



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ November 16, 2015 – November 20, 2015

DCF Social Workers Make Safety Recommendations To Lawmakers

Throughout the summer, a joint committee of lawmakers has been meeting to take testimony on the current status of child protection services in Vermont and how they can be enhanced, or modified, if need be. As VSEA members know, the key players in Vermont's child protection system are VSEA frontline social workers, and, for weeks now, following the tragedy in Barre, they have been talking and meeting with each other to develop key safety recommendations to bring to State officials and the legislature. On November 18, VSEA member and social worker Trissie Casanova took time to come to Montpelier to deliver the workers' recommendations, and VSEA issued the following press release about her testimony:

“When the Joint Legislative Child Protection Oversight Committee convened today for its final meeting before the 2016 legislative session, Vermont State Employees Association (VSEA) Legislative Specialist Nancy Lynch and social worker/VSEA member Trissie Casanova were in the room to present lawmakers with three primary worker safety recommendations frontline Department for Children and Families (DCF) employees want to see enacted.

‘These are recommendations that were developed by the experts, meaning the frontline social workers who are out there every day, all across Vermont, trying to ensure the safety of our children,’ said VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard. ‘Their recommendations are based on a lot of research about best practices in use at both the state and federal level, and VSEA is hopeful all three will be adopted and implemented.’

The three primary recommendations VSEA social workers asked the committee to enact were:

1) Impose a caseload cap for all DCF Family Services Division social workers with the following stipulations:

- a) For Caseworkers – Open, ongoing cases, not to exceed 12 at any given time;*
- b) For Investigators – No more than 100 investigations per year; and*
- c) For Supervisors – Supervise no more than six social workers at a given time.*

2) Ensure that every office housing DCF Family Services Division staff has trained, armed law enforcement or security personnel. Currently, only three of the Division's 12 offices statewide have this protection.

3) Ensure the Vermont State Police are adequately staffed, so troopers can be available if needed for support by a social worker.”

Here is some of the press generated by Casanova's testimony

WCAX: [Vermont Social Workers Want Better Security](#)

VTDigger: [DCF Social Workers Press Lawmakers To Reduce Caseloads](#)

WPTZ: [State Employees Union Requests Police Protection For Vermont DCF Workers](#)

Argus/Herald: [State Union Pushes To Add DCF Staff, Security](#)

DCF Social Worker Records Radio Ad To Promote Fund For Lara Sobel's Children

A number of Vermont radio stations began running a new 60-second radio spot this week, featuring the voice of DCF Social Worker Trissie Casanova, who makes a heartfelt appeal for people to donate to the VSEA Fund for Lara Sobel's Children.

"On August 7, my colleague Lara Sobel was tragically killed by a client while leaving work in Barre," Casanova says. "It was a horrific and senseless act that took Lara from her daughters, her husband, her colleagues, her family and her friends." She continues, "Please help us honor Lara Sobel's legacy of helping children by making a contribution today to this special fund, dedicated to helping Lara's daughters."

Hear Trissie's Ad Here!

"Trissie did a great job, and VSEA really appreciates her recording the ad," says VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson. "Given that we're heading into the holiday season, I imagine this is going to be an especially difficult period for Lara's family, so maybe hearing the ad—and hearing about the work Lara's colleagues are doing right now to promote enhanced safety for social workers—will help them a little."

Vermont Joins With 20 Other States To File "Friend-Of-The-Court" Brief With The Supreme Court, Supporting Public Employees And Fair Share

With the U.S. Supreme Court recently deciding to hear a case in the spring of 2016 that could do real harm to public sector unions nationwide, VSEA was heartened to learn this week that the state's Attorney General's office has signed on to a "friend-of-the-court" brief that supports "fair share" or "agency fee" provisions in public employee contracts. The brief is in response to a case labeled *Friedrichs versus California Teachers Association*.

The brief's primary author was New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, who announced the brief filing at a November 16 press conference, saying, "The right to organize is a fundamental right for American workers. Unions go hand-in-hand with a strong middle class. Organizing gives workers the power to lift themselves out of poverty and build a better future. The Supreme Court should follow settled precedent and allow states like New York to manage our own labor relations to achieve labor peace and government efficiency and to continue our long tradition of support for workers."

