Your union's weekly newsletter, *Week In Action*, is emailed every Friday afternoon. *Week In Action* is the best way to stay up to date with weekly VSEA news!

➢ Subscribe to *Week In Action* Online: [www.vsea.org/wia](http://www.vsea.org/wia)

**Email Coming With Information About VSEA’s New Electronic Ballot System For Upcoming Trustee Election**

For a few months now, *WIA* has been alerting members about the VSEA Board of Trustees approving a new electronic ballot system to conduct future union elections. We hope you saw and read the notice.

Next week, VSEA’s Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee will be conducting your union’s first-ever electronic election. A ballot link will be emailed on June 20 to members who are eligible to vote in one or more of the three elections being conducted (Corrections seat, Supervisory seat & District 4 seat). Members who requested a paper ballot by the Monday, June 12, deadline will have their ballot mailed to them via U.S. Mail.

**Very important!** Your electronic ballot is being sent to both the home and work email address that VSEA currently has on file for you. **On June 20, please be on the lookout for an email from vote@simplyvoting.com, which will contain your ballot(s). If you do not receive an email from this address by June 21, please look in your “Other” or “Spam” folders before contacting headquarters to request that your ballot be reissued.**

Reminder: VSEA is sending ballots to members’ home and work email address, provided the union has your correct home and work email address. This is a big reason why *WIA* is constantly soliciting members to contact VSEA with your updated email address. [You can update your contact information here anytime.](http://www.vsea.org/wia)

*Note: District 4 seat represents Chittenden, Addison and Franklin/Grand Isle region.*

**VOSHA Cites VPCH For “Serious” Employee-Safety Infractions**

*VTDigger reports on June 15* about the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA) issuing three citations on June 8 to the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital, all are concerning a failure by management to adequately protect frontline workers’ safety. Each citation was labeled “serious,” and the facility also received fines totaling $14,000.
In advance of the *Digger* story posting, VSEA issued the following press release about the VOSHA citations and fine:

VSEA members working at the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH) in Berlin tell their union that they are pleased the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA) issued citations this week to their employer, directing VPCH management to immediately address the facility’s identified “serious” safety and health issues. VOSHA issued three citations and fined the VPCH $14,000.

Citation 1 – “The employer did not furnish employment and a place of employment which were free from recognized hazards that were causing or likely to cause death or serious harm to employees.”

Citation 2 – “Protective equipment, including personal protective equipment for eyes, face, head and extremities, protective clothing, respiratory devices, and protective shields and barriers shall be provided, used and maintained in a sanitary, reliable condition whenever it is necessary by reasons of hazards of process environment, chemical hazards, radiological hazards, or mechanical irritants encountered in a manner capable of causing injury or impairment in the function of any part of the body through absorption, inhalation or physical contact.”

Citation 3 – “The employer shall assess the workplace to determine if hazards are present, or are likely to be present, which necessitate the use of personal protective equipment.”

VOSHA instructs VPCH management to address all citations by June 27, 2017.

“VSEA did a public records request recently to determine how many assaults took place on VPCH employees from January 2015 to June 2016, and the findings were not good,” explains VSEA President Dave Bellini. “More than 200 assaults on workers with an average of 11 per month. The assaults run the gamut, from a slap, punch or kick to being spit on to having furniture thrown at you. Some even end up with the worker having to be seen by a doctor. This has to end, and hopefully these long-awaited VOSHA citations will help cut down on the high number of employee assaults at the VPCH. This situation, and others across Vermont, is why VSEA will never stop fighting for stronger safety and security protections for our members. VSEA members working at VPCH look forward to assisting management in any way they can to make sure these serious VOSHA citations are adequately addressed--and in a timely manner.”

Read the VOSHA citations in their entirety here

**Reminder: Contact VSEA Today To Attend 2017 Northeast Regional Summer School For Union Women**

VSEA continues to invite its female members who interested in attending the 42nd UALE Northeast Regional Summer School for Union Women to contact your union today. Only a few VSEA spots remain, so you must respond soon.
This year’s school is being held July 22-26 on the campus of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst in Amherst, Ma. VSEA is sponsoring 10 members who want to attend, and two have already signed up to go.

