



Vermont State Employees' Association

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Hello Fellow VSEA Members:

We, the undersigned, are members of your VSEA Board of Trustees. We are reaching out to all VSEA members to alert you that our union is currently under attack on two fronts, at both the state and federal levels.

On the state front, we are angry about the Vermont Labor Relations Board's (VLRB) recent decision to select the State's last best offer, and about how the Administration manipulated the VLRB process to achieve its desired outcome. The VSEA Board of Trustees met recently and decided to channel members' and retirees' anger into developing a strategy to ensure VSEA Bargaining Teams never confront this situation again.

At the federal level, the United States Supreme Court will be announcing its decision soon in the Janus VS. AFSCME case. The Court's ruling, if adverse (which is anticipated), will impact our union negatively by allowing fee payers (who currently have to pay about 80% of full union dues) to no longer pay anything. In our opinion, this is a backdoor maneuver to weaken/bust unions, as it encourages members to stop paying union dues and could put unions into a death spiral with not enough funds to function. This has been a strategy employed by anti-union forces in "right to work" campaigns nationwide. There are currently 28 states that are so-called "right to work," and if this Supreme Court case (now with President Trump's appointee Neil Gorsuch seated) goes the way we think it's going to, all public employees in the USA will be dealing with "right to work." We must remind our fellow union brothers and sisters that the minimal savings that could be achieved by not paying union dues will be quickly offset by the significant losses state employees will incur if VSEA ceases to exist.

In other states where "right-to-work" legislation has passed, well-funded, anti-union organizations have been so bold as to call individual union members to tell them they no longer need to pay their union dues. They say things like, "Hey don't be sucker, you can still get the same benefit and pay nothing." These organizations do not have workers' best interests at heart. They are encouraging workers to stop paying union dues because they want to destroy unions. These anti-union forces see public-sector unions as one of the last bastions of union strength left in the United States, and they would like nothing more than to eliminate public-sector unions. Remember that unions are working people's only real line of defense against workplace injustice and your only guarantee to having a seat at the table. Without unions, working people don't stand a chance against big-money corporate interests, and the greed of some in power.

We cannot let these rich and powerful interests win. We must fight to keep our union strong. We must educate our union brothers and sisters about the importance of belonging to a union and about the outside forces who are trying to weaken and destroy our union. In addition, we must fight for better wages, health care, pensions, etc.; not just for state employees, but for all working Vermonters. The working class, middle class and poor have been under attack in this country for a long time, and now the attack is squarely aimed at us. We can either put our collective heads in the sand and pretend everything will be fine, or we can be proactive and fight for our union and for other working Vermonters.

Solidarity,

VSEA Board of Trustees

PS: Please contact us with any ideas you have to help our union move forward in these challenging times. We want to hear from you! Find VSEA Board of Trustees' contact information online here: <http://www.vsea.org/board-trustees>

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