

WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ August 11, 2014 – August 15, 2014

VSEA Responds Quickly To Off-Base Assertion That State Employees Are Not Helping At All To Repair Budget Deficit

VSEA leaders were stunned this week by media reports that a top government official had testified to lawmakers that state employees had come to the table on August 11 with no savings to offer to help Vermont address a recently announced budget deficit of \$31 million.

Unfortunately, a few lawmakers bought the line, forcing VSEA President Shelley Martin to attend an August 13 public hearing, where the legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee was taking public comment on the State's proposed budget cuts to reduce the deficit.

"I'm here today to address reports in the media that certain officials are saying state employees aren't helping at all to bring down Vermont's deficit," Martin began. "This is absolutely untrue and I would point to the EGWP changes VSEA members just agreed to this year to help save money." She added that VSEA members also recently agreed to other retirement and health care changes that are already saving the state millions, and she noted that many agencies and departments are still trying to rebound from the RIFs suffered in 2008 and 2009.

Martin ended by reminding lawmakers that it was the General Assembly that allowed a 2010 VSEA-created initiative to invite state employee cost-savings proposals to sunset in 2012, ending the flow of ideas.

"Frontline state employees are the experts and they know where the savings can be found," explained Martin. "It's really too bad this program was allowed to sunset." She added that VSEA is helping to spur more suggestions by actively soliciting cost-savings ideas from members. **If you have a cost-savings idea you would like VSEA to consider sharing with the State, please send a brief summary of your idea to VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson at dgibson@vsea.org. In the subject line, please write "Cost-Savings Idea."**

VSEA members are urged to remind their local lawmakers about all that state employees have done in just the past few years to help Vermont balance its budget.

Ahem...New Study Finds VT State Employees Pay Higher Health Care Premiums Than Most

[VTDigger reports on August 14](#) that a new study from the Pew Charitable Trusts found that Vermont state employees, on average, pay higher health care premiums than their counterparts in other states. The article states: "The average per-employee per-month premium for coverage of employees and dependents was \$963 in 2013. In Vermont, premiums cost \$1,307 on average."

"Given the recent accusation that Vermont state employees aren't helping to reduce the state's deficit, the findings of this study shine an even brighter spotlight on another way VSEA

members are helping—actually more than employees in most other states—to reduce Vermont’s continuing budget deficits,” VSEA President Shelley Martin told WIA.

2014 VSEA Annual Meeting WARN Is In The Mail

VSEA members are urged to keep an eye on your home mailbox for your copy of the 2014 VSEA Annual Meeting WARN. The WARN contains all the proposed bylaw changes and the union’s proposed FY2015 budget; all of which will be voted on at the Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 13, at the Killington Grand Hotel. Members attending Annual Meeting are being asked to bring their copy of the WARN to Killington.

Who Will Win VSEA’s 2014 Outstanding Performance Awards? Make Your Nomination Today!

- 1) VSEA Chapter of the Year;
- 2) VSEA Steward of the Year;
- 3) The Mazza Award — For Outstanding Service to VSEA;
- 4) The Macaig Award — For Outstanding Public Service; and
- 5) The Linda Coan Memorial Award — Outstanding VSEA Staff Member

To get nomination forms, either call Communications Specialist Kris Lizzari at VSEA HQ (802-223-5247) or print the forms out [here](#). All nominations must be received before 4:30 p.m. on Monday, August 18, 2014. Winners announced at Annual Meeting banquet on September 13.

ERN Committee Announces Results Of Recent Board Election

VSEA’s Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee was at headquarters on August 6 to tally the votes in several contested races for VSEA Board of Trustees’ seats. Here are the winners:

Department of Corrections Trustee Seat -- **Dave Bellini**

Defender General Trustee Seat – **Bonnie Kynoch**

Supervisory Trustee Seat – **Tom Hango**

District 4 Trustee Seat (Franklin/Grand Isle, Chittenden, Addison) – **John Gauthier**

VSEA congratulates all the winners!

President Martin Announces 21 Annual Meeting Room & Board Winners!

VSEA President Shelley Martin announced the winners this week of a free night’s lodging at the Killington Grand Hotel during VSEA’s 2014 Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 13. The 20 winners drawn at random by Martin were:

Dawn Carrillo – Central Vermont Chapter

Pamela Cullen – Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter

Aimee Towne – Lamoille Valley Chapter

Brad Dunsmore – Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter

Sheila LaPoint – Lamoille Valley Chapter

Rebecca Trower – Central Vermont Chapter

Tara Thomas – Springfield Chapter
Joyce Larro – Lamoille Valley Chapter
Kelly Hurd-Burnell – Lamoille Valley Chapter
Margaret Burbank – Lamoille Valley Chapter
Monique Prive – NEK/St. Johnsbury Chapter
Cheryl Prevost – Central Vermont Chapter
Marion Fignar – Central Vermont Chapter
Robin Rieske – Brattleboro Chapter
Matt Jakubowski – Rutland Chapter
Billie Langlois – Rutland Chapter
Deb Franks – Central Vermont Chapter
James Hale – Central Vermont Chapter
John DosSantos – Central Vermont Chapter
Paul Flint – Central Vermont Chapter
Lori Brady – Rutland Chapter

Prizes awarded cover only room cost. Hotel amenities, services and gratuities are the member's responsibility.

