



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ July 6, 2015 – July 10, 2015

July 14 Is Deadline To File Your Petition To Run To Be A VSEA Officer

Petitions to run for one of VSEA's five top elected official seats are due Tuesday, July 14, 2015. The seats up for election are:

- 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](#).

The VSEA Annual Meeting edition of the *VOICE* will print and mail soon, and it will contain statements from all the member-candidates who submitted their petition on time.

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 Officer Candidates Given July 17 Deadline To Submit Photos & Statements!

Running to be an officer? Please know 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 (dgibson@vsea.org) by 4:30 p.m., Friday, July 17.

Reminder: July 13 Is The Deadline To File Your Petition To Run For District 5 Board Of Trustees Seat

The VSEA Board of Trustees is actively looking to fill its District 5 seat, which represents Bennington and Rutland. **VSEA members interested in the seat must reside or have an assigned worksite in the District 5 region. The deadline to submit your petition is 4:30 p.m., Monday, July 13.**

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

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

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

VSEA Unit Chairs Reminded That July 17 Is Deadline To Submit Your Annual Meeting Agendas

VSEA is reminding all its Unit Chairs to please submit your Unit's Annual Meeting agenda to VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson (dgibson@vsea.org) 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.

Register Today To Attend VSEA 71st Annual Meeting

VSEA's Special Events Committee is reminding members to complete and send in your 2015 Annual Meeting registration form today. The union's 2015 Annual Meeting is on September 12 at the Jay Peak Resort in Jay, and the forms went out in the mail recently. 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.

Non-Management Unit Executive Committee Vacancy

Rachael Fields has resigned her position on the NMU Executive Committee. This resignation created a vacancy on the Executive Committee. Any member of the NMU Bargaining Unit is eligible to serve on this committee.

The primary duty of the Executive Committee is to manage the internal affairs of the Bargaining Unit and assure adherence to the Unit's policies.

If you are an NMU member who is interested in serving on the Executive Committee, please send a letter indicating why you want to be appointed. Please include where you work, how long you have been a state employee and a VSEA member and why you feel you are qualified to be appointed. Only letters received by the close of business on Friday, July 23, 2015 will be considered. Your letter can be emailed to NMU Chair Bob Stone (rstone@vsea.org) or you can mail it to:

Bob Stone, Chair
Non-Management Unit
VSEA
155 State St.
Montpelier, VT 05602

VSEA Cheering DOC Member's Win At VLRB!

VSEA scored a recent victory at the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) when the Board overruled a Department of Corrections' decision to demote a supervisor and suspend him for thirty days. At its hearing, the VLRB found that many of the allegations levied against the officer were not proven and that just cause did not exist for the demotion.

"The Board made the proper decision in this case, and VSEA is pleased to see this officer be able to put this nearly two-year battle behind him," said VSEA Associate General Counsel Justin St. James, who argued and briefed the case for VSEA. "Correctional officers have one of the most difficult and dangerous jobs in the state of Vermont and, as in this case, problematic inmates often seek to make the job of officers even harder by disobeying orders meant to keep inmates and officers safe."

"This is a nice win for VSEA members and our legal team," VSEA President Shelley Martin tells *WIA*. "These kinds of victories are more evidence of why VSEA representation is so important, especially to workers who are wrongly accused by management and who need an advocate to help them get their day in court, or in front of the VLRB, as it were."

Even With New Positions Added, VSEA DCF Family Services Division Employees Still Struggling To Meet Demand

Prior to the 2015 legislative session—and then throughout it—VSEA frontline DCF Family Services Division employees were at the State House often to testify to lawmakers about how insufficient staffing levels were adversely impacting the Division's ability to keep up with an unfortunate increase in the number of Vermont children needing protection from abuse and neglect. Their efforts were rewarded with the addition of 18 new social worker positions, and, according to a [July 1 VPR story](#), initially, the positions helped, but, sadly, demand for service is once again far outweighing DCF's Family Services Division's ability to respond as the employees think they should.

Commenting to VPR on a new DCF report titled the "[2014 Report on Child Protection in Vermont](#)." DCF Commissioner Ken Schatz said "When those 18 social workers were retained, we did see our caseload drop per social worker. But then the increasing number of children coming into custody drove that back up so that now, in fact, our social workers have a higher caseload than [before] when we did initially add the 18." The report cites an increase in reports of child abuse and neglect as a primary reason why caseloads grew so much.

Schatz's introduction to the report echoes what thousands of frontline state employees have been telling lawmakers and the public for years, which is you can't keep cutting services to the bone at a time when more Vermonters than ever are requiring the same services being cut.

"The data shows that many Vermont families are struggling," Schatz writes. "Last year, we received a record number of child abuse and neglect reports and substance abuse was a factor in about one-third of them. Since the beginning of 2014, the number of children in DCF custody has increased by nearly 33 percent—an increase that was most startling for children under the age of six (68 percent)."

