



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ April 27, 2015 – May 1, 2015

State Throws Ill-Timed Wrench In Senate's Budget Process. Calls For More Savings From "Personnel."

Late Tuesday into early Wednesday morning, the State was pulling key Senators aside to lobby them to abandon current revenue proposals contained in their budget in favor of cutting more from "personnel" costs, including an additional \$2.87 million hit to the Pay Act, which funds state employee salaries and benefits. State Finance Commissioner Jim Reardon estimated the additional funding cut would cost three dozen more state employees to be RIF'd, on top of the 50 the State has already said it's willing to shove out the door.

So far, lawmakers response to the State's last-minute grandstanding has been lukewarm, at best, outside of a few of the usual suspects when it comes to never breaking ranks with the State. Senate Pro Tem John Campbell warned that the Senate had already cut the budget "to the marrow," [and Senate Appropriations Chair Sen. Jane Kitchel was only willing to immediately entertain one of the State's new proposals](#), which concerned "additional payments for extraordinary pharmaceutical benefits."

Leaders on the House side were none too pleased with the State's hi-jinx either. Majority leader Rep. Sarah Copeland-Hanzas told *VTDigger* she is disappointed with the governor's message to lawmakers, which she and others interpreted as "you didn't do your homework." [House Appropriations Chair Mitzi Johnson took issue with the State's timing](#), telling *Digger*, "[The State's had three months to put [its] ideas for a balanced budget on the table, and we haven't seen it."

VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard responded to the State's new attack on state employees in several media outlets, [telling the Burlington Free Press](#), "This is sort of a last minute, not-that-well-thought-out plan from the administration," adding in a [VPR interview](#), "I think Vermonters would be outraged at the last-minute interjection of an idea that does not seem to be well thought out. They do not seem to have any reason or rationale behind it."

VSEA is closely monitoring any and all debate about the State's new budget twist, and members are urged to respond to action alerts when they are sent.

"In the coming days, as the Legislature's budget debate begins to move towards possible votes, VSEA may be contacting members with action alerts which require everyone's attention," explains VSEA President Shelley Martin. "Yesterday, VSEA sent an alert to all members, asking for call to senators. Hopefully, members have been making these calls, and if you have, thank you. Our calls are what's most important right now."

Just in case you missed the email Martin references, here is what it said:

CALL YOUR SENATORS TODAY!!!

VSEA learned today that the Administration went to the Senate Appropriations Committee this morning to propose an additional \$2.87 million cut to the Pay Act, which funds state employee salaries and benefits. That's on top of \$10+ million the Administration is already trying to extract from employees. This new proposal, if adopted, could result in additional state employee job losses, on top of those already feared.

Please call your Senators right now with a simple message to oppose the Administration's proposal for more cuts to state services and state employees.

[Find contact information for your Senators here.](#)

Thank you in advance for your help.

“This one call is very important right now, and I hope as many VSEA members as possible will let their Senators know you oppose the Administration’s latest proposal to further decimate our state services and workforce,” VSEA President Shelley Martin tells *WIA*. “This unexpected and unwelcome move by the Administration demonstrates why VSEA members must remain engaged in our Fight Back campaign and why we must continue to contact our lawmakers with our opposition to cuts, cuts and now more cuts.”

Quote Of The Week!

“Now the one thing we’re not going to do, we’re not going to open the budget.” If the [State] said we want you to open the budget, that is what I would call disrespectful. That’s not going to happen.”

Senate Pro Tem John Campbell in a *VTDigger* piece, commenting on the State's last-minute demand for more cuts.

VSEA First VP Pens Fight Back Commentary & Labor Notes Features Story On Vermont Labor Battles

VSEA’s Fight Back campaign remained in the press this week, as a commentary by VSEA First Vice President Michelle Salvador titled “The Vermont Way?” appeared April 28 on *VTDigger* and a story about VSEA and other labor groups struggles with the State was published in the latest edition of the national publication *Labor Notes*.

Here’s an excerpt from Salvador’s commentary, [which can be found in its entirety here](#).

