



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ August 3, 2015 – August 7, 2015

TODAY Is The Deadline To Register For VSEA 71st Annual Meeting And To Nominate For VSEA's 2015 Outstanding Performance Awards

VSEA's Special Events Committee is reminding members that today, close of business, is the deadline to complete and send in your 2015 Annual Meeting registration form. If you have lost or misplaced your form, you can download one by clicking [here](#). 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.

It's also the deadline to submit your nominations for a 2015 VSEA Outstanding Performance Award in the following categories:

- 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

Print nomination forms out [here](#).

Winners announced at Annual Meeting banquet on September 12.

VSEA Clerk Featured In Story About AHS IT Switch From ACCESS

[A July 25 Times Argus story](#) about the Agency of Human Services looking to replace the Agency's 32-year-old ACCESS computer system with a newer and "sleeker" Integrated Eligibility Solution" system, features the voice of frontline ESD worker and VSEA Clerk Katelyn Chase, talking about her experience with ACCESS.

"[Workers] biggest concerns from a long-term care perspective is that when you input information into ACCESS, I would say seven out of 10 times the notice that it spits out to the client is incorrect because it's incapable of doing the kind of computing of what you just told it to do," Chase tells the reporter. "It doesn't always do what it's supposed to do." State workers are "constantly reaching out to our IT team to have them fix things," she adds, but often the system "gets to a point where it's on overload where it locks us out of cases and you can't do anything at all." Still, Chase says the aging, workhorse system does work; "it just takes a lot longer than I think we'd like with high caseloads. And it's frustrating to the clients."

The bulk of the story is devoted to implementation and financing of the new IT system's four components, which AHS's Chief Financial Officer says is estimated to cost \$470 million. That's a lot of money and the paper notes that Vermonters have concerns, especially after the state's recent, well-documented trouble with setting up the Vermont Health Connect (VHC) system. AHS Secretary Hal Cohen agrees in the story that the VHC debacle is not helpful, saying, "What's really important is to learn from your mistakes. On the other hand, what VHC has done is kind of put a cloud over our work, a dark cloud. So, it's hard to gain the trust after something like that." He adds that the two projects are "very different."

VSEA's Chase supports an effective, new computer system, but she too has concerns after hearing about the series of setbacks with the VHC computer system.

"We feel like we just don't want to see a repeat of what happened to Heath Connect," Chase says. "We want to make sure the proper steps are in place and the experts are brought in to really iron out the

process before it's put in place." She adds, "We don't want to see a catastrophe with our caseloads and not being able to get benefits to our clients, because that's what we care about most."

Questions Remain About A 911 Dispatcher's Response To Call From Campus Security Guard In Crisis

Early this week, several members, one who posted to VSEA's Facebook page, alerted VSEA that a security guard at the College of St. Joseph's in Rutland had been assaulted over the weekend and that the 911 dispatcher he contacted for help could not determine his location right away. This is important because one of the primary allegations VSEA 911 dispatchers who are being displaced this year due to budget cuts made when opposing the cuts is that closing the Rutland and Derby PSAPs would cause delays and situations where a dispatcher in Rockingham or Williston would not be as familiar with the locations.

In an [August 4 Rutland Herald story](#) that focuses specifically on the 911 response to the incident, the Interim Director of the Vermont Enhanced 911 Board, Barb Neal, tells the paper that during the 1:26 time it took the dispatcher to determine the guard's location and send help, the dispatcher was "following procedure." She adds that she has to "be vague" about the content of the 911 call because it is considered confidential in Vermont and that **she is not familiar with the average turnaround time for a 911 call.**

The reporter notes that "a study of the 911 system in Austin, Texas, found it took an average of just under 70 seconds from when a call comes in to when an ambulance is dispatched. A similar study in Riverside, Calif., found calls almost always got to ambulances in less than a minute. New Jersey had a 90-second turnaround until efficiency measures cut that down to a minute. All those statistics are for emergency medical dispatching. The National Fire Protection Association recommends a 90-second standard. Recommendations for police dispatching were not as easily found."