The UALE Summer School includes classes and workshops on a variety of union-related topics. Women from all over the country and beyond learn the skills and knowledge needed to play leadership roles in their unions. Visitors from unions in other countries frequently participate. One of the most valuable aspects of the schools is the chance to meet and network with other union women from around the region and beyond.

The deadline for interested members to let VSEA know that you would like to attend this event is the close of business, Tuesday, June 20! Email a letter of interest and your contact information to VSEA Clerk Katelyn Chase at kchase@vsea.org.

Learn more about the 2017 UALE here!

**St. Albans Bomb Threat Raises New Concerns About How Employees Are Expected To React**

As reported in *WIA* last week, VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard and Field Representatives Director Gretchen Naylor were in St. Albans on June 7 to meet with VSEA members working at the State Office Building at 27 Federal Street, where a bomb threat was received on May 31, prompting the evacuation of some 140 state employees.

Many frontline employees reported that there was no clear direction about how they should respond to the threat, which only served to compound an already chaotic situation. Members also reported that individual agencies and departments within the building responded differently to the threat and that there was a breakdown in overall communication, both inter-agency or department and building wide. Howard and Naylor assured the group that VSEA would be bringing their concerns and issues to the appropriate parties.

VSEA is also looking into why a “Bomb Threat Protocol” that VSEA helped write in 2008 was not activated in St. Albans and why the protocol can no longer be found on BGS’ website.

**Background On Bomb Threat Protocol:**

In 2007, following a bomb threat at 133 State Street building in Montpelier, VSEA worked with the Joint Safety & Health Maintenance Committee to help draft a formal bomb-threat protocol that was refined and later allegedly implemented by BGS’ Security Division.

Here is an excerpt from the press release VSEA issued, following the 2007 bomb threat, and it’s not lost on VSEA how little seems to have changed between that threat and the recent one in St. Albans:

“*Employees were instructed via e-mail about the threat, with the words 'DON'T PANIC!' in capital letters. Some employees evacuated the building on their own,*
others were sent home by their manager, and the rest were told they could leave for the day, but would have to use their annual leave. There was a total breakdown in communication. Management sent mixed messages to the workforce. All the while, no one was telling employees for sure whether or not their lives were in danger. VSEA believes this threat should have been treated like a fire drill, and the building the building should have been evacuated.”

VSEA intends to pose these questions to BGS and the Douglas Administration, with respect to any future bomb threat:

1) What is the State’s protocol for bomb threats, particularly with respect to employee communication? Are posted threats considered different than phoned-in threats?
2) What kind of threat prompts a building evacuation (as was the case a few months back when it was determined to evacuate the National Life Building)?
3) What kind of training do BGS staff have in bomb identification and building evacuation? How often is this training updated? Are there posted evacuation routes on every floor in every State Office Building?
4) What determines an “all-clear” notification?
5) Why are employees required to use their annual leave if they choose not to remain inside a potentially dangerous work environment?

The release ends, “Friday is an example of why a clearer protocol is needed for bomb threats, especially in this day and age.”

Per the protocol implemented in 2008, each building was to be assigned a “Safety and Security Coordinator (SSC),” and this person was to be given all decision-making authority. According to the protocol, “the SSC is appointed by the Secretary or Commissioner and will represent the Agency or agencies within a geographical area or building.” The protocol also called for the naming of “Safety Wardens” throughout each State building to “coordinate, educate and act as a liaison between building leadership, public safety officials, security and your many co-workers.”

Are Required Emergency Drills Happening Where You Work?

With the recent bomb threat at the State Office Building in St. Albans, VSEA wants to find out if the State of Vermont is following BGS emergency-situation protocol where you work.