“Even more recently my union, the Vermont State Employees’ Association (VSEA), has stood up in support of members’ contractual rights, while the administration and many of our elected representatives are calling on us to open our contracts outside of the normal bargaining process. When we declared that our contracts are a legally binding agreement between the employees and the administration, and when we stood up for those rights publicly, once again I began to hear the rumblings directed toward us that we are just not doing things the Vermont Way.”

Here’s an excerpt from the Labor Notes story, [which can be found in its entirety here](#).

“The sense of betrayal runs as deep among state workers and teachers as it does among health care campaigners. Cuts would hit libraries, prison education, low-income weatherization and heating assistance, and services for veterans and people with disabilities. Public schools would be shuttered, and arbitrary caps imposed on local education spending.”

Former Rep. John Moran Pens Commentary Against Cuts

Former Representative John Moran wrote a great piece titled “Drastic Budget Cuts Will Not Help The State” that [appeared this week on VTDigger](#).

Here’s an excerpt:

“The task before us, to live within our means, may be easier than the governor suggests. Numerous proposals, alone or combined from the Public Assets Institute, state employees, the Workers’ Center and others, offer structural fiscal changes to reverse seven years of negative budgeting, turn state deficits into surpluses and lighten the tax burden on working Vermont families.”

VSEA Creates New Way For Members To Enlist Friends, Family & Neighbors In Union's Fights

One of the unions joining with VSEA at its April 11 Fight Back rally at the State House was the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, or the IBEW. While there, IBEW members had an opportunity to share with VSEA members a network they had created that allows IBEW members' friends, family and neighbors to show their solidarity on important issues by easily sending postcards to their legislators. VSEA members were impressed enough by the IBEW's "Friends, Family & Neighbors" program to want to make it available to all VSEA members, and this week, VSEA is pleased to announce that its very own FFN network went live.

To visit VSEA's FFN site, please [click here](#).

VSEA FFN Instructions:

Sending a postcard message through the Family, Friends and Neighbors (FFN) network is easy and the online tools are very intuitive. Using VSEA's FFN program, you can identify any of your friends and family in Vermont to ask them to call their lawmakers too.

How VSEA FFN Works:

- Once you log in, you'll be asked for your email address. If you are signing in for the first time, you'll be asked to hit the "Signup" button;
- Once you enter your email address, it will then ask you to enter a password, then your first name, last name, zip code and phone. You will then see a screen that says "Build Your List"

You can identify people you know and build your list three different ways:

- 1) By last name and first initial
- 2) By street or neighborhood within a town (great for identifying neighbors)
- 3) By scrolling through last names (enter the first letter of the last name in the "Last Name" box...i.e. "S" for Smith)

Be creative -- identify people from your social networks, places of worship, organizations, workplace, childhood acquaintances, college roommates, and, of course, family friends and neighbors! Parents -- identify other parents of children who go to school with your children, sports teams, scouting, other youth groups, etc.

- Once you have your list built, click the "Done Adding" button and you will return to the "Build Your List" page (you can always go back and enter more people later). Click on the "Write Postcards" button, where you can craft a personal message to the people you have identified. If needed, you can change their name in the salutation (i.e. "Dear Robert" can be changed to "Dear Bob" or "Bob", Dear Alice" to "Dear Mom" or whatever you want). You also can change how you sign the card.
- You can send the default message as is (**the current VSEA message is to Senators, as you will see after logging in**), modify it, add a personal message or completely rewrite it. You can tell your family, friends and neighbors about the valuable services you provide as only you can convey. Once you write a custom message, you click on "Save as My Card" so you can use the same custom message to other potential voters.

Once VSEA decides to mail all of our members' postcards, you will be notified by email. The next step is to make calls to the people receiving your postcard to encourage them to contact their State Senator, and to record their response. Please also encourage people friendly to working Vermonters' cause to visit our FFN site and identify people they know.

Thanks so much for signing up your friends, family and neighbors today.

Election Season Kicks Off!

This is a busy election year for VSEA, with all of the union's top officer slots up for election, as well as several seats on VSEA's Board of Trustees.