Vermont State Police Chief Donald Patch tells the paper he reviewed the 911 call due to press inquiries and "did not have a problem with the call." Rutland's City Police Chief deferred comment to Ms. Neal.

WIA urges members with additional information about this incident to send your input (confidentially) to VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson at dgibson@vsea.org.

VSEA & State Sign MOU, Concerning Transfer Rights For Displaced Dispatchers

[The August 3 Burlington Free Press published a story](#) about the State and VSEA reaching agreement this week on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to govern the transition of VSEA 911 dispatchers from Derby and Rutland to Rockingham and Williston. The MOU was necessitated after lawmakers were seemingly able to ignore the outcry earlier this year from dispatchers, local law enforcement, EMS and the public against saving money by closing Derby and Rutland's dispatch centers. Lawmakers instead voted to close the centers, displacing dozens of experienced and trusted 911 dispatchers.

The MOU's key component's include:

- Derby and Rutland dispatchers may transfer to open positions in Williston and Rockingham;
- Transfer volunteers will have 60 days to change their minds, in which case they will be considered to have been laid off; and
- For those who choose to work in Williston and Rockingham, the State will pay for up to six months of mileage reimbursement "for travel between home and the PSAP or their original duty station and the PSAP, whichever distance is shorter."

As the paper notes, it's not clear yet how many of the impacted 911 dispatchers will be accepting the offer. The story also contains a PDF of the entire MOU signed this week.

Even With New State Hospital, Physicians & Mental Health Advocates Say Vermont's New System Still Lacks Enough Acute-Care Beds (Which Is What VSEA Frontline VSH Workers & Others Told The State Would Be The Case Back In 2012)

Now more than two years into the State's new decentralized approach to treating Vermonters in acute mental health crisis, doctors and mental health advocates across the state are sounding the alarm about a lack of acute-care beds in the new system and about how many patients are still languishing in hospital emergency rooms because there are not enough beds.

In an [August 2 VT Digger story](#), Dr. Peter Weimersheimer, the ER chief at UVM Medical Center recounts how he had to recently had to have a patient in mental health crisis held in the ER for 130 hours because there was not an acute-care bed available. Porter Medical Center ER Dr. William Nowlan echoes his colleague's concerns, telling the paper "The system just doesn't work anymore. The new state hospital has clearly met a need but it has been maxed out." In fact, a new report by the Department of Mental Health found that a core group (25% of the most acutely ill patients) who find their way to Vermont's ERs are continuing to have to wait longer than 24 hours for a bed.

The lack of beds has not gone unnoticed by Rep. Anne Donahue, who is considered the legislature's in-house mental health expert. She tells *Digger*, "We put a solution together but we still have a big chunk of the problem, even if it is less than it was two years ago. In theory it should have been solved."

Jack McCullough, an attorney with Vermont Legal Aide who represents people with mental illness, tells the paper that he agrees the new system created is failing Vermonters in crisis because too many still have to spend hours waiting in an ER. "It is, at times, cruel and unusual treatment for this patient. The system is broken and the thing that is discouraging is that it doesn't seem like anyone is accepting that or working very hard to fix it," he says, reminding that "There was a time before Waterbury closed when it was really rare for people to be waiting in the ER for any time at all. They would be taken almost immediately to Waterbury or one of the other psychiatric hospitals and be admitted."

In the story, interim Department of Mental Health Commissioner Frank Reed says it's too early to start saying there are not enough beds, saying, "We are within range to make the 45 beds work. It's getting that flow fine-tuned. It's a little premature to say we don't have enough." But Rep. Donahue disagrees, saying, "I think we probably reached the lowest point we could get in patient care and the expectation that we could reduce it more and still meet the needs for inpatient care was overly idealistic."

VSEA President Shelley Martin tells WIA that many of the issues and problems now being experienced throughout Vermont's new mental health care system were predicted years ago by frontline VSH workers and advocates for the mentally ill.

