Week In Action Newsletter

May 3, 2019

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





Photo: VSEA ESD case managers in St. Albans depict life for Vermonters without full budget funding.

Strength In Numbers! A reminder that your union's 2019 membership-recruitment drive is underway. Rewards for recruiting new members between now and September 1!

- **2 new members -** Dunkin Donuts gift card;
- **5 new members -** VSEA insulated coffee mug;
- **10 new members -** $50 VISA gift card!

Bonus! Recruit a new member and receive an entry in a drawing to win one of four $300 prizes to be awarded at VSEA's 2019 Annual Meeting! Each new recruit earns you an additional entry! Just be sure to have your recruits add your name in the "Recruited By" line of the VSEA Membership Application.

Debate Over ESD Position Cuts Moves To House

The Senate Appropriations Committee agreed to language this morning that would ***cut $1.2 million in funding from DCF's ESD budget and $400,000 from Parent Child Centers.*** This would make it necessary to cut ESD positions, which is why VSEA is not happy about the Senate's decision and will be lobbying hard for the House to substitute its own budget proposal—which fully funds ESD—for the Senate's in conference committee.

In the coming days, VSEA First Vice President Aimee Towne and the VSEA legislative team will be updating ESD members regularly on any and all developments around ESD funding in the House and Senate, or in conference committee, and what action members can take to help.

Deadline To Apply For 2019 VSEA Scholarship Is May 8!

The VSEA Awards & Scholarship Committee's deadline to apply for a VSEA scholarship is Wednesday, May 8! Scholarship applications will be accepted from VSEA members and / or retirees and their spouses, dependents or domestic partners.

The application process is easy, requiring the applicant to write a couple of short essays as well as provide a grade history, employment history, personal references and a few other things.

Again, the deadline to submit an application is Wednesday, May 8.

Download an application on VSEA.org

VSEA 2019 Election Season Officially Kicks Off With May 1 Email

All VSEA members were sent an email on Wednesday that explains how to run for a VSEA Officer or Board post up for election this year. The email will also contained blank petitions for interested candidates to complete.

Officer Posts Up for Election This Year:
(Petition Filing Deadline: June 3, 2019)

- President
- First Vice President
- Second Vice President
- Clerk
- Treasurer

Board Seats Up for Election This Year:
(Petition Filing Deadline: July 16, 2019)

- District 1 Trustee (Central Vermont, Barre)
- District 2 Trustee (Waterbury, Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital)
- District 5 Trustee (Bennington, Rutland)

Download petitions or learn more on VSEA.org

Rally Time! VT Labor Community Prepping To Rally Against Ex-Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker's May 30 Visit To Burlington

The Vermont labor community is planning a rally outside the Hilton Hotel in Burlington on May 30. That night, notorious anti-union, ex-Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker is speaking at a fundraiser there. **Walker's visit comes eight years after working Vermonters and their unions, including VSEA, participated in an anti-Scott Walker solidarity rally to support Wisconsin workers, who were under attack from their governor.**

On Wednesday, May 8, at 5:00 p.m., AFSCME is hosting a meeting of unions, allied community organizations and Vermont activists to plan the logistics of the May 30 rally against Scott Walker. All pro-labor groups and persons are welcome. More information on VSEA's Facebook page.

Once the final rally details are nailed down, VSEA will be sharing the information with members and retirees and inviting your participation.

Remember, as Wisconsin Governor, Scott Walker's "right-to-work" (for less) legislation stripped away vital worker protections in Wisconsin. He also supported and championed legislation that:

- Required most public employees to pay more towards health insurance and pensions, resulting in a drop in take-home pay of 8 to 10 percent

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(police and firefighters were exempted from most of those provisions);

- Severely restricted the rights of public workers to collectively bargain by mandating annual certifications for the representatives of bargaining units; requiring that a majority of all members must vote to certify – not just a majority of those voting; and prohibiting employers from deducting labor union dues from paychecks;

- Prevented unions from requiring an employee to be a union member in order to reap the benefits of contract provisions the union has negotiated in bargaining on behalf of its members;

- Changed the way wages are calculated for members of certain trade groups on certain local public works projects, which resulted in less pay for the workers;

- Eliminated the practice of requiring all workers to be given one day off within a seven-day week;

- Limited options for women to sue to enforce equal pay provisions;

- Eliminated language in state law that asserted the state's interest in having workers receive wages that provide for an adequate standard of living; and

- Changed the state's pioneering civil service system by consolidating the personnel process within the partisan Department of Administration (DOA), replacing merit exams for most civil service positions with resume screening by DOA, and making it easier and faster to fire employees.

