



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ October 12, 2015 – October 16, 2015

NMU Bargaining Team Declares “Impasse” And State Goes Public!

A lot of press this week about the decision on Tuesday night by members of VSEA’s Non-Management Bargaining Team to declare “impasse” in their months-old contract negotiations with the State. The decision, as NMU members and VSEA learned on Wednesday, was not the State’s preferred course of action and, sadly, it responded by taking cherry-picked details of its negotiations with the NMU public, via a press release.

Forced to respond in the press, VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard told the *Vermont Press Bureau*, “The negotiations are different this year. There is a feeling that the state is more interested in politics than finances. We’re not here to score political points. We’re here to ensure our workers earn a fair wage.”

Here is the full *Vermont Press Bureau* story and others about this week’s unfortunate events:

Vermont Political Observer Story: <http://bit.ly/1GImgI2>

VT Digger: <http://bit.ly/1MDM9cj>

VT Press Bureau: <http://bit.ly/1MDMITx>

Angered By This Week’s Action By State? All The More Reason To Sign The VSEA 2015 Contract Respect & Dignity Petition!

State employees across Vermont are letting headquarters know that they are angry about the State’s decision to go public with bargaining details this week.

“State employees are the backbone of our state’s middle class,” reminds VSEA First Vice President and NMU Bargaining Team member Aimee Towne. “It’s appalling how the State is now orchestrating a new attack on working Vermonters, divulging just one of many bargaining supposals to the press in what I can only assume was an unfortunate attempt to turn public sentiment against state employees. We’re hard-working Vermonters, and I for one am tired of being asked to take wage or benefit cuts, or be on the menu every time there’s a budget hole, while large businesses are awarded tax breaks and there’s no additional ask of the wealthiest among us. The State’s action this week is, unfortunately, politics-as-usual at its finest.”

VSEA members who share Towne’s anger about this week’s actions by the State, and its ill-advised release of sensitive bargaining information, are urged to help send a strong message to the State and lawmakers about state employee respect and dignity by signing your union’s “2015 Contract: Respect & Dignity” petition. The petition calls for good-faith bargaining, an end to 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 nearly 1,000 signatures on the petition, but we need more!

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

VSEA's Fund For Lara Sobel's Children Eclipses \$10,000. VSEA Promotes Fund On *VTDigger*

Last week, VSEA was proud to announce that the "VSEA Fund for the Children of Lara Sobel" had eclipsed the \$10,000 mark and showed no signs of slowing down, which is a great thing. Of note this week is the Vermont Trooper's Association's \$1000 contribution to the Fund, which is very welcome and appreciated. The Fund total is currently \$13,000-plus.

To expand the Fund's reach, VSEA published a new set of ads this week on the online media site *VTDigger*, encouraging all Vermonters and others to donate what they can to help.

If you haven't donated yet to the VSEA Fund for the Children of Lara Sobel, but want to do so, please go to www.vsea.org/donate (and please share this link with everyone you know!).

Contributions can also be mailed to VSEA C/O The VSEA Fund for the Children of Lara Sobel, 155 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602 Attention: Amy Haskins.

All contributors will receive a purple "Lara Sobel Strong" band.

Thanks in advance for your generosity.

Buy Union-Made Halloween Treats!

Just in case you haven't stocked up yet. From the AFL-CIO's Union Plus Program page:

"When those little ghosts and goblins come collecting on Halloween, make sure you have a full supply of union-made-in-America treats for them like Jelly Belly's candy corn. [Here's a brief list of choices](#) of candy products made by members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM); snack foods by members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW); or fruit and nuts from members of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW).

VSEA Vets' Home Members Mobilize To Fight For Fair Schedule. Win Request For Mediator.

WIA has reported previously on a campaign by nursing employees at the Vermont Veterans' Home to create and implement a fair schedule with management. The workers had been under the impression that a schedule they had come up with would be put to a vote against a schedule management was proposing, but, according to the workers, management made a last-minute decision to cancel a vote and to just implement its schedule. Needless to say, that decision didn't sit well with the workers, and they mobilized quickly, drafting a petition against implementing the management schedule and getting a majority of workers to sign it. The workers then presented their petition to the Vets' Home Board at its October 14 meeting in Bennington. After receiving the petition and reviewing the facts, the Board voted overwhelmingly to support the workers' call for a mediator to be hired to help resolve the dispute.

[VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard attended the Board meeting, and he told the *Bennington Banner*](#) "The schedule management put out has serious deficiencies. First of all, it barely, and sometimes doesn't, meet state minimum nursing standards. Secondly, it has collective bargaining impacts that will create grievances that are unnecessary. It has impacts on the lives of the people who are here today and the nurses on the floor that they simply can not tolerate."

Note: WIA will let readers know the mediator's decision, once it is made.

Central Vermont Chapter Meeting Monday, October 19

VSEA's Central Vermont Chapter is hosting a Chapter meeting on Monday, October 19, at VSEA headquarters in Montpelier. The meeting begins at 5:00 p.m. For more information, please contact Chapter President Cassandra Edson by email at cassandraedson@hotmail.com.

Lamoille Valley Chapter Meeting Wednesday, October 21

VSEA's Lamoille Valley Chapter is hosting a Chapter meeting on Wednesday, October 21, at the State Office Building in Morrisville. The meeting begins at 4:45 p.m., and dinner is being provided. For more information, please contact Chapter President Aimee Towne by email at aimee.towne@vermont.gov.

Brattleboro Chapter Mourning Loss

Submitted to WIA by Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske

"The Brattleboro Chapter would like to acknowledge the recent passing of our VSEA union brother, John Angil.

John worked as the Radiological Director for the Vermont Emergency Management Department of Public Safety and Homeland Security and was active in his local VSEA chapter. Last year, John helped out at our local EAD, and he stood on the picket line with Fairpoint strikers, bringing coffee and good company to those workers. John was always quick to respond to VSEA requests and will be missed. He leaves behind a wife and two young children."

Cards or donations can be sent to: Angil Household, 12 Old Chesterfield Rd., Spofford NH, 03462

VSEA Vets' Home Utility Workers Win Reclassification

After more than a year trying, 28 utility workers at the Vermont Veterans Home are celebrating a big win, as the Department of Human Resources' Classification Division ruled recently that they should be reclassified into a higher pay grade. The workers' original request for reclassification (RFR) was denied in 2014 due to a technicality, so the workers re-filed their RFR in July 2015 and it was approved this month. The reclass will be retroactive to July 2015.

"After a year-and-a-half fight, we finally won a much-deserved raise for the utility workers at the Vets' Home," VSEA member and VVH Steward Tess tells *WIA*.

The Vermont Labor Relations Board will be determining soon whether or not the workers' initial request in 2014 should have been flagged for a technicality or if the workers are eligible for retroactivity back to the July 2014 date when they originally filed their RFR.

VSEA Welcomes New Legislative Specialist Nancy Lynch

VSEA is pleased to welcome Nancy Lynch, who recently joined your union staff as its new Legislative Specialist.

Lynch is a natural fit for the position, as she has spent the bulk of her working life advocating for: working people; women; affordable, quality health care; victims of sexual and domestic abuse; persons with disabilities and other great causes and movements. She's also familiar with state employee issues and concerns, having worked in Vermont state government, for both DVHA and the Secretary of State's office.

"I am truly honored to be given the privilege to represent the members of the VSEA at the State House," Lynch tells *WIA*. "Having grown up in a union household, where my father was heavily involved with his union over the course of his entire working life, and having been a member of the union myself, I

understand the history of the labor movement and the important role unions play to ensure the health and well-being of all workers. In my role as Legislative Specialist, I will work tirelessly to protect the rights of all of the hard-working state employees of this great state, and I very much look forward to doing so.”

Members can reach Nancy by email at nlynch@vsea.org.

Discounted Bolton Valley Season Passes Now Available To VSEA Members

For the third year in a row, the VSEA Advantage Discount Program is pleased to offer discounted season passes to the Bolton Valley Ski Resort in Bolton, Vt. VSEA members who order a pass before October 31, 2015, will receive a \$70 discount off the regular \$569 season pass price, making it just \$499. Like last year, this offer is available only to VSEA members who are currently paying full dues to their union.

