearly 800 Have Signed VSEA's Petition To Increase State College Funding. Have You Signed Yet?

Although Vermont is among the top five in the United States for K-12 education funding, Vermont is ranked 50th for state college funding.* VSEA members are standing strong in support of the Vermont State College staff and are demanding a solution to the many years of chronic underfunding.

To demonstrate how much our state colleges mean to Vermonters, VSEA is urging members, retirees, and the public to sign the union's online petition, which calls on state officials and lawmakers to immediately increase VSC funding.

Sign The Petition Online:
www.jotform.com/vsea/VSC

QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

"What a shame that it takes today to get what our kids deserve"

Indiana State School Superintendent Jennifer McCormick, addressing thousands of Indiana teachers, who rallied Tuesday at the State House for increased school funding and teacher pay. From a November 19 TIME magazine story.



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TALKING POINTS:

JFK's Words Still Ring True Today, 56 Years After His Tragic Assassination



In remembrance of the tragic November 22, 1963, assassination of President John F. Kennedy, WIA is sharing this 1960 Kennedy quote about labor unions. His words still ring true today.

Those who would destroy or further limit the rights of organized labor--those who would cripple collective bargaining or prevent organization of the unorganized--do a disservice to the cause of democracy.

Fifty years or so ago the American Labor Movement was little more than a group of dreamers, and look at it now. From coast to coast, in factories, stores, warehouse and business establishments of all kinds, industrial democracy is at work.

Employees, represented by free and democratic trade unions of their own choosing, participate actively in determining their wages, hours and working conditions. Their living standards are the highest in the world. Their job rights are protected by collective bargaining agreements. They have fringe benefits that were unheard of less than a

Continued on page 5

generation ago.

Our labor unions are not narrow, self-seeking groups. They have raised wages, shortened hours and provided supplemental benefits. Through collective bargaining and grievance procedures, they have brought justice and democracy to the shop floor. But their work goes beyond their own jobs, and even beyond our borders.

Our unions have fought for aid to education, for better housing, for development of our national resources and for saving the family-sized farms. They have spoken, not for narrow self-interest, but for the public interest and for the people.

Central Vermont VSEA Members Belonging To Hunger Mountain Co-Op Urged To Help Employees Get A Fair Contract!



Workers, belonging to UE Local 255--and working at the Hunger Mountain Co-Op in Montpelier--are holding information sessions with the public throughout central Vermont to talk about their contract struggle with Co-Op management and to seek the public's support.

The UE employees are currently working under the terms and conditions of an expired contract, and they say the situation is compounded by a

breakdown in communication with management and a perceived lack of respect for the workers, in general. They say that, to date, management has proposed raises of just 7-cents-per-hour and is insisting that any future raise be tied to employees giving up paid holidays, or, as they say, "paying for their own raise."

To learn more about how you can help the Hunger Mountain Co-Op workers, message them on their Facebook page or stop by the store and talk with a worker.

Indiana Teachers Pack State House To Demand Increased Funding

TIME reports this week on thousands of Indiana teachers rallying at the State House to demand increased funding for the state's public schools.

From the story:

Several thousand teachers wearing red surrounded the Indiana Statehouse on Tuesday to call for better pay and more respect from the Republican-dominated state government in a protest that closed more than half of the state's school districts for the day.

The union-organized rally represented Indiana's biggest such teacher protest amid a wave of educator activism across the country over the past two years.

Teachers chanted, "Fund our schools," and "Put kids first," as hundreds of them lined entrances to the Statehouse, many holding handmade signs with sayings such as, "Less Money on Testing, More Money on Students." Teachers with marching band instruments played "We're Not Gonna Take It" from the Statehouse steps.

Note: Teachers also protested last year in West Virginia, Oklahoma and Arizona.



Kentucky Teachers Will Lead Newly Elected Governor's Inaugural Parade!

Recognizing how important unionized teachers were to his election, newly elected Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear recently announced that teachers will be at the head of his December 10 inaugural parade.

"In my first inauguration announcement, I want to show my appreciation for our public educators, who work tirelessly, every day to improve the lives of our children and lift up our communities, and that is why I am naming them inauguration parade grand marshals," Beshear said.

Working Vermont Hosting January 2020 Event With AFT's National President Randi Weingarten

Working Vermont (a coalition of Vermont labor unions, including VSEA) is pleased to be hosting a reception for national American Federation of Teachers (AFT) President Randi Weingarten.

Here are the details:

AFT Randi Weingarten Reception

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

State House Cafeteria

4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

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

What is the VSEA Advantage Program?

Did you know? The average VSEA member can save hundreds of dollars a year by taking advantage of some of the Members Only benefits offered through their union!

GET EXCLUSIVE OFFERS, DISCOUNTS & MORE: It's free, just for being a Vermont State Employees' Association PerksConnect member!

Learn More On VSEA.org

Questions? Feel free to email vsea@vsea.org

Week In Action Not Publishing Next Week!

WIA is taking a short break next week and will publish next on December 6. Please review the calendar to see events happening next week and the following week.

Have A Happy Thanksgiving!

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YOUR PENSION IS ***UNDER ATTACK — AGAIN!***

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VSEA Retirement Security Fact Sheet

- In preparation for an expected new attack on VSEA members' and retirees' defined benefit pension plan, VSEA is providing this retirement primer:
- VSEA members' and retirees' current pension plan is called a **DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION PLAN**. This plan provides you a guaranteed and specified monthly amount in retirement, and your benefit level is in no way impacted by Wall Street and the unreliable fluctuations in financial markets.
- Some politicians and wealthy corporate interests will be actively lobbying this session to place future new hires to Vermont state government into a **DEFINED CONTRIBUTION PENSION PLAN (a.k.a. 401K)** instead of into employees' and retirees' current defined benefit plan. A 401K would offer VSEA members and retirees no specific amount of benefits at retirement because a person's benefit level would be at the mercy of Wall Street, meaning every fluctuation in the market, good or bad, impacts your retirement. If the market goes down when you retire, it's your problem. Imagine if you were set to retire with a 401K right as the market is crashing, like in 2008. You could be financially devastated.
- **IMPORTANT!** VSEA members and retirees will also have to guard against any proposal to transition your existing defined benefit plan to a "hybrid" plan, which is another tactic the pension-gutting crowd is employing in other states. A hybrid is a combination of defined benefit and 401K plans, and, eventually, this hybrid evolves into a 401K plan solely, so don't be fooled. The message is, **"DON'T MESS WITH THE CURRENT PENSION SYSTEM-PERIOD!"**
- Equally troubling, the onus is on the individual employee to adequately be investing into his/her 401K during their working years, which studies have shown is too often not the case.
- If you live longer than expected, your 401K can run out, whereas a pension lasts your entire life.
- The average VSEA retiree earns roughly \$19,000 annually in retirement, and that's with a stable plan.
- VSEA members and retirees have repeatedly stepped up to the plate over the years to ensure the defined benefit pension plan's annual retirement contribution (ARC) is funded. That time is coming again soon!
- State Treasurer Beth Pearce often reminds Vermonter's that defined benefit plans are more cost effective for Vermont taxpayers. She's right. A 2017 study found that **"rather than lower costs by moving from a defined benefit plan to a 401K plan, states actually experience increased retirement costs for themselves and taxpayers."**

