



## WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ May 19, 2015 – May 23, 2015

### 2015 Legislative Session Ends

The gavel banged on May 16, officially ending what was a pretty unsettling 2015 legislative session for many state employees and the services they provide. Coming out of the session, VSEA member sentiments seem to range from “it could have been a lot worse” to “the State never should have put its employees in this position in the first place.” No matter how you look at it, the good fights that frontline VSEA members fought this session did produce results, did let Vermonters know that VSEA members are united in opposition to a cuts-heavy approach, did provide alternative and creative ways to generate new revenue and, finally, did help change the debate in Montpelier.

“I am so proud of VSEA members for standing our ground and not backing down to the State’s repeated demands to open our contracts to help solve a budget deficit that we didn’t create,” VSEA President Shelley Martin tells *WIA*. “Thanks to VSEA members’ solidarity, the State had no other choice than to work collaboratively with us to find non-contractual savings to prevent more cuts. And in the end, I’m happy to report that we ended up with far fewer position cuts than the State originally wanted, which is a pretty big accomplishment.” Martin is quick to add though that, unfortunately, some positions might still be eliminated under the new budget agreed to, but she says the State is also proposing in its budget to add 40 new positions and that anyone displaced could find new employment in these positions. “Obviously, no loss of positions is always the goal, but we know there might still be a few from this budget, and VSEA is prepared to help each and every worker who is impacted navigate the process to hopefully achieve a positive outcome.”

Martin, who herself spent many hours at the State House in the legislature’s final days, asked *WIA* to please send her and the entire VSEA legislative team’s heartfelt thanks to all the members who took time during the session to come to the State House to testify or lobby against more cuts and to all those who called, wrote and met face-to-face with lawmakers to make VSEA’s case—and the case for the Vermonters you serve.

Here are some of the session’s highlights, pertinent to VSEA members:

- VSEA was finally able to convince the State to work with the union to identify non-contractual savings (i.e. retirement incentive) to help keep some services whole and prevent hundreds of employees from being RIF’d. Unfortunately, the State and lawmakers left it up to agencies and departments to “eat the Pay Act” and find an additional \$6.8 million in savings, which will be accomplished through cuts to private contracts, vacancy savings and fewer than 50 RIFs;
- VSEA members successfully lobbied lawmakers to reject the State’s last-minute and unwelcome proposal to cut an additional \$3 million from state employees;
- Lawmakers adopted several VSEA members’ revenue generating proposals, including an alternative 3% minimum tax on Vermonters earning more than \$150,000, the elimination of a deduction for state and local income taxes, and a cap on remaining deductions—except medical and charitable—at 2.5 times the standard deduction;
- With rumors of privatization and even closure, the future of the Vermont Veterans’ Home (VVH) was highly uncertain at the start of the 2015 session, but in the end, thanks to pressure from veterans, VVH workers and VVH residents, lawmakers agreed to fully fund the facility in 2016. A working group is also being established to begin identifying new revenue sources for the VVH;
- The future was also uncertain for the DOC’s Community High School of Vermont program at the beginning of the session, but consistent member lobbying and education efforts throughout

the session resulted in lawmakers agreeing to cut just \$250,000 from the program; far less than originally desired. The smaller cut, by the way, was a savings idea the CHSVT employees had introduced;

- The House and Senate both agreed to language to keep 911 Emergency Dispatch Centers in Derby and Rutland open through September 15, 2015. Lawmakers hope the extension will allow interested parties to explore ways to generate new funds by charging municipalities for State Police dispatching services. Lawmakers also directed the DPS Commissioner to provide them with a report that “clearly summarizes the specific budgetary impact of PSAP consolidation on the FY 2016 and 2017 budgets”;
- Language to close the Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor was removed from the budget bill entirely;
- A potential \$600,000 budget cut to the already cash-strapped Judiciary was removed;
- The House and Senate passed a “grievance arbitration” legislation that VSEA has been championing for years now. The bill allows for collective bargaining agreements under SELRA to provide for binding arbitration as a final step in the grievance procedure. The State will sign the bill at a special ceremony on May 26;
- State employee pension plan receives full funding;
- Lawmakers scrapped an idea introduced early in the session to include language in a bill that included a criminal provision that—according to some interpretations—would have exposed DCF workers to criminal liability for “failure to protect a child.” The language was removed and replaced with a provision that simply enhances penalties for existing crimes; and
- A legislative committee is being created and charged with “identifying greater efficiencies in government.”

## **State’s Retirement Releases One-Pager On Retirement Incentive**

VSEA members who want to learn more details about the State’s upcoming retirement incentive for eligible state employees can now find a one-pager on the incentive by [clicking here](#). According to the new info sheet, which was created by the State’s Retirement Division, a notice of eligibility is being mailing to all qualifying state employees by mid-July.

If you have questions about anything on the one-pager, please contact the State’s Retirement Division, which is located in the State Treasurer’s Office. The phone number is (802) 828-2305, or you can visit the Division’s homepage by [clicking here](#).