The protocol on BGS’ website reads:

"All owned and leased State Office Buildings occupied by State employees will practice a minimum of (1) evacuation fire drill every year and (1) Active Shooter and hostile intruder drill at least every two years. A record of these emergency drills should be recorded in the EML by the designated ECM on the day of the drill. The Safety Committees will coordinate drills with their respective sites. The Safety Committees shall meet within (14) days after the drills to discuss, critique, and analyze the drill."
VSEA wants to know if the proper training is occurring at your workplace and when it occurred last. Also, if you are unaware of this protocol, that's not good and VSEA wants to know this as well and also where you work.

Please send an email with your input to VSEA at vsea@vsea.org. Write "Protocol Status" in the subject line.

**VSEA Council Meets At Lyndon State**

The VSEA Council met June 13 at Lyndon State, where the body heard about, discussed and voted on a host of items, including:

- VSEA's Operating Budget
- Bylaw Change Proposals
- Buildings' Safety & Security Overview
- Bargaining Unit Updates
- Scholarship Awards Presentation
- Legislative Session Wrap-Up
- Membership Recruitment Campaign Update & Prize Awards
- President's Report
- Executive Director's Report

One of the day's more engaging discussions took place when BGS Commissioner Chris Cole and Director of Security Paul McManus provided Council members with an overview of what safety and security measures have been implemented to date and what plans they have for the coming months. Council members used the opportunity to pepper the duo with really good questions and to voice their concerns about present situations and hopes about what could happen. Discussion topics ranged from “are panic buttons effective” to worker safety and security training needs to client safety and privacy to confidence level in current security services.

Another highlight was the awarding of four $2000 VSEA scholarships to members and their dependents. This year's recipients were:

Rachel Floyd - VSEA AOE member
Katelyn Ireland - daughter of VSEA member Courtney Ireland
Cameron Kelley - son of VSEA member Aimee Towne
Marie Ly - daughter of VSEA member Hon Ly

VSEA congratulates all of this year's deserving winners!

**VSEA Legislative Team’s 2017 Legislator Scorecard**

At the June 13 Council meeting, VSEA Legislative Committee Chairperson Margaret Crowley provided a comprehensive overview of this year’s legislative session, highlighting VSEA’s many wins at the State House. Part of Crowley’s presentation also included the distribution of a scorecard, providing each Vermont legislator’s “right or wrong” vote on the following bills important to VSEA members:

- State’s Attorneys Office Collective Bargaining;
- Beck Amendment To Interfere With Teachers’ Right To Bargain Health Care;
• Paid Family Leave; and
• The Budget.

Find out how your local lawmakers rated by reviewing VSEA’s FY2017 Session Legislator Scorecard here.

**Time Running Out To Donate To Non-Management Unit Sick Leave Bank**

*Donations Accepted To June 30*

June 30 is the final day to contribute some much-needed time to the Non-Management Unit Sick Leave Bank. VSEA NMU Sick Leave Bank Chairperson Dawn Carillo has been reminding members for weeks that the bank is nearly depleted and your help and hours you can spare are needed now.

“Just donating an hour of your time can mean the world to a fellow employee,” reads a new flyer DHR is circulating. It also informs state employees that they can **donate any amount of annual-or personal-leave time** to the NMU Sick Leave Bank. “Know that you are performing a wonderful service by helping your friends and fellow employees, who, along with their families, are struggling due to serious health issues,” the flyer concludes.

_VSEA members interested in donating some much-needed time to the NMU, Corrections and Supervisory Sick Leave Banks can find a donation form here._

“I want to thank every member for considering a donation to your Unit sick leave bank,” says VSEA President Dave Bellini. “Even if you only donate one hour to the bank, these one-hour donations add up. It’s so worthwhile because your donation is going to help a fellow state employee who is battling a serious illness.”

**Agenda Released For August 18 VSEA “Steward Summit.” Register Today!**

In an effort to better educate frontline worksite Stewards about their role in VSEA, as well as provide them with enhancements to their existing skill set, VSEA’s Field Department is hosting a series of “Steward Summits” across Vermont this year.

