



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ May 4, 2015 – May 8, 2015

Happy Public Service Recognition Week!

VSEA is wishing every state employee a happy "Public Service Recognition Week" 2015!

VSEA President Shelley Martin notes that many state employees are not feeling a lot of love this year, as the State continues to target our services and jobs, but she says that should not detract from the fact that, day in and day out, thousands of frontline state employees are on the job, making Vermont work.

"Vermont state employees continue to lead the nation in terms of dedication and commitment to the services we deliver daily with pride," says Martin. "Thank you to each and every VSEA member for your service."

Martin reminded however, "The State can give out awards or issue a declaration this week to honor its employees, but the acknowledgement or gesture workers truly seek is for the State and lawmakers to fully fund our services, honor the contract and fully staff our worksites. Telling an employee that he or she will just have to accept doing the work of two or three now because of RIFs is actually a dishonor, and so is cutting critical services to the neediest Vermonters and not honoring a contract."

Quote Of The Week!

"I have opposed and do oppose the [State]'s most recent proposal to make additional cuts. We are working with the leadership team and money chairs to close this year's budget without asking state employees to endure any more cuts. I hope this clarifies my position."

House Speaker Shap Smith's response this week to a VSEA member's email, asking him to reject the State's new and unwelcome request last week for an additional \$3 million cut to services and employees.

VSEA President Asks For Patience On Retirement Incentive Information

The State recently informed lawmakers in testimony that it is proposing a retirement incentive (not an *early* retirement incentive!) to help limit the number of RIFs originally proposed by the State. President Martin tells *WIA* that she and other leaders are getting a lot of questions about the incentive from members, but at this point in time, the incentive is just a proposal that must still be approved by the legislature.

"Before VSEA can begin to share too much information about the incentive with members, we first want to see what the final language is coming out of the legislature," explains Martin. "Only then will we be able to provide an accurate overview of the options available to eligible members. Thank you for your patience."

Deadline Approaching To Self-Nominate For VSEA Departmental Council Seat

VSEA Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee Chair Mary Poulos asked *WIA* to include a reminder to VSEA members that now is the time to self-nominate for a VSEA departmental Council seat.

All departmental Council seats are open, and current terms will expire on September 30, 2015. The deadline to submit a self-nomination form is Tuesday, June 30, 2015.

To find out how many Council seats are allotted your department, please contact VSEA Administrative Assistant Ayla Hudson at 802-223-5247, or by e-mail at ahudson@vsea.org.

You can find a self-nominating form by clicking [here](#).

Vets' Home Workers' Tune Out Negative And Are Rewarded

It's not easy being a frontline worker at the Vets' Home (VVH) these days. Constantly having outside parties judging the service you provide 24/7 to Vermont veterans and then having some demonize you for bad business and care decisions made at a much higher level. But to their credit, the Vets' Home workers have hung together throughout it all, and this week, all their hard work paid off.

The *Rutland Herald* published a story on May 7, announcing that two years after the State's Division of Licensing and Protection (on behalf of the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) placed the facility on a "special oversight list" due to identified "deficiencies," the VVH learned this week that it has been officially removed from the list. The VVH could only come off the list if it could pass two straight inspections without deficiencies.

"This is really terrific news," praised VSEA President Shelley Martin. "In the face of constant rumors of closure or privatization, VSEA's members at the Vets' Home were able to drown out the noise and focus instead on the task at hand, which was to provide the best care possible to our Vermont veterans. Two straight inspections with no deficiencies speaks volumes to the way these workers have banded together to fulfill their mission. Congratulations to every worker at the Vets' Home."

New VSEA Awards & Scholarships Committee Chair Hopes More Members Will Apply

VSEA member Pat Moulton was recently appointed chair of VSEA's Awards and Scholarships Committee, so this is the first time he's been in charge of the union's awarding of scholarships to deserving members and their dependents. In years past, Moulton says the committee has handed out half-a-dozen or more scholarships, but this year the applications have been few and far between, which Moulton says surprises him. He's hopeful more will come in as the May 19 deadline draws closer.

"I thought there would be more interest in this benefit, especially given the tough economic times we live in and the increasing hits to our paychecks, but we've really only received a very small handful of applications," explains Moulton, who works at Johnson State College. "There's still some time, and I hope more members will apply for this benefit and use it to help fund their own education or that of a spouse, dependent or domestic partner."

To download a 2015 VSEA Scholarship Application, please [click here](#). The deadline again to apply is May 19, 2015.

VSEA President Looking For Interest To Participate In June 6 "Bury Cancer, Survivorship Celebration Parade"

In recognition of national "Cancer Survivorship Day," a special parade to commemorate Vermont cancer survivors is being held Saturday, June 6, through downtown Barre, and VSEA is asking members

interested in marching, or in entering a float, to please contact VSEA President Shelley Martin at smartin@vsea.org (please write “Bury Cancer” in the subject line).

“People who know me know that I am a proud cancer survivor, and I know I am not alone. I have met more than a few members in my travels who have shared their story of cancer survival with me,” says Martin. “Even if it wasn’t you personally, which I hope it never is, almost everyone knows of someone—a family member or friend—who has beaten cancer or who is fighting the disease at this very moment. **This is why I would really like VSEA to be a part of this day and why I’m actively looking to see how many members want to march in this parade with me on June 6. Groups can also enter a float, so we can do that too, if enough members want to help build it.**”

Martin reminded us that one of the primary reasons the State gave for a recent health care plan premium hike was an increasing number of state employees/dependents who have cancer or heart issues.

