

Together We Win: Our Union is Our Voice!

2013 Fall VSEA Council Meeting
Year in Review



2013 Areas of Focus

- Broaden VSEA's reach beyond representing individual members in grievance and investigation procedures to include facilitating the efforts of state employees to join together in their union to build worker power at their jobs and throughout Vermont.
- Reverse decline in VSEA power and influence and increase our shrinking membership.
- Build real political power that establishes VSEA members as essential allies in electoral work, important partners in legislative strategy, and subject matter experts in the development of successful public policy.
- Create a member, leader and staff culture focused on VSEA's organizational well being.

Building Towards a Stronger and More Effective VSEA

- *By organizing members into action around matters important to the rank-and-file, members will redefine the purpose of their union, participate in making actual progress in confronting the challenges that they face, and signal to the state that VSEA is a force to be taken seriously.*
- *Some highlights of the issue-based work include:*



National Life

- Survey conducted of all members working at National Life as a tool to collect workplace issues, post-construction.
- 135 members at National Life participated in the survey.
- Membership meetings held to discuss concerns and create a list of solutions. A regular meeting schedule set for last Thursday of every month at the worksite.
- A delegation of VSEA members working at National Life met with the Administration to communicate lessons learned from the move and presented the survey results and the proposed solutions. This is ongoing work with the Administration.
- National Life members are planning outreach to other members who are experiencing similar worksite moves.

Agency of Education

- Members met at Montpelier High School after work to discuss concerns.
- A survey was created and issued to all AOE staff. Over 80 members weighed in.
- A delegation of AOE staff met with officials from BGS and the Administration to raise safety concerns and formally ask to be a part of the design process.
- VSEA partnered with BGS and the Administration to host a Town Hall, on work time, at the Paramount Theatre in Barre. Members got a tour of their new site and heard from environmental experts, along with Barre City officials, about their concerns.
- AOE members have begun a Labor-Management Committee and are in ongoing conversations with the Administration.

Agency of Transportation

- Worksite meetings held in all 53 garages across the State.
- Survey issued with 103 members participating.
- Key contact structure built in garages across state.
- AOT Labor-Management Committee re-instated and beginning to meet with Management again
- Statewide conference call with the AOT Labor-Management Committee and key contacts to discuss report, issues and provide updates.
- Ongoing garage visits, BBQs and Union 101 trainings held across the State.



Vermont Veterans' Home

- Consistently well-attended member meetings.
- Community petition and yard signs in support of frontline workers.
- Ongoing testimonies by members before the VT Legislature.
- 65 members on pledge cards committing to activities.
- Over 160 members house visited by Organizers; 67 face-to-face conversations held.
- Membership survey with 82 members participating.
- Member presentations to area Veteran groups.
- Member delegation met with US Senator Bernie Sanders and all local legislators.
- Local Honk-n-Wave.
- Recent workplace election to determine official position to get VVH back on track. Over 1/3 of the entire facility voted.

Downtown District Parking Campaign

- Members moved a petition calling for action. Over 600 state employees signed on.
- Met with Administration several times to present proposed solutions.
- Hosted a Town Hall meeting on the VT House floor, with a crowd of 200.
- Delivered over 300 postcards from constituents to legislators calling for action.
- Awarded seats on two Committees where the decisions about parking are being made.
- Acknowledged as the driving force behind winning the 50% Bus Subsidy pilot program.

Department Of Corrections

- Meetings with female staff as part of developing a Women's Caucus in the DOC.
- Union 101 held at Correctional facilities across VT.
- Hartford P&P members develop and sign a majority petition to address safety issues.
- CRCF and SSCF develop Labor-Management Committees and see successes.
- DOC Bargaining Team issues a Bargaining Survey with 189 DOC members participating.
- DOC members run petition in support of fully funding the VT State Hospital.