***Note: This incentive is available only to employees working in the Executive Branch. Employees working in the Legislative and Judiciary Branches are not eligible.***

## **June 1 Deadline To File Petition To Run For One Of Four VSEA Board Of Trustees’ Seats**

Monday, June 1, 2015, is the final day for interested VSEA members to file a petition to run for any one of the following Board of Trustees’ seats up for election this year:

- 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](#).

## June 30 Deadline To Self-Nominate For VSEA Departmental Council Seat

VSEA Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee Chair Mary Poulos is reminding 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.

You can find a self-nominating form by [clicking here](#).  
(Opens/ downloads as a PDF)

With more than 120 VSEA members, the VSEA Council is one of your union's primary governing bodies and its largest and most diverse, with departmental representatives from across state government. The Council meets quarterly and retains a right to override decisions made by the VSEA Board of Trustees.

Questions? Please contact VSEA Administrative Assistant Ayla Hudson at 802-223-5247, or by email at [ahudson@vsea.org](mailto:ahudson@vsea.org).

**To determine the best fit for you, here is a complete list of the number of Council seats available, by departmental heading:**

Aging and Independent Living = 4 Seats  
Agriculture = 1 Seat  
Attorney General = 1 Seat  
Auditor of Accounts = 1 Seat  
Buildings and General Services = 5 Seats  
Children and Families = 10 Seats  
ACCD/Housing = 1 Seat  
ACCD/Economic Development = 1 Seat  
ACCD/Marketing and Tourism = 1 Seat  
Commission on Women = 1 Seat  
Corrections = 10 Seats  
Criminal Justice Training Council = 1 Seat  
Defender General = 1 Seat  
DVHA = 2 Seat  
Education = 2 Seats  
Environmental Conservation = 3 Seats  
Finance and Management = 1 Seat  
Financial Regulation = 1 Seat  
Fish and Wildlife = 1 Seat  
Forests and Parks = 1 Seat  
Health = 6 Seats  
AHS/Rate Setting and Auditing = 1 Seat  
AHS/IT Unit = 1 Seat  
Information and Innovation = 1 Seat  
Judiciary = 3 Seats  
Labor = 3 Seat  
Library = 1 Seat  
Liquor Control = 1 Seat  
Lottery = 1 Seat  
Mental Health = 4 Seats  
Military = 2 Seats  
ANR = 1 Seat

Natural Resources Board = 1 Seat  
Public Safety - Civilian = 4 Seats  
Public Service Board = 1 Seat  
Public Service Department = 1 Seat  
Secretary of State = 1 Seat  
Tax Department = 1 Seat  
Transportation Agency = 10 Seats  
Transportation Agency/DMV = 2 Seats  
Treasurer's Office = 1 Seat  
Vermont Veterans' Home = 3 Seats  
Vermont State Colleges = 4 Seats  
Vermont Housing Authority = 1 Seat

## **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](mailto:monique.prive@lyndonstate.edu).

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

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

## **Awards & Scholarship Committee Meets To Name VSEA Winners!**

Members of VSEA's Awards and Scholarships Committee were at headquarters on May 21 to sift through two-dozen-plus member and dependent applications submitted and then choose this year's recipients. The lucky 2015 scholarship winners will be announced at the VSEA Council meeting on Tuesday, May 9, at Vermont Technical College in Randolph, where a special luncheon will be held in their honor. Committee Chair Pat Moulton says he was pleased to see the number of applications submitted jump after his appeal in *WIA* two weeks ago for more members to try to take advantage of this great benefit.

## **Discounted 2015 Great Escape/Splashwater Kingdom Day Tickets Now Available Online! Hard Tickets For Pickup Coming Soon.**

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

Park Opens May 16, 2015, & Splashwater Opens May 23, 2015

Discount tickets are now available to purchase online by [clicking here](#), but in order to access this page, which also includes the required VSEA username and password, **you must be a registered “member-only” VSEA website user** ([you can sign up here!](#)). Please note that there is a service charge for purchasing online.

VSEA will also soon be receiving a batch of hard tickets that members can pick up at headquarters, and there is no service charge attached.

2015 Regular Day Tickets = \$33 each (\$25 savings over price at gate)

### **Quote Of The Week!**

*“Really, it’s the staff that turned this program around,”*

DCF Deputy Commissioner Sean Brown, responding in a May 20 *VTDigger* story about Vermont being named the most improved state in the nation for FY2014 in terms of lowering its food stamp program’s processing error rate. The program’s error rate dropped from 9.81% in FY2013 to just 2.58% in FY2014. As a result, Vermont expects to receive a monetary “bonus” this year for its efforts, as opposed to being penalized over the past few years.

### **Delta Dental Supplemental Plan Enrollment Forms**

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.

### **File Your Petition Today To Run To Be A VSEA Officer!**

Petitions to run for one of VSEA’s five top elected official seats are due 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 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](mailto: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.

## **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**

Tuesday, June 30  
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](mailto:tlenoch@vsea.org)

## **Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:**

### **May 25**

Memorial Day Holiday

VSEA & Most State Offices Closed

### **May 29**

Bylaws Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

9:00 a.m.

### **May 29**

Building Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

9:30 a.m.

### **May 31**

[Deadline To Apply For VSCSF Scholarship](#)