Schatz's report also says "the number of reports to the state's Child Protection Line reached a record 19,288 last year, up more than 10 percent from 17,460 in 2013. While that number isn't necessarily indicative of increases in the number of abuse cases, it shows more Vermonters are going to DCF with concerns."

Frontline DCF Family Services Division employees have told VSEA they are fully aware of the report's findings, as they live the reality daily. They say they are continuing to work with management to address their burgeoning caseloads through the labor/management committee process, and, like Schatz, many say they are very concerned about the marked increase in reporting and they want to see the situation addressed in a timely and adequate fashion.

“The spotlight was on us, so we did get some welcome help this session from legislators,” explains one DCF worker to WIA. “But, like the report says, the demand continues to far outweigh the resources, and we all know that the imbalance is jeopardizing the health and well being of Vermont’s children. It’s time to fix this problem, once and for all.”

WIA will keep readers updated on any developments related to this story.

VSEA Bargaining Teams Meet To Discuss "Cadillac Tax"

Representatives of nearly all VSEA’s Bargaining Teams were at the Best Western in Waterbury on July 7 to meet with each other and representatives of the State and Vermont’s congressional delegation to discuss the ramifications of the Affordable Care Act’s (a.k.a. Obamacare) proposed "cadillac tax" on “high-cost” health care plans. According to VSEA Policy Analyst Adam Norton, when the tax is imposed in 2018, he estimates it will impact 60% of Vermonters who have health care plans deemed to be "too rich with benefits." VSEA members, teachers and other Vermont union members, as well as a large number of Vermonters working in the private sector unfortunately have plans that will qualify for the tax. Norton shared an informative PowerPoint presentation about the cadillac tax with the group, and VSEA members can view it by clicking [here](#).

Here are a couple of helpful online pieces about the Cadillac tax:

[Unions, Employers Pushing Repeal of Cadillac Tax](#)
[Lavish ‘Cadillac’ Health Plans Dying as Obamacare Tax Looms](#)

There wasn't a whole lot of new information shared at the meeting, but it was helpful for VSEA Bargaining Team members to be able to voice their concerns (such as retaining members' right to bargain health care benefits) to the State and Vermont’s congressional delegation and to ask for help in trying to formulate a bargaining strategy this year, while saddled with all the uncertainty about the cadillac tax's future. Unfortunately, both the State and delegation said they could not predict with any real certainty what the tax's future will be, or won't be. A representative of Sen. Sanders' office said they are waiting for a budget "reconciliation" process to culminate (allegedly at the end of July), and the State said it is waiting for a new IRS "bulletin" to be delivered, showing the cadillac tax thresholds today when adjusted for inflation.

Rep. Peter Welch's representative said the congressman has signed on to a House bill to repeal the cadillac tax and said the bill has bipartisan support, however its future is still unknown, as it sits in House Ways and Means. It was unclear if there is a Senate companion bill, but both offices said they would check.

In a [July 7 VTDigger story](#) about Vermont groups prepping for the tax, VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard stresses one the union’s primary positions, which is that if the value of state employee health benefits need to be reduced to duck the tax, VSEA wants to be sure workers receive a commensurate boost in pay or other benefits.

VSEA Bargaining Teams and leaders will continue to meet and gather as much information as possible to aid their negotiating strategy moving forward.

Caption: Pictured here is the State's Deputy Director of Health Care Reform, Michael Costa, addressing the group about the cadillac tax and a report on its impact that he is preparing for legislators.

Rachael Fields Hired To Be New VSEA Union Representative

VSEA Field Services Director Gretchen Naylor announced recently that former VSEA member and current House Representative Rachael Fields has been hired to be VSEA's new Union Representative, replacing Josh Massey, who left the union a few weeks back. Fields begins in her new role on July 13, and VSEA is happy to welcome her to headquarters. Fields has been assigned to cover Bennington, Brattleboro, Addison and Barre. She will also back up John Brabant at the Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Facility. Prior to joining VSEA staff, Fields was an LNA, working at the Vermont Veterans' Home in Bennington.

Welcome aboard Rachael!

Small Changes To VSEA Union Representatives' Territories!

With Josh Massey's departure and Rae Fields' hiring, VSEA Field Services Director Gretchen Naylor is announcing some small changes to existing Union Representatives territories and also which territories Fields will serve.