Retirees' Chapter Elects Officers

At its August 13 Annual Meeting at the Elks Club in Montpelier, members of the union's Retirees' Chapter elected the following officers and trustees:

President – Joan Maclay
First Vice President – Nancy Robinson
Treasurer – Susan Martin
Clerk – Terry Lefebvre
Essex/Orleans Trustee – Bernie Peters
Grand Isle, Chittenden, Addison Trustee – Bob Hooper
At-Large Trustee – Ed Stanak

DCF Workers Get Their Day In Front Of Lawmakers

After enduring months of finger-pointing, accusations and even death threats, VSEA frontline DCF members were at the State House on August 12 to testify in front of a special legislative committee created to investigate everything and everyone related to the recent untimely and tragic death of a two-year-old child. It was the first time lawmakers had heard from frontline workers, and VSEA members Tracey Brown, Patricia Casanova, Alyssa Dawson, Andrew Frowine, Kerrie Johnson, Nancy Miller, Shannon Morton and Neysha Stewart did a terrific job educating lawmakers about the issues that are currently impeding DCF workers' ability to provide adequate service to some very vulnerable Vermonters.

The group focused their remarks on several key areas of concern, including non-manageable caseloads, what constitutes an actual "client", high employee turnover, the depletion of the workforce through past RIFs, communication breakdowns, policies and protocols in need of immediate revision and how the current legal system impacts their work.

Here is an excerpt from A [VTDigger story](#) about the hearing:

DCF is “woefully understaffed,” said Nancy Miller, a social services supervisor at the Burlington DCF office. Her colleagues echoed her concerns during more than two hours of testimony in the Statehouse.

“We just do not have enough people,” said Alyssa Dawson, another Burlington DCF social worker.

“I’m triaging my cases,” said Tracey Brown, who also works in Burlington.

“Things will fall through the cracks,” said Patricia Casanova, a St. Albans worker.

“VSEA thanks all these DCF members for having the courage to come to the State House and talk honestly with legislators about the reality for frontline DCF workers,” VSEA President Shelley Martin told *WIA*. “Many DCF workers we are hearing from are very concerned they are being scapegoated for these tragic deaths, and that is extremely upsetting, which is why this testimony was so important and so needed. This group did an outstanding job stating the case for all Vermont DCF workers.”

VSEA Meetings With DCF Workers Continue!

To date, VSEA has already met with groups of DCF workers in Rutland, Springfield, St. Albans. Here are the remaining meetings (all begin at 5:00 p.m., **except Williston**)

August 21

DCF Office
Industrial Ave.
Williston
9:45 a.m.

August 26

Elks Lodge
118 Western Avenue
St. Johnsbury

Percey Jr. Sworn In As New VVH Board Member

{photo with caption}

On August 13, 25-year BGS employee Harry “Jaime” Percey Jr. (pictured here, left) was officially sworn in to a newly created “classified employee” seat on the facility’s Board of Trustees. It’s the first time ever a classified VVH employee has held a seat on the Board. Pictured here swearing Percey in is VVH Board President Joseph Krawczyk.

VSEA Sending Five-Member Delegation To “People’s Climate March” In NYC. Interested?

VSEA President Shelley Martin announced that the union will send five interested members to the “People’s Climate March” in New York City on September 21, 2014. Labor activists from around the country are participating in the march, which culminates two days of action, beginning on September 20.

Here’s a description from the event’s website, describing why labor is participating in the march and other events throughout the weekend:

“Super storm Sandy showed us that climate change is here and that if we do nothing, working families and the most vulnerable will be hardest hit. Workers and union members play an essential role in responding to climate change and extreme weather events – many workers risked their lives to repair infrastructure and keep essential services running in the aftermath of Sandy. By joining this march we challenge the 1% and corporate CEO’s who are responsible for both attacking workers and unions and polluting our environment and causing climate change.”

If you are a VSEA member interested in traveling to New York City September 19-21 to participate in the People’s Climate March, please send a letter of interest by 4:00 p.m., Friday, August 29, to VSEA President Shelley Martin, via email at smartin@vsea.org or by U.S. Mail at VSEA, 155 State St., Montpelier 05602.

For more information on the People’s Climate March, please [click here](#).

Discount Sugarbush Ski Passes Return For 2014-2015 Season. LINK IS LIVE!

For the eighth straight year, VSEA is pleased to inform you that the VSEA Advantage Discount Program will once again be offering discounted Sugarbush all-mountain (& other) ski passes for the 2014-2015 season. This year, Sugarbush is once again using an online sign-up feature, which went live on August 12. This year’s rate will be (15+ VSEA sign-ups) \$749 + 6% tax or (1-14 VSEA sign-ups) \$799 + 6% tax. VSEA has always been able to meet the 15-person limit, but there is no guarantee. Offer is available only to full-fledged VSEA members, meaning those who pay full dues. VSEA will be confirming names and status with Sugarbush representative.