There is a Monday, June 1, 2015, petition deadline for VSEA members wishing to run for any one of the following Board of Trustee seats:

- Non-Management Unit Trustee;
- Judicial Unit Trustee;
- District #3 (Newport/Island Pond, Lamoille County, Northeast Kingdom and St. Johnsbury)
- District #6 (White River Junction/Springfield/Brattleboro)

VSEA members interested in running for one of the Board seats above can find a filing petition [here](#).

Petitions to run for one of VSEA's five top elected official seats are not due until 60 calendar days prior to the union's Annual Meeting on September 12. This makes the deadline Tuesday, July 14, 2015.

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

VSEA members interested in running for one of the "Elected Officer" positions above can find a filing petition [here](#).

Note: If running to be an elected officer, please make sure you clearly indicate the office you seek in the space provided. Primarily, this means distinguishing between First and Second VP.

VSEA Retirement Board Representatives To Offer System Update

VSEA NMU Chairperson Bob Stone is inviting interested members to come to Burlington on May 11 to hear an update on the state employees' retirement system from three VSEA Retirement Board members.

The update is being given in the top-floor conference room at the Department of Labor, located at 63 Pearl Street in Burlington, beginning at noon. Pizza and soda will be provided to members who RSVP by email to Bob Stone @ rstone@vsea.org by noon on May 7, 2015.

Because time is limited, if possible, please send your questions ahead of time to Bob and he will give them to the Retirement Board representatives so they can prepare a thoughtful response and obtain specific details, if needed.

Woodside Members Wanted For Labor/Management Committee

VSEA Senior Union Representative Kelly Burns wants workers at the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center who are interested in sitting on a labor/management committee to please contact her.

“Woodside's rank-and-file workers have to deal with some pretty unique issues, and they've been clear with me in meetings that a need exists to address them,” explains Burns. “A labor/management committee is very beneficial, mostly because it gives workers a great way to offer possible solutions to management and then help develop the ideas mutually.”

Burns adds that if enough Woodside workers show interest, the committee formed would meet regularly with management and Human Resources to discuss an agenda of non-contractual workplace issues and see if there are areas where creative resolutions can be agreed to and possibly implemented.

To date, Burns says that three Woodside workers have expressed interest, but a need still exists for more.

“To ensure all Woodside workers’ issues are being addressed, it would be great to have members on the committee representing many different positions and working various shifts,” she says.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please email Kelly at kburns@vsea.org.

May 6 Bargaining Team Training

VSEA Labor Relations Director Gary Hoadley asked *WIA* to remind VSEA Bargaining Team members about next week’s comprehensive, all-day bargaining training on Wednesday, May 6, at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Team members who have not yet contacted their Bargaining Team Chair to let him or her know you want to attend should do so immediately. You can find contact information for the Chairs [here](#).

Send An Online “Fight Back” Postcard To Your Legislators

VSEA organizers and activists recently wrapped up Fight Back campaign phase two meetings in worksites across Vermont, updating members on efforts to change the debate in Montpelier from cutting services and jobs to generating new revenue. Part of each meeting was devoted to members filling out personal message postcards to be hand delivered to their lawmakers in Montpelier. Recently, [VSEA posted an online version of the postcard](#), and members are urged to take a few minutes to fill out one or more and hit send. VSEA Legislative staff will then ensure your online postcard(s) reaches its intended lawmaker(s). Thanks in advance for the help.

The next phase of your union’s Fight Back campaign will commence immediately following the conclusion of Saturday’s rally. Keep an eye on *WIA* for a schedule of upcoming worksite meetings.

VSEA Insurance Representative In Morrisville Next Week

VSEA Insurance Representative Joanne Woodcock will be in Morrisville two days next week at the following locations to talk with interested VSEA members about member-only insurance benefits.

May 6

Department for Children and Families
93 Professional Drive
Morrisville
12:00 to 3:00

May 7

Family Services
93 Professional Drive
Morrisville
12:00 to 3:00

Receive information on disability coverage, family life insurance, family accident and cancer coverage. You must be a member paying full dues to be eligible for this VSEA benefit. If you are an agency-fee payer, Joanne can provide you information about signing up for full membership.