"After Irene wiped out the State Hospital and the State announced its plan to decentralize services, VSEA frontline workers stood side by side with mental health advocates at the State House and in the press to warn that the plan was not going to work because there would not be enough acute-care beds—or adequate, trained staff to care for patients. Well, I hate to say we told you so, but I will in this instance. Now it's a still question of how to fix a problem that should have been properly addressed from the beginning."

Martin is right that VSEA and advocates did warn the State that its proposed system had big holes in it. Here's a couple of quotes from 2012 and 2013 that still ring true today:

Valley News – March 24, 2013

"Dr. Robert Pierattini also describes the difficulty his staff is having handling some of the individuals in acute crisis who are being brought to them for care. He explains that these are not patients that can be treated in 'outpatient settings based in a community, and he cautions that the number of beds Vermont is

planning to build won't be enough to accommodate the anticipated need.”

From a 2012 WIA post:

“[VSEA President John] Reese reminded that while VSEA is welcoming the building of a new State Hospital, the union and its VSH members still have concerns that the redesigned mental health system will not provide enough acute-care beds. Working with a broad coalition of mental health advocates and care providers during the last legislative session, VSEA successfully advocated to increase the proposed number of acute beds at that the new state hospital from 16 to 25. Reese notes ‘While VSEA is excited to move forward with the 25 bed facility, we agree with the position of the Vermont Psychiatric Association and Dr. Jay Batra, who just left his position as VSH’s medical director, that 25 beds is inadequate.’”

Note: click here to view 2012 "Vermonters For Quality Health Care" press conference, where participants, including frontline VSH workers, warn about many of the system’s problems being highlighted today: <http://bit.ly/1M6OBsa>

VSEA Labor Educator Announces Fall 2015 Training Schedule

VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lenocho asked WIA to announce a new round of trainings he has scheduled throughout the fall 2015. If you are interested in registering to attend one or more trainings, you can do so by [clicking here](#). Please direct your training questions to Tim at tlenoch@vsea.org.

Health Care Facilities’ Stewards

VTrans District Office, 61 Valley View, Mendon, VT (five miles east of Rutland)
Wednesday, September 2

Department of Corrections Stewards

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, September 9

Steward 1: Introduction and the Basics

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday September 16

VSEA Council Members and Chapter Officers

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, September 23

Steward 2: Protecting the Contract and Building the Union

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday September 30

Steward 3: The Contract and Challenges in the Workplace

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, October 14

The Labor Activist (open to all members and union officers)

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Friday, October 16

Health and Safety Issues

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, October 28

The Grievance

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Friday, November 6

Steward 1: Introduction and the Basics

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Friday, November 13

VSEA Council Members and Chapter Officers

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, November 18

The Labor Activist (open to all members and union officers)

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, November 25

Labor Management Committees for Stewards and Labor Team Members

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, December 2

Steward 2: Protecting the Contract and Building the Union

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Friday, December 4

Representing Co-Workers in Investigations and Disciplinary Meetings

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Wednesday, December 9

Steward 3: The Contract and Challenges in the Workplace

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Friday, December 18

[Click here](#) to register for a training(s)!

BGS Security Webpage Posts New Video “Surviving An Active Shooter Event”

The director of the State Security Programs office asked WIA to let members know that [a new video about how to survive an active shooter event is now available to view on BGS' security webpage](#). The video, which is endorsed by the federal Department of Homeland Security, is titled “Run. Hide. Fight.” and is approximately six minutes in length.

Federal Judge Upholds New NLRB Rule To Expedite Union Elections

This week, a federal district judge in Washington D.C. ruled to uphold a new union election rule that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) implemented in April 2015. The rule, which will expedite the amount of time it takes for unions to conduct an election after petitioning, was being challenged by big business, via the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Since the new NLRB rule went into effect, the average number of days between petitioning and an election has dropped from 38 days to 23, or a nearly 40% decrease in wait time. The wait time could actually be reduced to as little as 10 days under the new rule.