Vermont State Colleges



- The VSEA/ Vermont State Colleges Staff Federation represents over 250 administrative and service workers at Castleton State, Lyndon State, Johnson State, and Vermont Technical College.
- Over the last year, the State Colleges have increased membership at all four campuses, including 100% at Lyndon State.
- State College leaders and rank-and-members have participated extensively in VSEA -wide actions, including the Fair Share victory and the Fight to Save State services.
- The State Colleges have a strong steward and member leader structure. A majority of workplace issues and challenges are dealt with at the campus level. Monthly campus meetings allow for greater member-to-member communication and engagement with rank- and -file members know who to contact with workplace concerns.
- Right now, the State Colleges Staff Federation is at impasse in bargaining a new contract with the Chancellor's office. The State College Bargaining Team has worked hard this year fighting back against proposed cuts by the Chancellor's office and have received tremendous support from the larger membership and campus community. This has been done by standing strong with one another and with consistent engagement and updating the membership on the bargaining process.
- The Fight for a Fair Contract continues this Monday, September 16 at 3pm with a Rally at the Statehouse.

Economic Services Division

- Over the last year, employees of the Economic Services Division (ESD) have faced serious challenges, ranging from statewide technology problems, persistent mismanagement, Legislative struggles over Reach Up, and low morale. Recent changes in health care and economic assistant programs have only added to these challenges.
- ESD member leaders have responded with engaging the larger membership to identify issues and possible solutions and bringing them to the Labor Management table.
- In the spring, an ESD statewide survey on training needs was completed by over 60 members and the results submitted to management. The ESD Labor team requested the survey results and recommendations be implemented if a new training program is created.
- ESD member leaders played a key role in the successful fight to Save State Services and the funding of an ESD training program.
- As many challenges continue to exist and new ones develop, the ESD Labor Team will re-access the relevancy and success of the Labor Management Committee model as the ideal means to address workplace issues.

Additional Campaigns and Victories

- Survey completed by members at the Office of Child Support, with 44 members weighing in.
- Ran a petition at the Barre Court House in regards to lack of air conditioning in the office.
- Supported local Chapters and EADs.
- Created and supported Labor-Management Committees on the local and statewide level across all Bargaining Units.
- Site meetings at 4 Court Houses across the State.





Growing the Membership

The More Members You Are, the Stronger Your Voice Is

Our Growing VSEA



- Developed and launched the Spring 2013 Membership Growth Initiative, which produced 100 new members.
- Redesigned the new membership and fee-payer packets to promote VSEA victories. These new pieces have sparked discussion about the strength and significance of the union.

External Organizing Campaign

- Have been dedicated to building relationships with United Staff at UVM; exploring the potential of a “new organizing "campaign to unionize clerical, admin, technical and professional workers on the campus, adding to our State College Unit.
- Ongoing efforts to organize the DSA’s and Deputy Sheriffs.
- Met with staff members at the VT Historical Society .
- Supported Vermont’s Early Educators in their efforts to win the right to be recognized as a Union.

Increased VSEA's visibility in the workplace

Strengthening the Union
Where it Matters



- Mobilized VSEA Organizers and Union Representatives to engage members at worksites in unprecedented ways.
- Worked towards goal to build relationships with workers throughout state government through daily face-to-face conversations with members at their worksites, identifying potential leaders and helping state employees to develop the capacity to improve their work situations.
- Union bulletin boards systematically updated and new boards hung in worksites.

Worksite Meetings Held

- AOT Garages for all of D-4, D-7, D-9 / plus others
- Barre - Court House
- Barre – McFarland
- Berlin- Agency of Education
- Berlin- AOT garage
- Barton- AOT garage
- Bennington – Vets Home
- Bennington- Court House
- Bennington- State Office Building
- Bennington- AOT garage
- Burlington -108 Cherry St
- Bradford- AOT garage
- Brattleboro- AHS office
- Brattleboro- Probation and Parole office
- Colchester- Camp Johnson
- Castleton State College
- Derby- AOT garage



Worksite Meetings Held

- Dummerston- AOT garage
- East Dorset- AOT garage
- East Jamaica- AOT garage
- Highgate- AOT garage
- Irasburg- AOT garage
- Island Pond- AOT garage
- Johnson State College
- Londonderry- AOT garage
- Lyndon State College
- Marlboro- AOT garage
- Montpelier-National Life
- Montpelier -Treasurer's Office
- Montpelier -City Center
- Montpelier – Secretary of State
- Montpelier – Department of Environmental Conservation
- Montpelier – Dewey Building