VSEA Stewards are learning the latest developments relating to contract enforcement and receiving an overview of the budget, safety and health and other challenges that lie ahead for state employees. Stewards attending are being asked to immediately help out by taking some of what they learn back to the worksite to educate their colleagues.

Three, six-hour trainings remain, and every current VSEA Steward is required to attend one session.

Here is the agenda released for the August 18 summit in Waterbury at the Best Western Hotel:

8:30 a.m. – Registration & Breakfast
9:00 a.m. – Welcome & Introductions
9:30 a.m. to Noon – Grievances (Learning the Basics) or Safety & Health
1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. – Role of Steward in an Investigation or Organizing (Member Recruitment)
2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Bullying in the Workplace

Future Steward Summits (all 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) are scheduled for:

October 20 – Hotel Coolidge, 39 South Main St., White River Junction
November 3 – Holiday Inn, 476 Holiday Drive, Rutland

Click Here To Register For Steward Summit

Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter Employee Appreciation Day Event Is June 23

VSEA’s Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter asked WIA to remind Chapter members about an Employee Appreciation Day event being held Friday, June 23, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the First-Floor Conference Room at 27 Federal Street. Members with questions can contact Chapter President Michael Gordon by email at michael.gordon.vermont.gov.

F/GI Chapter members should also mark this upcoming Chapter event on their calendar:

• F/GI Chapter Annual Meeting is August 11, beginning at 5:00 p.m. at St. Alban’s Bay.

Waterbury Chapter Meeting On June 26!

The VSEA Waterbury Chapter is holding its next meeting on Monday, June 26, from 12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. in the Mountain Ash Room inside the Waterbury State Office Complex.

Mark this date also! The Waterbury Chapter is hosting an Employee Appreciation Day event on Friday, July 21, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Fox CC Atrium inside the Waterbury State Office Complex. Stop by during your lunch break for treats and VSEA giveaway items.

Share The Road With Vermont Farmers!

The Agencies of Transportation and Agriculture and the Department of Public Safety have teamed up to produce a public service announcement, reminding motorists to share the road with our state’s farmers.

“Farmers are working hard to grow our economy, and keep Vermont beautiful,” explains Vermont’s Secretary of Agriculture. “Sometimes they need a little extra patience and care from fellow drivers – let’s give it to them.”

Here are some specific actions motorists should take when they approach a tractor on the road:
1) Slow down: The first thing you should do is slow down. Remember, the top speed for most tractors is 20mph. Slow down and give yourself the time and space to assess the situation;

2) Pay close attention: You should always give the road 100% of your attention – especially when approaching farm equipment;

3) Don’t get too close: Give the farmer some space. Do not tailgate – it causes stress and distraction;

4) Don’t pass until it is safe: Wait for a safe opportunity to pass. When it’s all clear, it’s OK to pass a tractor, as long as you do so safely; and

5) Be alert for turns: Looks for turn indicators, like hand signals and blinkers from the drivers. Farm machinery makes wide turns. Sometimes tractors will turn directly into fields – no driveway needed. Be especially alert for left hand turns. The left-turn collision is the most common type of farm machinery collision on public roads. It happens when the farm vehicle is about to make a left turn; meanwhile, the motorist behind the farm vehicle decides to pass.

Massachusetts Vote To Put “Millionaires’ Tax” On Ballot

Bloomberg News alerted its readers this week to a 134-55 June 14 vote by Massachusetts lawmakers to let that state’s voters decide, via ballot initiative in 2018, if a new 4% surtax on all personal income over $1 million should be implemented in 2019. The initiative has been labeled “the Fair Share Amendment” and the “millionaires’ tax,” and, if passed, it’s expected to generate $1.9 billion in new revenue.

