

WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ August 17, 2015 – August 21, 2015

Indiana Governor Authorizes The Hiring Of Hundreds Of New Workers To Address Rise In Reports Of Child Abuse And Neglect

The *Tribune News Service* reports on August 17 that Indiana's Governor Mike Pence authorized his state's Department of Child Services (DCS) to immediately hire 113 new "family case managers" to help manage an influx of reports of child abuse and neglect. These new positions are on top of the 117 added just this year, bringing the total number of new hires to 230.

"The men and women at DCS have an incredibly difficult job," Pence said. "We want to make sure that we're not only meeting our statutory obligations, but also that we're doing right by our kids. To that end, we will also continue to support prevention efforts on the part of DCS in order to combat the unacceptable yet ever-rising increase in instances of child abuse and neglect in our communities."

Lest anyone think Pence's motivation is purely to do what is right, the American Civil Liberties Union did recently file a lawsuit on behalf of family case managers against the Indiana DCS, alleging the Department is failing to comply with current law governing caseloads. Indiana law requires family case managers to handle no more than 12 initial assessments or 17 ongoing cases. According to the story, as of June 30, 2015, just one DCS' 19 offices met the standard. The workers' lawsuit claims DCS' failure to comply with Indiana law is making it "extremely difficult" for them to do their jobs and is putting children at risk.

"It appears that the state is attempting to address the fact that DCS is currently failing to comply with the mandatory caseload standards that the legislature established to protect Hoosier children," Ken Falk, legal director for the ACLU of Indiana, said in a statement to the paper. "We will have to evaluate the effect of these additional positions to determine if the agency is finally able to meet its statutory mandate."

"It's important they have the right number of people to do the important work," [DCS Director Mary Beth] Bonaventura tells the paper. "We didn't create the need. What people do in society creates the need. We respond to it."

More Noteworthy Press This Week Concerning The Vermont DCF Tragedy

VTDigger: On Front Lines Of Child Protection System, Social Workers Bear Brunt Of Frustration

<http://bit.ly/1EwssLZ>

WPTZ - VSEA Demands Better Security At State Buildings

<http://bit.ly/1ITEqn2>

Times Argus - DCF Focuses On Emotional State Of Workers

<http://bit.ly/1TILHcb>

Times Argus Editorial - Standing With DCF

<http://bit.ly/1NkG4RM>

Times Argus - Couple: DCF Deserves People's Support

<http://bit.ly/1MrOS7x>

New VDH Lab Opens In Colchester

Vermont's old Health Department Lab in Burlington used to have the distinction of being the nation's oldest public health lab, but no more. That's because, on Tuesday, VDH employees reported for the first official day of work at a newly built, \$30 million lab in Colchester.

Lab Director and VSEA member Mary Celotti [told WCAX](#) on August 18 that the new lab has additional space to facilitate the introduction of new technologies and she said it "[allows] the Health Department to react or respond via laboratory response to any public health threat currently or in the future such as infectious disease new flu strain, chemical threat, bio threat. This just gives us the space, the technology; it has the safety features for us to respond to any public health threat in the future.

According to the story, the lab is now open to the public for drop-offs and testing kits.

New VSEA Video Uses Recent Retiree Voices To Talk With Young State Employees Just Joining The Workforce

VSEA's Communications Department has produced an 11-minute video that features recent VSEA retirees talking about their experience in the union, why they got involved, the good the union does, the importance of being a steward and other things. VSEA will begin including a flyer in all new-member packets, steering the new member to the video link and asking them to take a few minutes and view.

"This is an additional tool for VSEA to use to recruit new members to get active in their union and help ensure it's still around when he or she is getting ready to retire and pass the baton to a whole new generation of Vermont state employees," says VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson.

VSEA members can view the video by [clicking here](#).

Americans' View Of Unions Improving

A [new Gallup poll](#) released on August 17 finds that 58% of Americans now have a favorable view of labor unions, which is a marked increase from the days of the great recession in 2009, when the labor movement's favorable ratings hit a low of 48%. The new number represents the highest favorable rating for labor since 2008, when 59% of Americans approved of unions.