The sign-up process is pretty straightforward, but, like last year, in order for a member to view the special VSEA discount promo code ([which can be found by clicking here](#)), you must be a registered user of the VSEA website, which also requires you to be a full dues-paying member. If you want to register for member-only status, please [click here](#). To sign up to become a full, dues-paying member, please [click here](#).

After acquiring the special VSEA promo code, VSEA members can [go here](#) to place your season pass order.

Follow these instructions to make your purchase:

- Click on “Buy Online” and select pass products, accepting or declining pass protection and adding each product to your cart.
- In the Cart view, click on “Add/Change Guest” to set the pass holder's name and information to each pass product, then click “Proceed to Checkout.”
- Enter your Promo Code in the box where it asks for your promo code then click “Apply Code.” The cart should be refreshed and show the discounted corporate pricing.

A 2015-16 Bolton Valley All Access Season Pass includes:

- Unlimited alpine skiing and riding;
- 100km of Nordic and backcountry skiing;
- A 20% discount on rentals, retail shop purchases, group ski and ride lessons, and lodging (includes condos, suites, or hotel rooms); and
- Sports Center Membership including access to an indoor heated pool, hot tub, and sauna.

BV pricing allows you to build your own family pass. Adult passes are just \$499 and passes for youth 17 and under are just \$159 when purchased with a parent's pass.

If you have any questions, please contact Brad Battin at 802-434-6813 or bbattin@boltonvalley.com

Quote Of The Week!

“VSEA does not want to bargain contracts in the press, but the [State] has now forced our hand with [its] ill-advised press release. VSEA believes the [State]’s actions are prompted less by [its] desire to reach a good-faith agreement with thousands of hard-working NMU state employees and more by [its] desire to score political points. That’s not good for Vermont public services or the people who deliver them or who depend on them. VSEA’s NMU Bargaining Team remains committed to achieving a fair agreement with the State.”

VSEA NMU Bargaining Team Chair Bob Stone, in a message he sent this week to the home addresses of VSEA NMU members.

LiveWell Vermont & Benefits Presents The 2015 Flu Program & Open Enrollment!

WIA is including at the request of State Employees' Wellness Plan:

Protect yourself, your co-workers and those you love. Influenza can be a very serious disease, particularly to the young, the old and those with chronic health conditions. Get vaccinated every year!

LiveWell Vermont has partnered with ClearChoiceMD and is offering quadrivalent vaccine at all 2015 flu clinics! Clinics are open to all active, retired and temporary Vermont State employees, including employees of VSEA, the Historical Society and Arts Council.

If you can't make one of our clinics, or are looking for a vaccine for a spouse/partner and/or adult dependent, you can now go to any pharmacy that accepts Express Scripts (the State pharmacy vendor) and your shot is 100% covered. Questions? Contact Maura O'Brien, Program Coordinator at maura.obrien@vermont.gov or by phone at 802-828-2804.

Clinics held October 1 thru November 5, 2015.
Register [HERE!](#)

[2015 Flu Poster](#)

[2015 Flu Schedule](#)

[2015 Flu FAQ](#)

VSEA Labor Educator Reminds That Some Fall Trainings Are Open To All

VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lenoach asked WIA to remind members that many of the trainings scheduled throughout the fall 2015 are open to all members (indicated below in blue).

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 tlenoach@vsea.org.

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 Meetings/Events/Holidays:

October 19

Central Vermont Chapter Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

5:00 p.m.

October 20

OCS Labor/Management Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

9:00 a.m.

October 20

Child & Elder Care Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

9:30 a.m.

October 20

White River Junction Chapter Meeting

State Office Building

Room 120

White River Junction

Noon

October 20

NMU Bargaining Overview Meeting

White Cap Office Building

Conference Room

Williston

Noon

October 21

AOT Labor/Management Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier
8:00 a.m.

October 21

VSEA Meeting w/ANR Members
McFarland State Office Building
ESD Conference Room
Barre
Noon

October 21

Labor Educator's Monthly Worksite Meeting
Lyndon State College
Lyndon
Noon

October 21

Lamoille Valley Chapter Meeting
State Office Building
63 Professional Drive
AHS Conference Room
Morrisville
4:45 p.m.

October 22

Retirees' Chapter Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.