Worksite Meetings Held

- Montpelier- Agency of Education
- Montpelier – Department of Labor
- Montpelier – Tax Department
- Montpelier - DMV
- Morrisville- Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Center
- Morrisville- 63 Professional Lane
- Middlebury- Court House
- Middlebury- Vermont Department of Labor
- Newport- 100 Main Street
- Newport- Northwest Correctional Facility
- Newport- Probation and Parole Office
- Newbury- AOT garage
- Randolph- AOT garage
- Vermont Tech College
- Rockingham- PSAP
- Royalton- AOT garage
- St.Albans- AOT garage
- South Burlington- DMV



Worksite Meetings Held

- Springfield –Southern State Corrections
- Springfield - State Office Building
- St. Johnsbury – ANR 1229 Portland St
- St. Johnsbury – 67 Eastern Ave
- Rutland -Marble Valley Correctional Facility
- Rutland – Office of Economic Service Division
- Rutland- Office of Public Safety
- WRJ – Agency of Natural Resources
- Rutland -Marble Valley Corrections
- Rutland - Chapter Meetings
- Rutland – Economic Service Division
- White River Junction – ANR
- White River Junction- South East Correctional Facility
- White River Junction- Probation and Parole Office
- White River Junction- AOT garage
- Westfield-AOT garage
- Westmore- AOT garage





Building Real Political Power

Members Take the Lead!



Fighting Privatization of State Services

VDOL Reach Up Case Managers

- VSEA members in VDOL unraveled Administration plans to privatize their jobs.
- They testified in legislative committees, met with leadership, formed coalitions, and held a press conference.
- These efforts resulted in a victory as legislators responded and negotiated with the Governor's office to limit potential RIFs to these cuts.
- Their work shows VSEA members have the power to change the conversation in the State House, and that VSEA is a formidable obstacle to privatization.

Vermont State Hospital

- VSEA members succeeded at making sure they are resourced to provide top quality care to the Vermonters they serve in the state mental health system.
- They organized a petition drive in solidarity with VSEA members in DOC and VFNHP members.
- Recently (September 2013), the Administration reversed its position and announced it will support fully funding the operation of 25 beds at the new Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital in the budget adjustment process early in the 2014 legislative session.

Fair Share passed!

- Equitable contribution system for all state employees, as of 7/14.
- The passage of this bill reflects a significant win for Labor at the State House, as it provides necessary resources to strengthen our movement.
- We overcame opposition from the Administration, the school boards, and the Right-to-Work lobbying efforts.



Deputy State's Attorneys and Deputy Sheriffs

- Against incredible odds, and on a tight timeline, we moved a bill through The Senate Economic Development Committee. The bill passed its second reading and waits for final passage in the Senate when the legislature returns
- The bill extends collective bargaining rights to a group of state employees who have been denied the right to bargain,



VSEA Lobby Day!

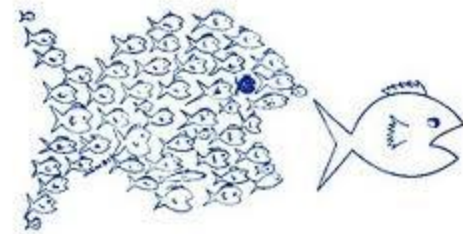
- First ever!
- 40 members came.
- Member spoke directly with their elected officials about issues affecting them and their colleagues at work. Union leaders prepared remarks for meetings with the leadership of the House, Senate, and Executive Branch.





Focus on Leadership Development

The Strength of the Union is Directly Connected to the Strength of VSEA Leaders



ORGANIZE

Developing New Leaders

- To date, over 75 new worksite key contacts on pledge cards, committing to keep their colleagues in the loop.



Member Trainings

- Created a Union 101 training that has been shown to members in DOC and NMU to educate them about stewards, their contract, and other ways to take on workplace issues.
- Hosted over 35 worksite meetings in the month of August alone with Supervisory, DOC and NMU members to educate members about the bargaining process, which issues are taken up at the bargaining table vs. the legislative process, and how to get involved.

Developed and trained members on:

- How to Answer Tough Questions about the Union, How to Talk to Fee Payers and How to Use a Direct Action Approach.