In her decision, U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson writes: “The Chamber and its allies mount a broad attack on the rule as a whole, claiming it 'makes sweeping changes to the election process' and that it 'sharply curtails' employers' statutory, due process, and constitutional rights.’ But these dramatic pronouncements are predicated on mischaracterizations of what the final rule actually provides and the disregard of provisions that contradict plaintiffs' (the Chamber's) narrative. And claims that the regulation contravenes ‘labor law’ are largely based upon statutory language or legislative history that has been excerpted or paraphrased in a misleading fashion. Ultimately, the statutory and constitutional challenges do not withstand close inspection.”

National AFL-CIO Counsel Lynn Rhinehart tells *Press Associates* that the ruling is a victory for working people.

"So far every judge to consider a challenge to the rule has rejected the challenge and found the rule is legal and within the NLRB's authority. We think this shows the rules are reasonable, well supported, and well within the NLRB's authority. There have been hundreds of petitions processed under the new rule. From what we hear, the process has gone smoothly and the rule has helped reduce unnecessary litigation and delay. We hope the courts will continue to reject legal challenges to the rule so it can remain in effect."

VSEA Teams Continue Bargaining Overview Meetings

VSEA Judiciary and NMU Bargaining Team members and staff are continuing a series of meetings across the state to give frontline workers an overview of upcoming bargaining with the State, talk with you about where to go for information and let you know how you can assist your Team throughout negotiations.

Here are the remaining scheduled meetings—by date and Bargaining Unit:

Judiciary Unit– Contact: CC Reuge, creuge@vsea.org)

St. Albans - August 11 - 36 Lake Street, Lunchroom - Noon
St. Johnsbury - August 12 - 1229 Portland Street, Jury Room, Main Floor - 4:30 p.m.
Morrisville - August 19 - 65 Northgate Plaza, Jury Room - Noon
Middlebury - August 21 - 7 Mahady Court, Probate Hearing Room, Noon
Rutland - August 26 - 9 Merchants Row Lunchroom -Noon

Non-Management Unit – Contact: Tim Boyle, tboyle@vsea.org or 802 595-9106

Bennington – August 27 -- State Office Building --11:30 a.m.
Burlington – August 24 -- ESD Office, Conference Room -- Noon
Burlington – August 20 -- Health Department, 108 Cherry Street --11:30 a.m.
Brattleboro – August 26 --State Office Building --11:30 a.m.
Newport – August 28-- State Office Building, 100 Main Street, Room 250 -- 11:30 a.m.
Rutland -- August 13 -- Rutland Bowlerama – 5:00 p.m.
Waterbury – August 25 -- DDS Office, 93 Pilgrim Park -- Noon

VSEA Insurance Representative In Chittenden Next Two Weeks

VSEA Insurance Representative Joanne Woodcock will be in Chittenden in the next few weeks at the following locations to talk with interested VSEA members about member-only insurance benefits.

August 11 & 12

Department for Children and Families
426 Industrial Ave.
Conference Room 101
Williston
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

August 13 & 14

108 Cherry Street
Conference Room 3A
Burlington
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

August 17 & 18

HEAU
IBM Complex
Bolton Conference Room
Essex Junction
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
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! 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!

“No worker, no matter their sexual [orientation], race, religion, or whatever, should ever be subjected to discrimination and harassment, especially in the workplace.”

VSEA spokesman Doug Gibson, commenting to *VTDigger* in a [story about three former AOT workers filing a lawsuit against the State for sexual discrimination](#).