"It's good to see Vermont taking a stand with other states for public employees and against what is part of a well-orchestrated and well-funded campaign by some pretty anti-union folks," comments VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson. "These are people who were content with allowing their client to be ruled against all the way up the legal chain, knowing that every ruling against got them closer to their day in front of the Supreme Court and to their chance to effectively dismantle labor unions."

[Read 21-State Brief Here](#)

U.S. President Backs Unions!

POLITICO reports this week that the Obama Administration "is throwing its weight behind public employee unions in what may be the fight for their life at the Supreme Court. The Solicitor General has [asked](#) to participate in oral arguments in *Friedrichs v. California Teachers Association*, in which the high court may overrule its 1977 *Aboud* precedent and outlaw the fair share fees that public employee unions charge non-members to cover collective bargaining costs.

NEK/St. Johnsbury Chapter Seeking “Santa Fund” Donations

VSEA’s NEK/St Johnsbury Chapter is asking its members to make a cash donation to the Chapter’s annual “Santa Fund.” The Chapter is matching donations up to \$200, and the deadline to contribute to this very worthwhile cause is December 3, 2015. Contact Chapter President Ellen Hinman or Chapter Vice President Dianne Rivers to arrange pickup of donations.

Contact Info:

Ellen Hinman, 751-0110

Dianne Rivers, 626-6223

Secretary-Treasurer Monique Prive, 626-6364

The Chapter thanks its members in advance for your generosity to others.

Barre Chapter Meeting December 3

VSEA’s Barre Chapter has scheduled its next meeting for December 3 at the Quarry Restaurant in downtown Barre. The meeting begins at 5:00 p.m. in the restaurant’s upstairs space.

NMU Sick Leave Bank Needs Your Help! Please Donate Today!

VSEA member Dawn Carrillo staffs the Non-Management Unit Sick Leave Bank, and she asked *WIA* to remind NMU members that the deadline to donate a few hours to the sick leave bank is December 31.

“Just donating an hour of your time can mean the world to a fellow employee,” reads a flyer DHR sent out this week. It also informs state employees that they can donate any amount of time to the NMU Sick Leave Bank. “Know that you are performing a wonderful service by helping your friends and fellow employees, who, along with their families, are struggling due to serious health issues,” the flyer concludes.

VSEA members interested in donating some much-needed time to the NMU Sick Leave Bank can find a donation form [here](#).

“I want to thank every member for considering a donation to this important fund,” VSEA NMU Chairperson Michelle Salvador tells *WIA*. “Even if you only donate one hour to the bank, these one-hour donations add up. It’s so worthwhile because your donation is going to help a fellow state employee who is battling a serious illness.”

State Colleges’ Members Urged To Complete Bargaining Survey

Members of the VSEA Vermont State Colleges’ Bargaining Team sent an email this week to members working at campuses across the state, asking them to complete a bargaining survey in advance of formal negotiations beginning in early winter.

[If you’re a VSEA State Colleges’ Unit member who did not see this week’s email, you can:](#)

[Click Here To Complete VSC Electronic Bargaining Survey](#)

The Team is advising that if you prefer to fill out a hard copy of the survey, you should contact your Campus Chair, who will be happy to provide you with one.

The VSC Bargaining Team is requesting that members complete the survey by November 24, 2015.

Subscribe To VSEA Today!

VSEA's Communications Department is happy to disseminate any and all communications the leadership, Chapters, Units, and others request, however, the lists the Department currently pull from are provided to the union by the State of Vermont. VSEA's Communications Department has found the lists to be dated, incomplete and sometimes lacking key information that was entered by a VSEA staff person but later overwritten or deleted during a State data dump.

To help VSEA more effectively reach active members—and really all those members who want to know what's going on in their union—VSEA will be working hard in the coming months to collect members' emails on its own and begin to build contact lists that cannot be altered by a State download.

You can help us get started by [clicking here](#) and signing up for the VSEA communications you are interested in receiving.

Thank you in advance for subscribing. Please urge your colleagues to do the same.

