



## WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ June 22, 2015 – June 26, 2015

### **Check Your Mailbox Soon For VSEA 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting Registration Forms**

VSEA's Special Events Committee has finalized the registration form to attend the union's 2015 Annual Meeting on September 12 at the Jay Peak Resort in Jay, and the forms will go out in the mail next week. You can also download a registration form by clicking [here](#). This year, the Committee is sponsoring a special wild west-themed event on Friday night, September 11.

Your registration form must be mailed to VSEA HQ by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, August 7. Members who do not complete the registration form will not be provided meals at the Annual Meeting, as members must indicate their meal selections on the form in advance.

### **Who Will Win VSEA's 2015 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 Friday, August 7, 2015. Winners announced at Annual Meeting banquet on September 12.

### **NMU Looking To Fill Bargaining Team Vacancy**

A reminder that VSEA Non-Management Unit Chairperson Bob Stone is actively looking to fill an open Bargaining Team position:

- NMU Bargaining Team – Engineering & Technical Support

VSEA NMU members interested in any of the above positions are asked to send a letter of interest by close of business Friday, July 10, 2015, to:

Bob Stone  
NMU Chairperson  
c/o VSEA  
155 State St.  
Montpelier, VT 05602

You can also send an email of interest to [rstone@vsea.org](mailto:rstone@vsea.org)

### **UVM Medical Center Nurses In Tough Contract Fight**

VSEA is sending best wishes to nurses working the University of Vermont's Medical Center in Burlington. The nurses are entering the final weekend of contract negotiations, trying to reach an agreement by Monday. [Frontline nurse Laurie Aunchman told reporters on June 24](#) that "So far, the proposals of the hospital have been less than optimal." The nurses are asking for safe staffing levels and for a fair wage that allows the facility to recruit and retain the best nurses possible and cuts down on having to pay an estimated \$22,000 to \$65,000 to replace a nurse. "We are looking for a wage that is respectable for the work that we do."

“VSEA has supported the nurses’ call for safe staffing levels for years now because it’s the right thing to do and because our members working at health care facilities want the same,” VSEA President Shelley Martin explained to *WIA*. “VSEA stands in solidarity with the UVM nurses, and we wish their negotiating team all the best in these next few days.”

The UVM Medical Center nurses have not ruled out a strike.

## **Tuesday (June 30) Is Deadline To Self-Nominate For VSEA Departmental Council Seat**

VSEA Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee Chair Mary Poulos is reminding VSEA members that time is running out 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

## **Lamoille Valley Chapter Renews Call For Members To March In Morrisville's July 4 Parade. All Members Statewide Welcome!**

VSEA's Lamoille Valley Chapter has a great opportunity at this year's annual Morrisville Fourth of July 4 Parade to show House Speaker Shap Smith and other local politicians that state employees are united and prepared to stand strong in defense of the services we provide. That's because Smith and other elected officials will be marching in the parade, and so will we! The parade also affords us an opportunity to take our message to the public and enlist their support in our fight for the Governor and lawmakers to adopt a responsible budgeting process.

The Lamoille Valley Chapter is inviting all state employees (especially those who live and work in the Lamoille Valley) to march with the Chapter in this year's parade. Here are the details:

- Parade theme is an 'All American Holiday';
- Being held on Saturday, July 4;
- Beginning at 9:30 a.m., floats/marchers will be lining up at the Community College of Vermont Morrisville Campus. The parade begins promptly at 11:00 a.m. and it ends at the Peoples Academy High School; and
- VSEA members are urged to wear green!

Come to have a great time!

Questions? Email the Lamoille Chapter's Aimee Towne at [aimee.kelley@hotmail.com](mailto:aimee.kelley@hotmail.com), or call her at 802-793-4754

## **VSEA Activists' Curtis Awards' Petition Effort Nets 81 Signatures!**

True to their word, VSEA activists John Howe and Joanie Maclay spent last Friday night at the Sheraton Hotel in South Burlington, collecting 81 petition signatures from supportive Democrats at the annual Curtis Awards Dinner. The petition being circulated was a frontline workers' response to letter penned in mid-April by the Democrat chairs of two powerful House committees, which contained several unsolicited suggestions for how to lower labor costs through the collective bargaining process.

Howe shared his petitioning experience with *WIA*:

“I think that petitioning Democrats at their largest annual event and putting the House Appropriations and Government Operations Chairpersons’ letter on all the banquet tables was just the right the kind of action for the Curtis Award Dinner. Sister [Joan] Maclay and I got many of the Party’s leaders to sign the petition, including five members of the VDP Executive Committee, a former VDP Chair and two statewide office holders. It really shows us who our friends are in the Party. Joanie and I got 81 signatures during the hour that we canvased before the dinner started. If we had more members present I am sure we could have gotten many more. It was a good use of VSEA dues to sponsor a table so that we could get in the door. Petitioning was a great way to have a short one-on-one conversation with rank-and-file Democrats about the Chairs’ proposed assault on our collective bargaining. As state workers we need to keep constant public pressure on all politicians: we need to actually hold them accountable to vote pro labor when they say they are pro labor.”