Schedule Of Still Remaining Chapter Annual Meetings

Here are the remaining Chapter Annual Meeting dates:

- **Bennington** – Wednesday, August 29 – Rescue Squad Bldg., Bennington – 5:30 p.m.
- **Central Vermont** – Monday, August 10 – VSEA HQ, Montpelier, 5:00 p.m.
- **Chittenden** – Thursday, August 20 – TBD – 5:00 p.m.
- **Franklin/Grand Isle** – Thursday, August 13 – St. Albans Bay Park, St. Albans – 5:00 p.m.
- **NEK*/St. Johnsbury** – Wednesday, August 12 – ANR Office, 1229 Portland, St. Johnsbury – 2:00 p.m.
- **Rutland** – Thursday, August 13 – Rutland Bowlerama, Rutland – 5:00 p.m.
- **Vermont State Hospital** – Friday, August 14 – VPCH, Berlin – 2:00 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.
- **Waterbury** – Wednesday, August 12 – Cold Hollow Cider Mill, Waterbury Center – 5:30 p.m.
- **White River Junction** – Wednesday, August 29 -- Room 120, 118 Prospect St, White River Jct. – 4:30 p.m.

* Corrected from 7/23 WIA post!

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.

Upcoming Retirement Board Election

If you would like to run for the State Employees Retirement Board—and have your name on the ballot—you must submit a letter of intent to the Chair of the Election, Rules and Nominating Committee (ERNC) no later than Friday, September 4, 2015. This year there will be an election for one (1) VSEA seat and one (1) VSEA alternate seat on the Board.

The Retirement Board is an eight-member Board that is responsible for the proper operation of the retirement system. VSEA has three members and an alternate who serve to represent the interests of state employees and their beneficiaries. The board invests the funds of the system to ensure an adequate return and funding of the system. The Board also appoints an actuary, hires money managers and makes yearly recommendations to the Governor on the amount of money the State should appropriate in the next fiscal year to achieve and preserve the financial integrity of the funds.

Questions?? Contact ERN Chair Mary Poulos by phone at 479-7544, or by email at mpoulos@vsea.org.

Vermont Has A New Labor Candidate School & Interested VSEA Members Are Encouraged To Apply!

Do you think Vermont needs more union-friendly people in the State House? Have you ever thought about running for office but didn't know where to start?

If so, the newly created [Vermont Labor Candidate School](#) (VLCS) is for you!

VSEA, along with other unions, is helping conduct the Vermont Labor Candidate School for union members who are committed to helping create positive political change. VLCS is not affiliated with, nor supported by, any Vermont political party.

Elected leaders, from the state legislature to local boards, make important decisions that impact labor union members every day. VLCS teaches union activists the important skills necessary to successfully run for office in Vermont at the local and state level. VLCS will continue to support participants after they graduate by offering mentoring programs and trainings.

VLCS trainings will be held on Saturdays in the Fall and Winter 2015/2016.

Applications are due Monday, August 17!

Go to <http://www.vtlaborschool.org/> to learn more!

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

August 10

Central Vermont Chapter Annual Meeting
Steak House Restaurant
1239 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin
5:00 p.m.

August 11

Awards & Scholarships Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

August 11

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

August 11

Judiciary Bargaining Overview Meeting
36 Lake St.
Lunchroom
St. Albans
Noon

August 11 & 12

Meet VSEA Representative Joanne Woodcock
Department for Children and Families
426 Industrial Ave.
Conference Room 101
Williston
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

August 12

Judiciary Bargaining Overview Meeting
Portland St. Jury Room
Main Floor
St. Johnsbury
4:30 p.m.

August 12

NEK/St. Johnsbury Chapter Annual Meeting

ANR Office
1229 Portland St.
St. Johnsbury
5:00 p.m.

August 12

Waterbury Chapter Annual Meeting
Cold Hollow Cider Mill
Waterbury Center
5:30 p.m.

August 13

Retirees' Chapter Annual Meeting
Steak House Restaurant
1239 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

August 13

Franklin/Grand Isle Chapter Annual Meeting
St. Albans Bay Park
St. Albans
5:00 p.m.

August 13

Rutland NMU Bargaining Overview Meeting
Rutland Bowlerama
5:00 p.m.

August 13

Rutland Chapter Annual Meeting
Rutland Bowlerama
5:00 p.m.

August 13 & 14

Meet VSEA Representative Joanne Woodcock
108 Cherry Street
Conference Room 3A
Burlington
12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

August 14

Corrections Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.