More To Come On Rally... Stay Tuned For Location & Time!

Hope To See You At The Rally!

Influential NH Newspaper Advises Governor To Move On From His NH/VT Joint Family Leave Proposal

New Hampshire's Governor is signaling he will veto family leave legislation that implements a .5% payroll tax, much like legislation being debated right now in Vermont. He's vetoing it because he wants his own proposal passed, which would require a partnership with Vermont and both states' state employees being dumped into a pool together. VSEA quickly rejected this idea when it was promoted here by Governor Scott.

On Tuesday, the *Concord Monitor* penned an editorial that urges NH's Governor not to veto the legislation. Here's an excerpt:

'Help Wanted" signs hang in hundreds of windows. Short employees, some businesses have reduced the hours they're open. Others have closed. At 2.6%, New Hampshire's unemployment rate is, save for South Dakota at 2.5%, the lowest in the land. Employers are desperate for workers. But with the race to fill vacant positions underway, the state is poised to shoot itself in the foot.

It will do that, and lose what's become an intense regional competition for workers, if Gov. Chris Sununu vetoes Senate Bill 1, legislation that provides employees up to 12 weeks of paid family leave. The Legislature lacks the Republican support necessary to override Sununu's veto.

The bill is actuarially sound. Versions of it have been used by other states for years. The benefits it provides, time off at partial pay to care for a newborn, ill spouse or aged parent, will be funded by a 0.5% tax on payroll that can be paid by employers or employees or shared between them. Benefits would be distributed through the state's Labor Security Department, which already runs the unemployment insurance program.

The governor claims to have a rival plan. It involves voluntary participation with coverage purchased from private insurers.

There is no there there, at least for now, to Sununu and Vermont Republican Gov. Phil Scott's proposal to use state employees to provide a pool of buyers big enough to attract the interest of private insurers. The union representing Vermont's state employees rejected the idea. New Hampshire's state employees union has been noncommittal. Nor is it clear that insurers are interested in selling paid family leave coverage, at least at a price employers and employees would be willing to pay.

Quote Of The Week!

"The union representing Vermont's state employees rejected the idea."

Line from an editorial this week in the *Concord Monitor* (NH), advising lawmakers of just one of the major reasons the state legislature should forget about a family leave proposal floated by the governors of both NH and VT to combine state employees into a pool.

May 17 Is The Deadline To Enroll In VSEA's Popular Delta Dental Supplemental Plan

For VSEA members who are not currently enrolled in your union's Northeast Delta Dental Supplemental Program, now is the time to join, during the open enrollment period for the 2019-2020 plan year. The VSEA supplemental program is designed to enhance your current State-provided dental insurance benefit.

The enrollment period is also when members already in the program can amend their number of dependents also using the program, if this number has changed in the past year.

All enrollment forms will be due back on May 17, 2019.

Note: If you are already taking advantage of this benefit, and you have no changes this year to your coverage, ***you do not need to send back a new form****, as you will be automatically renewed.*

Reserve Your Room Now For VSEA's 2019 Annual Meeting At Okemo

You can reserve a room now through a special link created by Okemo. VSEA members will need

to use a special rate code for the event, which is: **CM2VSEA.** Reserve Room Now Online Here: https://www.okemo.com/groups/group-promo-package/

Room types available:

- **Inn Room** (occupancy 2-4)
  1 to 2 nights = $159 per night
  3 nights = $144.54
- **Studio** (occupancy 2-4)
  1 to 2 nights = $173 per night
  3 nights = $157.27
- **One-Bedroom** (occupancy 2-6)
  1 to 2 nights = $195 per night
  3 nights = $177.63
- **Two-Bedroom** (occupancy 4-6)
  1 to 2 nights = $235 per night
  3 nights = $213.63

Talking Points:

Oregon Lawmakers Debate Bill To Protect Nurses From Assault & Violence

Oregon television station KMTR reported this week on a bill making its way through the state legislature that seeks to enhance safety protections for health care professionals.