“I really hope a lot of my VSEA brothers and sisters who are battling cancer, or who have survived cancer, will be interested in joining me for this event,” adds Martin.

The “Bury Cancer Survivorship Celebration Parade” starts at 1:00 p.m, and other featured events throughout the day include: a 5k run/walk sponsored by The Gym for Women, music by Vermont singer/songwriter Patrick Fitzsimmons, a dinner and Bogle wine pairing and auction sponsored by Calmont Beverage, and a night time light show in City Park.

All proceeds from the event will go to the Vermont Cancer Survivor Network (VCSN); a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for anyone dealing with cancer (click [here](#) to view VCSN website). VCSN provides programs of support, information and education, celebrates cancer survivorship, advocates for cancer survivors and collaborates with related institutions and organizations. Featured programs include: Kindred Connections, a one-on-one support for people going through cancer, and a “Sally Fox Memorial” Gas Card fund to ease the cost of transportation to and from cancer related appointments.

[VSEA Fight Back Campaign Meetings Underway](#)

VSEA leaders and organizers continue to visit worksites to update members about the VSEA’s “Fight Back” campaign and what needs to happen now to stop the State from once again cutting services and jobs.

Here is where Fight Back meetings are scheduled for next week:

Monday, May 11

Fight Back Campaign: Update Meeting
Central Vermont Chapter Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
5:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 14

Fight Back Campaign: Update Meeting(s)
DMV
120 State Street
First Floor Break Room
Montpelier
Noon – 1:00 p.m. & 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

[Vermont Supreme Court Schedules Hearing On State’s Attorneys’ Employees’ Right to Collective Bargaining](#)

VSEA informed employees at State's Attorneys' offices statewide this week that the Vermont Supreme Court has scheduled a date to hear the workers' case to win the right to collective bargaining, which they do not enjoy now. The case is scheduled for Wednesday, May 27, beginning at 11:00 a.m. at the Supreme Court Building (111 State St.) in Montpelier.

In a communiqué to the workers on May 7, VSEA Organizer Tim Boyle wrote:

“By bringing this case before the Vermont Supreme Court, VSEA is attempting to resolve the confusion surrounding the nature of your employment and help determine once and for all who your employer is exactly. Our next steps to achieve your collective bargaining rights will be largely determined by the decision we receive at the Supreme Court.”

Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter Scheduled For May 20

VSEA Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter President Michael Gordon is inviting members to attend the Chapter's next meeting, which is being held Wednesday, May 20, at Mimmo's Restaurant in St. Albans, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Spring/Summer Steward Training Schedule Announced

VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lench is announcing the next series of Steward Trainings, which will be held during the spring/summer 2015.

All trainings begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. Each is open to all VSEA members.

Steward 1: Introduction and the Basics

Thursday, June 4
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Steward 2: Protecting the Contract and Building the Union

Thursday, June 11
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Health Care Facilities: Stewards and Members Leaders

Wednesday, June 17
VTrans District Office
61 Valley View
Mendon (five miles east of Rutland)

Diversity and Solidarity for Public Sector Union Members

Tuesday, June 23
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Steward 3: The Contract and Challenges in the Workplace

Thursday, June 25
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Steward 1: Introduction and the Basics

Thursday, June 20

VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Stewards and the “Hostile Work Environment”

Tuesday, July 7
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Steward 2: Protecting the Contract and Building the Union

Tuesday, July 14
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Department of Children and Families: Stewards and Labor Team Members

Tuesday, July 21
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

Steward 3: The Contract and Challenges in the Workplace

Tuesday, July 28
VTrans Training Center,
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin

To register for a listed training, please [click here](#):

Questions? Contact Tim Lenoach for details: tlenoch@vsea.org

[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.

Connecticut Lawmakers Trying To Adopt Labor History Curriculum For State’s Schools

The [Hartford Courant published a story on May 7](#) about the state Senate’s passage of a bill that directs the Department of Education to provide schools with a curriculum on labor history.

"This is critically important for people to understand the history of this country and how it was formed," CT Senate President Martin Looney, D-New Haven, tells the paper. "The children of Connecticut have to know that many of the things they take for granted in terms of rights were not freely given by employers but had to be fought for by workers who showed great courage and made great sacrifice."

Looney adds that “it is important for schoolchildren to learn about Samuel Gompers, the London-born cigar maker who founded the American Federation of Labor, and Big Bill Haywood, an American socialist who led several strikes. They need to know about the Pullman porters, the former slaves who staffed railroad sleeping cars, and the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire of 1911, which claimed the lives of nearly 150 workers and led to several reforms that modernized labor laws.”

Looney also quotes Czech writer Milan Kundera, saying, “The struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory versus forgetting.” He adds, “We must teach our children to remember and they cannot remember if they are not taught.”

Note: Way to go Connecticut!

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.

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.

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 11

Chittenden Meeting w/VSEA Retirement Board Members
DOL
63 Pearl St.
Burlington
Noon

May 11

Central Vermont Chapter Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
5:00 p.m.

May 11

Fight Back Campaign: Update Meeting
During Central Vermont Chapter Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
TBD

May 13

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

May 13

Steward Training: Stewards & Labor/Mgmt. Committees
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

May 14

Building Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
1:00 p.m.

May 15

Training: Chapter Presidents
Best Western Hotel
Waterbury
9:30 a.m.