“The Fair Share Amendment is about tax fairness and making critical public investments in education and transportation, two of the pillars upon which a robust and prosperous economy are built,” Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D) said in a statement after the legislature voted. “I hope the voters understand that this amendment benefits all Massachusetts residents.”

VSEA Officer Candidate Petitions Due July 11!

The deadline to submit a petition to run for one of four VSEA Officer posts is 4:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 1. Members simply download a petition, collect the required signatures and then submit their petition to VSEA to place their name into nomination for one of the five union officer positions up for election in 2017. The positions are:

President
First Vice President
Second Vice President
Clerk
Treasurer

Note: VSEA candidates for all positions are required to submit a petition bearing no fewer than 25 VSEA members’ names, signatures and employee number.
If Searching For Child Care, Don’t Forget This Important Resource For State Employees

Longtime VSEA member, now retiree, Dave Clark has served on VSEA’s Child and Elder Care Committee for many years, and he recently asked WIA to remind state employees about an important child-care resource that is currently available to them.

“The Committee has noticed a recent decline in employees’ usage of the valuable child-care resources available to them, so we asked WIA to help us remind VSEA members about what is available,” explains Clark.

VSEA members can click here to learn more about the Committee’s “Child-Care Referral Service” and other child-care resources for state employees, including possible child-care reimbursement to qualifying employees.

Reminder: VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee Sponsoring 2017 Recruitment Drive. Prizes Being Awarded!

Last fall, VSEA’s Membership Recruitment Committee launched a “Membership Engagement and Recruitment Initiative” to grow the union’s ranks. The Committee asked members to talk with current agency-fee payers about the benefits of full-fledged membership and why the member should make the switch. If the member decides to upgrade their membership, the recruiting member will have the satisfaction of knowing they helped their union become stronger, but, in addition, the Membership Recruitment Committee will be awarding different levels of prizes to members, based on the number of new VSEA members recruited.

Here are the guidelines to participate and be eligible for a prize:

- Whether submitting your recruited member(s) name(s) on a physical recruitment card or online, you must include your name as the recruiter;
- Every member who recruits a new member will have his or her name entered into a drawing for the Grand Prize. The winner’s name will be drawn at VSEA’s Annual Meeting in September 2017, and the winner must be present to claim the prize;
- Team entries are being accepted. Please register with Membership Recruitment Committee Chair Katelyn Chase by emailing her at kchase@vsea.org.
- Members who recruit a new member, who then agrees to join your union’s political awareness committee (VTPAC) will receive an additional chance to win the Grand Prize, and
- The cut-off date for this competition is August 30, 2017.

Here are the different prize levels:

- 75 prizes awarded - $10 gift card and a VSEA water bottle
- 40 prizes awarded - $25 gift card and a VSEA hat
- 15 prizes awarded - $50 gift card and a VSEA tote bag
- 8 prizes awarded - $100 and a VSEA vest
1 Grand Prize - $1200

*Note: WIA is periodically reminding members about this effort until its culmination in August 2017.

**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 visiting, VSEA.org/subscribe 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.

**Quote Of The Week!**

“They’ve had a tough time. People don’t come to work for DHS because they think, ‘Gee, this is a cush job and it pays a lot of money.’ They come to DHS because they really feel like they can make a difference in people’s lives.”

Newly appointed Iowa Human Services chief Jerry Foxhoven, telling the Des Moines Register that improving frontline social worker morale is his top priority.

**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.”

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.
Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

**June 20**
VSCSF Executive Board Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

**June 20**
Child & Elder Care Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.

**June 20**
Organizer’s Monthly Worksite Meeting – WRJ
State Office Building
Room 120
118 Prospect Street
White River Junction
12:00 p.m.

**June 21**
Organizer’s Monthly Worksite Meeting – Springfield
State Office Building
First Floor Conference Room
100 Mineral Street
Springfield
12:00 p.m.

**June 23**
Supervisory Unit Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

**June 23**
Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter Employee Appreciation Day Event
State Office Building
27 Federal Street
First Floor Conference Room
St. Albans
11:30 a.m.