Reminder! November 23 “Public” Forums To Solicit Budget Ideas

A reminder that the State is conducting two public “webinars” on November 23 to gather input from Vermonters about what the state's budget priorities should be in the upcoming session.

The first forum begins at 1:00 p.m. and goes to 3:00 p.m. It will focus exclusively on the AHS budget, which is why VSEA is urging its members working in DCF, ESD, Corrections, VVH, GMPCF and other AHS workplaces to take some time on November 23 to participate in this important discussion. Lawmakers and the State need to hear from as many VSEA members as possible about the need to enhance worker safety, staff adequately and reduce caseloads. They also need to hear how past cuts are impacting the AHS population you serve on a daily basis.

The second forum begins at 4:00 p.m. and goes until 6:00 p.m. It will focus on the “rest of the budget,” meaning any areas outside of AHS. This is a good chance for State Colleges, Judiciary, AOT, ANR and other VSEA members to make your voices heard.

- [Pre-Register For Either Webinar](#); and
- [Quick Survey](#) (*To assist the Finance and Management Department with prioritization and evaluation of spending and revenue initiatives*)

This year, the State is accepting written testimony on the public's priorities. Please address your input to Secretary Justin Johnson, with the subject “Public Budget Development FY 17” on the envelope. Send to 109 State Street, 5th Floor, Montpelier VT 05609-5901.

Public Forum: Their Fight Is Our Fight! Lessons from the Labor Struggle in Quebec

Tomorrow, Saturday, November 21 at 4:00 p.m., the Vermont Workers Center is inviting VSEA members to its headquarters at 294 North Winooski Avenue in Burlington to learn more about the labor struggle teachers, nurses, and other public sector workers are currently locked in across Quebec. While the Quebec government attempts to impose wage freezes, increase workloads, and cut social services, more than 400,000 trade union members have joined a series of strikes, school and hospital shutdowns, and street demonstrations. They have been joined by students who are fighting cuts to higher education. This is the largest, most significant struggle against austerity in North America.

There is much to learn from our brothers and sisters to the north. Their determination has inspired non-union workers to take action, and they have won widespread support among parents, students, patients, and other working people.

Join the VWC for an inspiring and instructive discussion with union militants from Quebec, to discuss how workers can build solidarity to support their fight, and in turn strengthen our own movement here.

Speakers:

- Philippe de Grosbois, Executive Board member of the Fédération Autonome de L'Enseignement (Autonomous Federation of Teachers);
- Marjolaine Goudreau, social worker, member of of the Common Front; and
- Student representative of the Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Association (Association for Student Union Solidarity, or ASSÉ)

Organized by the Vermont Labor Solidarity Committee. Endorsed by the Vermont Workers Center and Vermont AFL-CIO

For information, or to arrange child care during the event, contact Traven Leyshon by phone at 522-3484, or email traven.l@gmail.com. Child care is free; please be sure to let us know that you'll need coverage, and how many children you'll bring, by Nov 20.

VSEA Seeks Experienced Director of Organizing

VSEA is actively seeking to fill the Director of Organizing position at headquarters in Montpelier. Here is a description for any member interested in applying:

Join Vermont's most dynamic statewide union as its new Director of Organizing.

Scope of Work:

Reporting to the Executive Director, VSEA's Director of Organizing will be tasked with leading a team of organizers to move union members to take action on key issues that are impacting their lives. The Director of Organizing oversees all aspects of both internal and external organizing campaigns and is responsible for training and day-to-day development of the organizing staff.

Job Duties Include:

- Supervising the VSEA organizing staff;
- Working to develop VSEA member/leaders through engagement in a variety of union activities;
- Coordinating organizing activities with other departments in alignment with the VSEA strategic plan;
- Facilitating turnout to union events, trainings and meetings;
- Identifying key member issues and moving a plan of action around those issues;
- Mobilizing the membership for political action and advocacy campaigns;
- Engaging union activists and leaders in the membership recruitment process; and
- Traveling to worksites and locations across the state to conduct and participate in meetings on a regular basis.

Experience:

It is necessary to have demonstrated labor union organizing experience as well as a track record of running successful union organizing drives and campaigns. Demonstrated experience building consensus and working relationships with a wide variety of persons and organizations. Demonstrated skills in verbal and written communication, as well as familiarity with the state and federal laws governing organizers and organizing campaigns. Knowledge and understanding of the State of Vermont's political landscape.