From the report:

"...violence in healthcare facilities nationwide is a growing epidemic. One in four nurses are physically assaulted every year, mostly by patients, according to the American Nurses Association.

That's why state lawmakers have passed a bill in the Oregon senate that, if it becomes law, would require health care facilities to establish violence prevention plans, protect workers' right to report, and create team-based solutions, bringing nurses into the conversation."

The Nation Reports: How Private Equity Is Turning Public Prisons into Big Profits

The Nation published a very well-researched article this week about America's growing private-prison industry and who is making money off the nation's incarcerated.

Here's the story teaser... "In recent years, corporations have privatized almost every part of the public prison system. Now, private-equity firms are swooping in, seeking lavish returns for investors."

From the story:

Bianca Tylek, the founder of Worth Rises, an advocacy group that tracks commercial interests in corrections, has catalogued 3,100 companies with a financial stake in mass incarceration. Her findings were released last April in a Corrections Accountability Project report and include not only the well-known, publicly traded private-prison contractors but also divisions within companies with household names like Amazon, General Electric, and Stanley Black & Decker. In addition, dozens of boutique firms are dipping deep into the corrections-industry well, from Wall Street Prison Consultants, which provides advice to white-collar offenders, to a lawn-mower service that sells only to prisons. "We've underestimated the size of the prison-industrial complex," Tylek said. "Every estimate you've seen until now is a conservative one."

Or as Alex Friedmann, associate director of the Human Rights Defense Center and managing editor at Prison Legal News, put it, "Pretty much every conceivable service in the public prison system has been privatized in one form or another, with the exception of putting people to death."

Connecticut Nursing Home Workers Renew Strike Threat

The *CT Post* reports on May 1 that 3,100 employees working at 25 nursing homes across Connecticut are renewing their threat to strike after calling off a strike they had scheduled for May 1.

From the story:

"Workers like Reid called off their May 1 strike last week because they received a letter from Gov. Ned Lamont indicating he would work to increase their pay and state funding for nursing homes.

But the legislature's Appropriations Committee revealed their state spending plan Tuesday with no increase. That disappointed workers, who showed up force Wednesday and sat in on a meeting of the legislature's tax policy committee to pressure lawmakers."

Day Of Protest Features Largest Gathering Ever Of South Carolina Teachers

Several media outlets reported this week on teachers across South Carolina walking out of classrooms on Wednesday to protest poor wages and working conditions. In the state capital, Columbia, 10,000 teachers rallied, which is the largest gathering of teachers in South Carolina ever.

From a *Greenville News* story:

Duncan Chapel Elementary School teachers Lindsey Finley, Taylor Long and Patricia Enfinger were among those who took a leave of absence to participate in the rally organized by the advocacy group SC for Ed.

Long said she and her Greenville County colleagues have to pay for classroom supplies out of pocket and hold multiple jobs to make ends meet, and she believes state lawmakers should do more to provide teachers and students with more.

"Our students deserve to be fully funded," she said. "We have to work with other teachers and create (materials) ourselves to find things that work for the curriculum."

VSEA Calendar:

May 7
Board Of Trustees Meeting
VSEA HQ
155 State Street, Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

May 7
VSHA Chapter Meeting
VSEA HQ
155 State Street, Montpelier
5:00 p.m.

May 8
Scholarship Application Deadline
4:30 p.m.

May 8
Franklin / Grand Isle Chapter Meeting
14th Star, Grazers
133 N Main Street, St. Albans
4:45 p.m.

May 8
Central Vermont Chapter Meeting
VSEA HQ
155 State Street, Montpelier
5:00 p.m.

May 9
Know Your Rights Training
Main Office Building
Shared Conference Room
1016 US Route 5, St. Johnsbury
12:00 p.m.

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