He continued: “A follow-up to this action is that Speaker Smith—when approached with the petition—agreed to meet with VSEA members to discuss our concerns. This is a huge step toward having member-initiated lobbying. I believe the Chairs wanted to keep their attacks on our contracts hidden, but petitioning brings their attempt out into the open and hopefully will scare Democrats from doing it again. Keeping this out in front is more democratic (little D). This summer, as we go to Fourth of July and other Vermont Summer Festivals where politicians are as abundant as mosquitoes, I hope more members approach their reps and senators, especially those who did not support us last session, and confront them on their positions.”

### **VSEA Meets With DEC Members Impacted By Reorganization**

A VSEA organizer, union representatives, the Executive Director and VSEA President Shelley Martin attended a June 23 meeting in Barre of impacted Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) employees to talk about the ramifications of an email they recently received from their commissioner, informing the workers their shop is being reorganized. Washington County Sen. Anthony Pollina also attended the meeting.

The email read: “*Dear DEC: As I reported earlier, we were directed to cut \$722,000 from our budget for fiscal year 2016 (July 1, 2015 to June 30, 2016). To meet this obligation, I am reorganizing the Regional Office Program of the Drinking Water and Groundwater Protection Division by reassigning the duties of ten of our people in that program. Over the coming months, they will be transferred into a different program or division and, in some cases, to a different location. The people who are affected have all been notified.*”

“I work for DEC, so I personally know the people affected by this decision, and I want to help them achieve the best possible outcome,” Martin tells *WIA*, adding that the workers think the decision will lead to more problems. “According to what I heard today, these workers believe that breaking up the Barre DEC team is going to draw out the length of time it takes to process permits, which could actually lead to decreased revenue for the state because the DEC workers won’t be processing as many permits.”

The Barre DEC workers told VSEA reps that the reorganization will reduce the permitting staff from five to three, and they warned about angry clients who could have to wait up the three times longer to complete the process. As for the staff, they say they are demoralized and their stress levels have increased. They also worry about losing seasoned workers to other programs and how that will impact their own workloads and productivity. They were also upset about the increased number of exempt employee they say ANR has hired—and is still hiring. Senator Pollina gave his full support to the DEC workers and promised to remind people that the State just a few months ago was trumpeting how it was moving employees into Barre, but that now they are taking them out.

The workers discussed several ways to address the situation and agreed on some steps to take in the coming days and weeks to educate politicians and the public about the ramifications of breaking up the Barre DEC office. These include drafting letters to key elected officials and the media, trying to

schedule a face-to-face meeting with the ANR commissioner and filing freedom of information requests to learn about certain costs.

*WIA* will keep readers updated on this story, as it continues to develop.

## **Solid Proof Exists To Rebut Vermont Economist's Hypothesis About How Staffing Levels Impact Corrections' Costs**

[In a June 24 Burlington Free Press story](#), UVM Professor and Economist Art Woolf openly ponders why, in his opinion, Vermont Corrections' costs are high. One of the theories Woolf openly floats is that there may simply be too many DOC staff, writing, "It's also possible that Vermont's prisons are overstaffed. In that regard Vermont prisons may be like its schools. In education we have very high per pupil costs because we have a lot of teachers compared to most states. In prisons we could have high costs per inmate because we have a lot of staff." Woolf does catch himself later in the quote, adding "I'm not convinced the overstaffing explanation holds. The numbers don't suggest that Vermont has a large number of corrections employees given the number of inmates in our prisons." Well, you're right Mr. Woolf, but VSEA is still encouraging its DOC members to draft letters to the editor to remind the revered economist about a study provided to legislators this year that showed a need currently exists for the DOC to hire 58 additional corrections officers, primarily for safety reasons. VSEA members can read about the report [here](#).

## **U.S. Supreme Court To Decide Soon On Whether Or Not To Take Case That Could Really Harm Public Sector Unions**

[The Associated Press published a story on June 24](#) that reports the U.S. Supreme Court is currently debating whether or not to hear a "high-profile legal challenge" (*Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*) that could severely impact the ability of VSEA and other public-sector unions to effectively represent members.

The Court is deciding if it will hear a group of California schoolteachers' challenge to a 1977 Supreme Court ruling titled *Aboud v. Detroit Board of Education*, which permitted unions to collect "bargaining costs" from workers who choose not to join the union, as long as the money was not used for political purposes.

According to the story, America's public-sector unions have good reason to be concerned about the challenge, as the Court "raised serious doubts about the viability of *Aboud*" when it ruled in 2014 that thousands of Illinois homecare workers could not be required to pay union dues that cover collective bargaining. However, the story also points out that the Court has been reluctant to overturn longstanding court precedent.

In the story, a spokesperson for the California Teachers Association sums up his belief for why this challenge is being advanced, saying, "I think it's an attempt to reduce our numbers, reduce our clout and reduce our revenue streams." He's right.