Delta Dental Supplemental Plan Enrollment Forms In Mail Mid-April

VSEA members wanting to join Delta Dental's Supplemental Program should keep an eye open for new enrollment forms, which will begin arriving in all eligible VSEA members' home mailboxes in mid-April. The deadline to return your enrollment form will be May 13, 2015. Premium deductions from employee paychecks will begin in early June. The Supplemental Program's new contract year begins July 1, 2015, and ends June 20, 2016.

VSEA members who already belong to the Supplemental Program will not be required to re-enroll. VSEA members who wish to leave the Program will be able to do so, using the enrollment forms that are coming in the mail.

Note: The new enrollment forms will only be made available via the mid-April mailing. The forms will not be posted on VSEA's website.

NMU Sick Leave Bank Nears Bankruptcy! Please Donate Today!

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) asked VSEA to help spread the word that the Non-Management Unit's Sick Leave Bank is teetering on the brink of bankruptcy and help is desperately needed.

"Just donating an hour of your time can mean the world to a fellow employee," read a flyer DHR sent out last week. It also informs state employees that from April 1 to June 30, 2015, they can donate any amount of 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 Sick Leave Bank can find a donation form [here](#).

"I want to thank every member for considering a donation to this important fund," VSEA President Shelley Martin tells *WIA*. "Even if you only donate one hour to the bank, these one-hour donations add up. You can feel good, knowing your donation is going to help a fellow state employee who is battling a serious illness."

Capital Commuters Asking State Employee Users To Complete Survey

The Vermont Capital Commuters Program was created in July 2013 to help improve parking conditions in Montpelier for state employees by promoting efficient, affordable commuting options. To date, more than 500 state employees have enrolled in the program, and now the program wants your feedback on the service, via [an online survey](#).

"Please ask your members, whether they in the program, or not, to take a few minutes to answer some simple survey questions," program administrators wrote. "Their individual responses will be confidential, summarized and reported as a group. Your input will help us achieve our goal to improve commuter choices."

All members who complete the survey will become eligible to win a \$50 Shaw's gift certificate.

To learn more about the Capital Commuters program, please [click here](#).

Got Questions? Contact Your Elected VSEA Leaders

As the debate around the State's budget proposal rages on at the State House, VSEA understands that members might have questions about your union's position on certain issues, or you might want to learn more about how to support a VSEA campaign at your worksite. To help facilitate the conversation, VSEA is pleased to share the following VSEA leaders contact information links with members. They are:

[VSEA Board of Trustees Members](#)

[VSEA Bargaining Unit Teams](#)

[VSEA Council Members](#)

[Chapter Presidents](#)

Deadline Is May 31 To Apply For 2015 Vermont State Colleges Staff Federation Scholarship!

A Vermont State Colleges' Staff Federation scholarship is intended to help VSEA members and their spouses, dependents or domestic partners who are seeking financial assistance to pursue post-secondary educational goals at one of the following: Castleton State College, Lyndon State College, Johnson State College or Vermont Technical College. The deadline to apply is May 31, 2015.

VSCSF scholarship applications should be sent to:

Monique Prive, Librarian
c/o Lyndon State College
P.O. Box 919

Lyndonville, VT 05851-0919

If you want an application or have questions, contact Monique by phone at 802-626-6364 or email her at monique.prive@lyndonstate.edu.

Download an application by [clicking here](#).

Note: The VSCSF scholarship is not to be confused with the annual VSEA scholarship.

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

May 2

Green-Up Day
Across Vermont

May 4

NMU Executive Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

May 5

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

May 6

VSEA Bargaining Team Member Training
Capitol Plaza Hotel
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

May 6

Specialized Steward Training: DOC
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

May 6

Meet VSEA Insurance Representative Joanne Woodcock
Department for Children and Families
93 Professional Drive
Morrisville
12:00 to 3:00

May 7

Bylaws Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
8:30 a.m.

May 7

Meet VSEA Insurance Representative Joanne Woodcock
Family Services
93 Professional Drive
Morrisville
12:00 to 3:00

May 7

Barre Chapter Meeting
Quarry Restaurant
Barre
5:00 p.m.

May 8

Council Member Training: Central VT
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin
9:30 a.m.