Strengthening Our Steward System

- Upgraded the Steward training program to include an in-depth exploration of the necessary skill set, including a contract overview, roles and responsibilities primer, and how to resolve issues according to the contract.
- Created a Step 2 grievance form to facilitate Stewards taking more leadership in the grievance procedure.

Advanced Our Communications Program

Connecting VSEA Members to
Each Other and
Their Communities



Internal Communications

- Website redesign and VSEA Facebook increase reach of message.
- Addition of new email technology to send attractive and interactive updates and action pieces.
- Introduced dozens of new worksite fliers to support campaigns and announce events.
- Began using Call-Fire to send out mass phone messages.
- Wrote and produced two volumes of the popular VSEA Voice.
- Weekly email updates through the popular Week-In-Action.
- Union-wide survey on Whistleblower protection, in coordination with the Auditor's office. To date, 520 members have participated.
- Currently developing a phone APP for the Union

External Communications

- VVH ads run in the Bennington Banner to promote frontline staff as the true experts.
- Radio ads run across every station from State College leaders promoting their right to a fair contract.
- Launched an ad campaign on Vermont Digger to promote state employees as everyday heroes.
- OpEd on the legacy of state employees weighing in cost saving measures penned by President Reese.
- Facilitated countless interviews between members and the press on various issues, concerns and campaigns.
- Filed numerous FOIAs on behalf of members.



Tended to Important Housekeeping



Making it All Run

- Our Fiscal Coordinator, Amy Kinsell, has kept audits up to date, and made sure members are reimbursed much faster than the past.
- Agency fee up to date; was not when Amy started at VSEA.
- Converted old database system to an upgraded version.
- Researched and visited potential new space for VSEA HQ to offer an expanded office and meeting space, along with an increase in available parking.

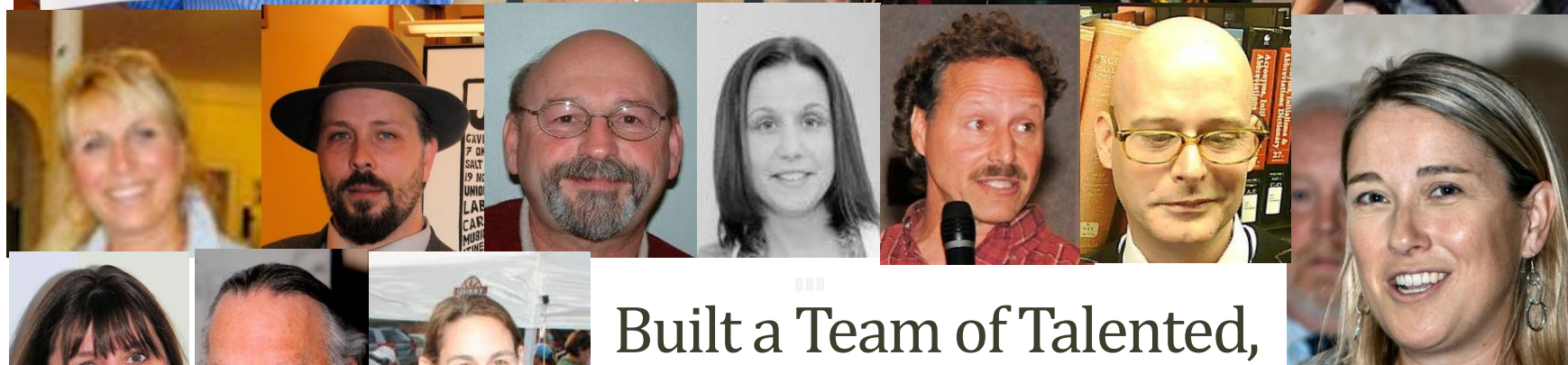


In Summary



- VSEA staff and leaders have put forth work that supports the vision our membership voted on at the 2012 Annual Meeting.
- VSEA Union Reps have continued to provide excellent representation to our members.
- Members have been engaged around work place issues that matter to them.
- VSEA is stronger in the work place and the State House than it was a year ago.





Built a Team of Talented, Experienced Staff

Who are committed to working with members to build a strong, more effective VSEA.