Here are the Reps with their territories:

John Brabant - Franklin/Grand Isle, St. Johnsbury, White River Junction, Newport, Waterbury, Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Facility (primary), Lyndon State College, Vermont Technical College (Randolph campus)

Kelly Burns Everhart - Chittenden, Lamoille, Johnson State College, Vermont Technical College (Williston campus)

Rachael Fields -- Bennington, Brattleboro, Addison, Barre, Green Mountain Psychiatric Care Facility (secondary)

Brian Morse - Supervisory Unit, Judiciary Unit

Bob South - Central Vermont, Springfield

David Van Deusen - Statewide Agency of Transportation, Rutland, Castleton State College

3SquaresVT Back In Federal Compliance, Earning State \$300,000!

Back in late March, VSEA was congratulating state employees working for DCF's 3SquaresVT food program for dramatically dropping the program's processing error rate down from 9.81% in 2013 to just 2.58% in 2014. The reversal prompted the Feds to name Vermont the nation's most improved state in 2014.

The good news keeps coming for these DCF workers, as [WCAX reports on July 9](#) that Vermont has now been found to be "in line with federal standards," which earned the state of Vermont a \$300,000 bonus. As further evidence of how big a turnaround this is, the reporter notes that in the past three years, DCF has incurred fines totaling almost \$700,000 for being far out of compliance.

"This continues to be one of the success stories VSEA points to when talking with people about what a difference adequate resources and listening to frontline workers can make," VSEA President Shelley Martin tells *WIA*. "Congratulations again to all the dedicated ESD members who helped to turn this ship around."

VSEA Lamoille Chapter Marches In 4th Parade!

A nice contingent of VSEA members, leaders, supporters (including a big group of VSEA friends from the Vermont Workers' Center...thanks!) marched in Morrisville's Fourth of July parade this past

Saturday. Many in the crowd recognized VSEA members and applauded them for the services they provide, which was really nice. Along the route, VSEA members and others passed out candy, some cups and VSEA message cards (great idea Chapter President Aimee Bertrand Towne), which read:

{Front}

Happy Independence Day!

Thank you for your support for quality public services and working Vermonters.

In solidarity and celebration, from the members of the Vermont State Employees' Association.

{Back}

All Vermonters benefit from quality public services and the work of VSEA Members. We are the workers who keep Vermont state government running. We serve the greater good by providing the public these services and support:

Full listing of different services

We Make Vermont Work!

Many thanks to all the VSEA members, Workers' Center folks, Katelyn Chase's parents for pulling the float, and everyone else who helped make the parade a success. Well done.

To see pictures from the parade, [click here](#).

U.S. Supreme Court Decides To Hear Case That Could Really Harm Public Sector Unions

The last *WIA* reported that the U.S. Supreme Court was considering 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. Well, unfortunately, the Court decided to hear the case.

Near the end of June, the Court announced that it will hear the 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.

The *Rutland Herald* asked VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard to weigh in on the Court's decision, and he told the paper, “Obviously, it's a concern of ours any time the court reviews a case that could weaken a workers' rights,” adding, “Anytime you take a step that weakens workers' unions, it makes it more difficult to for a union to achieve its goals on behalf of the middle class. The union is the last thing that protects the middle class from the powers that be.”

Since the Court's decision, there have been some pieces written that will help VSEA members better understand the potential ramifications and inform about how other unions across the nation are preparing for an adverse ruling. Here are some of the more informative press stores, concerning the Court's decision:

[How Unions Are Preparing \(In These Times\)](#)

[Unions Have New Life \(Washington Post\)](#)

[Unions Must Act Now To Survive Supreme Court Deathblow \(Counterpunch\)](#)

[Supreme Court To Hear Case Threatening Public Employee Unions \(USA Today\)](#)

VSEA Insurance Representative In Middlebury Next Week

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

July 15

State Office Building
156 South Village
Middlebury
12:00 to 3:00

July 16

State Office Building
156 South Village
Middlebury
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.

Discounted 2015 Great Escape/Splashwater Kingdom Day Tickets Now Available Online!

“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’s got nothing to do with a Cadillac. It’s got to do with the health benefits being received by 65 percent of the population. I don’t think 65 percent of cars on the road are Cadillacs.”

VT NEA Executive Director Joel Cook commenting on the “cadillac tax” in a [July 8 VT Digger story](#) about unions and the State beginning to explore the options available to address the excise tax that will impact 65% of Vermonters in 2018, many who are average workers.

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 managements 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 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.

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

July 14

Steward Training: Protecting The Contract, Building The Union
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

July 14

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

July 15

Meet VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock
State Office Building
156 South Village
Middlebury
Noon – 3:00 p.m.

July 16

Chapter Presidents Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

July 16

DOC Training: Representing Colleagues In Investigations & Disciplinary Hearings
VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

July 16

Barre Chapter Employee Appreciation Day
McFarland State Office
Montpelier
11:30 a.m.

July 16

Meet VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock
State Office Building
156 South Village
Middlebury
Noon – 3:00 p.m.

July 17

Personnel Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.