"Gallup first asked Americans about organized labor in 1936, a year after Congress legalized private-sector unions and collective bargaining. At that time, 72% of Americans approved of unions. Support remained high into the 1960s, but then dipped through the 1970s until it reached 55% in 1979. It has since varied, reaching as high as 66% in 1999 and as low as the 48% in 2009."

VSEA Seeks Legislative Specialist

Your union is currently recruiting qualified individuals to fill the position of:

Legislative Specialist

Scope of work:

This position works under the supervision of the VSEA Legislative Director. This position is responsible for all aspects of legislative activities under the direction of the Director. This position oversees monitoring of assigned legislative issues. The Legislative Specialist works to ensure the completion of

all legislative drafting, reports, and other documents necessary to VSEA's lobbying and political activities.

Job Duties will include:

- Assisting the VSEA Legislative Committee in the development of the union's legislative priorities;
- Coordinating the lobbying and/or testifying activities of VSEA staff and members;
- Assisting the VSEA Legislative Committee and members in executing the unions legislative priorities through lobbying efforts;
- Testifying before legislative committees and at public hearings on VSEA's issues;
- Developing excellent working relationships with member leaders as well as rank-and-file members in order to assist members in their union's legislative advocacy;
- Researching legislative issues and preparing legislative reports as necessary;
- Working with VSEA's communications team to assist with political and legislative messaging;
- Coordinating necessary action on proposed legislation;
- Collaborating with other unions and coalitions on legislation impacting VSEA members; and
- Coordinating VSEA's political action and campaign support.

Experience:

Experience working with government, legislature, political campaigns or labor unions. Demonstrated experience building consensus and working relationships with a wide variety of persons and organizations. Demonstrated skills in verbal and written communication. Knowledge and understanding of the State of Vermont's political landscape. Campaign experience is a requirement.

Have You Signed The VSEA 2015 Contract: Respect & Dignity Petition Yet?

As official contract bargaining on successor agreements begins, VSEA is reminding members to sign your union's "2015 Contract: Respect & Dignity" petition, which calls for good-faith bargaining, an end to cuts, cuts and more cuts and for lawmakers to stay out of the collective bargaining process (language prompted by a letter from the Chairs of two powerful House committees with their suggestions for what and how to bargain with state employees). To date, VSEA has collected more than 500 signatures on the petition, but we need more!

You can sign the online petition by [clicking here](#).

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)

Rutland - August 26 - 9 Merchants Row Luchroom -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

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.

Waterbury – August 25 -- DDS Office, 93 Pilgrim Park -- Noon

VSEA Insurance Representative In Chittenden Next Week

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

August 25 & 26

Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility

7 Farrell Street

Training Room

12:00 to 4:00

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!

"We made a commitment to Lara [Sobel's] family and to her father that this union was going to continue to fight for her, and continue to fight for her colleagues. We aren't going to let this get swept under the rug and let it be dismissed as an isolated incident."

VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard, responding to an August 14 *WPTZ* interview question about the future of state building security and how workers in other state buildings, owned and leased, have concerns about the protections currently afforded them while at work.

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.
- **Chittenden** – Thursday, August 20 – TBD – 5:00 p.m.
- **White River Junction** – Wednesday, August 29 -- Room 120, 118 Prospect St, White River Jct. – 4:30 p.m.

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)!

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 24

NMU Bargaining Overview Meeting
ESD Office, Conference Room
Burlington
11:30 a.m.

August 25

NMU Bargaining Overview Meeting
DDS Office
93 Pilgrim Place
Waterbury
11:30 a.m.

August 26

Judiciary Bargaining Overview Meeting
9 Merchant's Row
Lunchroom
11:30 a.m.

August 29

NMU Bargaining Overview Meeting
State Office Building
Brattleboro
11:30 a.m.

August 27

Special Events Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.

August 27

NMU Bargaining Overview Meeting
State Office Building
Bennington
11:30 a.m.

August 28

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

August 28

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

August 29

NMU Bargaining Overview Meeting
100 Main St., Room 250
Newport
11:30 a.m.