Please share this notice with any VSEA members you know who might be interested in the Sugarbush deal.

A few notes:

- The program is open to full time employees, their spouse, partner in a same sex marriage. It is not meant for a "roommate" situation.
- Youth and child passes maybe purchased only in conjunction with an adult pass and do not count towards the 10/15 minimum.

[Click Here To Go To VSEA Sign-Up Page](#)

Deadline to sign up is September 19, 2014

175+ Have Already Taken VSEA’s Worksite Survey. Keep Them Coming!

Do you work in an office or a cubicle? Do you carpool to work, drive yourself, bicycle, walk? Are there temporary employees working where you do? What about employees working for a private contractor? How are workers communicating best with each other? Has your workplace moved in the past five years? Do you have trouble finding daily parking?

These are just some of the questions VSEA is asking members to answer in a new survey that is designed to help union staff and leaders become more familiar with specific worksites across Vermont and better determine how certain issues are impacting employees at specific worksites, if at all.

“We’re excited that 175 members have already taken a few minutes on a break, or at home to complete this important survey,” VSEA President Shelley Martin told *WIA*. “Thanks to your answers, we’re already learning a lot about where VSEA members work and some of the unique problems and issues that exist at some of these worksites.”

To take the new VSEA worksite survey, please go to:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MVVWTG3>

Go!Vermont Group Promoting “Capital Commuters” Program

In an effort to help address a parking shortage for state employees working in Montpelier, the group Go!Vermont began to provide discounted bus tickets in June 2013 to employees who commute into central Vermont. To date, Go!Vermont’s offer has been well received and dozens of state employees are taking advantage of the discounts.

Now Go!Vermont is asking *WIA* to promote another of its programs to VSEA members; the Capital Commuters Program. By enrolling in the program, VSEA members become eligible for a 50% discount on bus passes for certain routes, VIP parking for vanpoolers and carpoolers, a “guaranteed ride home” benefit and an official benefit card. Capital Commuter participants who take transit, carpool, or bike ten round trips per month are eligible to receive great giveaways to area businesses along with other perks.

Sign up by July 30 to be eligible to win one of this month's great prizes:

- **\$150 to Onion River Sports**
- **\$50 to the sponsored restaurant of your choice**
- **\$25 to Shaw's Supermarket**
- **Free transit pass for a month!"**

To learn more about the Capital Commuters Program, or to promote it to your co-workers, click [here](#) to download a flyer and click [here](#) to read the latest edition of the Capital Commuters newsletter.

VSEA Advantage Discount Program Pleased To Once Again Offer Discounted Day Tickets To:

The Great Escape & Splashwater Kingdom

“Two parks of fun for the price of one!”
Lake George, New York

Park Opens Today, May 23, 2014, & Splashwater Opens May 24, 2014

Discount Tickets Now Available Through VSEA HQ & Online*

2014 Regular Day Tickets — \$31 each (\$24 Savings)

To Get Tickets

Send or drop off check (made out to VSEA), noting how many tickets you need. VSEA can mail your tickets or you can pick them up at VSEA HQ in Montpelier. VSEA members can also order tickets online by going to GE's [homepage](#), looking in the upper right-hand corner for the “Promo Code” box and entering VSEA's promo code, which can be [found here](#)*. GE Phone Number: 1-888-792-3500

New this year is the Extreme Supernova thrill ride!

Note: You must be a registered VSEA website user to view the VSEA promo code. You can sign up online [here](#).

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

August 16

Battle of Bennington Day Holiday
VSEA & Most State Offices Closed

August 18

Legislative Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
10:00 a.m.

August 18

Newport Chapter Annual Meeting
East Side Restaurant
Newport
4:30 p.m.

August 18

Rutland Chapter Annual Meeting
Rutland Country Club
275 Grove St.
Rutland
5:00 p.m.

August 19

Steward Training: AOT
McFarland Office Building
Third Floor Conference Room
5 Perry St.
Barre

August 19

Chittenden Chapter Annual Meeting
DVHA
312 Hurricane Lane
Williston
5:30 p.m.

August 20

Child & Elder Care Committee
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.

August 20

Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter Annual Meeting
St. Albans Bay Park
St. Albans
5:00 p.m.

August 20

Waterbury Chapter Annual Meeting
Cider House
1675 U.S. Route 2
Waterbury
5:30 p.m.

August 21

Steward Training: DOC
BGS Conference Room #21
133 State St.
Montpelier

9:00 a.m.

August 21

Awards & Scholarships Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

August 21

Bennington Chapter Annual Meeting
Vets' Home
Bennington
5:00 p.m.

August 21

Barre Chapter Annual Meeting
The Quarry Restaurant (Upstairs)
Barre
5:00 p.m.

August 21

DCF Employee Meeting
DCF Office
Industrial Ave.
Williston
9:45 a.m.