*WIA* will keep readers updated on what the Court decides.

## **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!**

*“It will do nothing to prevent repeating the mistakes of failed trade policies that have contributed to stagnating wages, increasing inequality and the closure of more than 60,000 factories since 2000.”*

From a June 22 AFL-CIO letter to members of Congress, attempting to prevent the U.S. Senate’s from giving the President “fast-track authority” on trade deals, like the Trans-Pacific one. The Senate voted 60-37 to give the President the authority.

### **District 5 Vacancy On VSEA Board Of Trustees**

Vets’ Home worker and House Rep. Rachael Fields recently announced her decision to step down from her District 5 seat on the VSEA Board of Trustees, so the body is now actively looking to fill the seat, which represents Bennington and Rutland. With more than a year remaining on Fields’ term, the Board must conduct an election to fill the seat. **VSEA members interested in the seat must reside or have an assigned worksite in the District 5 region.**

The VSEA Board of Trustees manages the internal affairs of the union and ensures that the policies of VSEA are followed. It reviews and approves the union’s budget for submission to the membership, and it reviews committee reports and recommends action by the Council and members. The Board also sets policy for VSEA. The Board meets monthly and Trustees are expected to attend all the meetings, as well as all quarterly Council meetings and the VSEA Annual Meeting. Release time from work is authorized under the unit collective bargaining contract. Each Trustee is also assigned to at least one VSEA Chapter to attend meetings and provide any necessary assistance.

If you are interested in running for this seat, please download a petition [here](#) and fax it to (802) 223-4035 or mail it to:

Mary Poulos, Chair  
VSEA ERN Committee  
D. 5 Seat  
155 State St.  
Montpelier, VT 05602

**The deadline to submit your petition is 4:30 p.m., Monday, July 13.**

*Petitions not sent to VSEA headquarters by the deadline will not be considered.*

### **VSEA Unit Chairs Reminded To Submit Your Annual Meeting Agendas**

VSEA is asking all its Unit Chairs to please submit your Unit’s Annual Meeting agenda to VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson by Friday, July 17. These are the Unit meeting agendas to be included in the 2015 VSEA Annual Meeting WARN, which mails to all members prior to the actual Annual Meeting, which is Saturday, September 12 at the Jay Peak Resort. Thanks in advance.



## **VSEA Officer Candidates Given July 17 Deadline To Submit Photos & Statements**

For a few weeks now, *WIA* has been running a story, informing members who want to run for one of VSEA's top officer positions that you must file a petition by Tuesday, July 14. Another caveat to running for one of the officer positions is that each candidate is permitted to submit a photo and candidate statement for inclusion in the Annual Meeting WARN, which publishes and mails a few weeks in advance of the event.

Members who file a petition for office and want to appear in the WARN should send their photo and statement to VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson by 4:30 p.m., Friday, July 17.

## **NMU Bargaining Team Wants Your Leave Request Stories**

The Non-Management Unit's Bargaining Team was at headquarters on June 3 to continue preparing for upcoming negotiations with the State this fall. One of the topics they discussed is the need to learn more from NMU workers about how long it takes different managers to process employee leave requests. Are workers' requests being approved or denied in a timely manner?

If you belong to the NMU and want to share your story about how long it took for management to process your leave requests, please send your NMU Team a summary of how long it took and what the ramifications were. Did you miss a booking date due to a delay? Were you denied at the last minute, after waiting for days or weeks? Did you have to cancel a trip or event due to slow processing of your request? Was your family made to suffer because management was stringing you along on your leave request? Your NMU Team wants to know.

To share your story (confidentially, unless otherwise agreed to) with the Team, please send an email to [nmumail@vsea.org](mailto:nmumail@vsea.org) and write "My Leave Story" in the subject line. The Team thanks you in advance for responding to this request.

## **Reminder: VSEA Members Enrolled In The Delta Dental Supplemental Plan Are Also Eligible For Vision Discounts**

VSEA staff and leaders hear often that members would like to see the current vision benefit negotiated in members' contracts improved. Given this, VSEA wants to make sure that members enrolled in the Delta Dental Supplemental Plan know that you are also eligible to take advantage of a "Vision Discount Program" to help defray additional costs.

To see the vision discounts being offered through the supplemental plan, please [click here](#) and then click on the "Vision Discount Program" entry under the "VSEA Supplemental Dental Plan Info" heading.

## **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.*

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

#### **June 30**

Steward Training: Introduction & The Basics  
VTrans Training Center  
1716 U.S. Route 302  
Berlin  
9:00 a.m.

#### **June 30**

Deadline To Self-Nominate For VSEA Council Seat

#### **July 2**

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

#### **July 3**

Independence Day Holiday

#### **July 4**

Lamoille Valley Chapter Marching In Morrisville July 4 Parade  
11:00 a.m.

#### **July 7**

Training: Stewards & A Hostile Environment  
VTrans Training Center  
1716 U.S. Route 302  
Berlin  
9:00 a.m.