Want Instantaneous Push Notifications From Your Union? Sign Up Today For The VSEAUnite App!

With the 2016 legislative session fast approaching, VSEA is excited to be employing a new push notification tool to message members faster about important hearings, meetings, testimony, events and other union matters. Any member who has already downloaded the VSEAUnite App does not to do anything, but if you haven't downloaded the free App yet, you can do so very easily.

VSEA's Communications team is stressing that it will not be overloading members' phones with push notifications. Members will also have the option to easily turn off the notifications, if the volume of notifications ever becomes an issue.

"We'll be working in the coming weeks and months to increase the number of VSEA members using the VSEAUnite App, with an emphasis on getting a few users from each work site," explains Communications Director Doug Gibson. "We'll be aiming to limit the notifications to just information that is important to the entire VSEA membership, as opposed to Chapter- or Unit-specific messages, which, for the time being, will continue to be sent to members via email message."

VSEAUnite is available for most mobile devices, including I-phone and Android. Once you download the App, you simply register with your name and your VSEA bargaining unit and location. VSEAUnite then allows you to view your Unit's contract, find contact information for your nearest VSEA steward (to report contract infractions), see a calendar of upcoming VSEA events and read the latest news about working people to hit the wires.

The download is free, so your union hopes all VSEA I-phone, Android and other mobile users will download it today!

VSEA Insurance Representative In Chittenden Next Few Weeks

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

December 1, 2 & 3

108 Cherry Street
Room 3B (12/1)
Room 2C (12/2)
Room 3A (12/3)
Burlington
Noon to 3:00 p.m.

December 7

Chittenden Correctional Facility
Front Conference Room
Burlington
Noon to 3:30 p.m.

December 8, 9, & 10

DVHA
312 Hurricane Lane
Williston
Noon to 3:00 p.m.

If you work in another area and cannot make it to one of these Chittenden enrollment sites, please call 802-485-4820 for an appointment on the above dates.

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.

Quote Of The Week!

“I don’t think you can put a dollar amount on a social worker’s life, or a child’s life.”

VSEA Social Worker Trissie Casanova, responding in an [interview on VPR’s Vermont Edition](#) to a question about lawmakers openly worrying about the costs to enhance DCF workers’ safety.

{PUT IN SIDEBAR}

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 tlenoch@vsea.org.

VSEA Council Members and Chapter Officers

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

Steward 1: Introduction and the Basics

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Friday, November 20

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)!

VSEA First Vice President Looking To Fill Vacant Council Seats

VSEA First Vice President Aimee Towne asked *WIA* to let members know about several open seats on the VSEA Council. Most Council seats were filled by the required September 30 date, but these seats (by departmental heading) still remain open:

Aging and Independent Living = 1 Seat
Agriculture = 1 Seat
Auditor of Accounts = 1 Seat
Buildings and General Services = 3 Seats
Children and Families = 1 Seat
ACCD/Housing = 1 Seat
ACCD/Economic Development = 1 Seat
ACCD/Marketing and Tourism = 1 Seat
Commission on Women = 1 Seat
Corrections = 1 Seat
Criminal Justice Training Council = 1 Seat
Education = 1 Seat
Finance and Management = 1 Seat
Financial Regulation = 1 Seat
Forests and Parks = 1 Seat
Health = 1 Seat
AHS/IT Unit = 1 Seat
Labor = 1 Seat
Library = 1 Seat
Liquor Control = 1 Seat
Lottery = 1 Seat
Mental Health = 3 Seats
Military = 1 Seat
ANR = 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/DMV = 2 Seats
Treasurer's Office = 1 Seat

The deadline to submit a self-nomination form for any of the seats listed above is Friday, December 4, 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.

Advance Notice: Delta Dental Supplemental Plan Enrollment Forms Mailing In April 2016

VSEA members wanting to join Delta Dental's Supplemental Program should keep an eye open for new enrollment forms in mid-April 2016, when the forms will begin arriving in all eligible VSEA members' home mailboxes. The deadline to return your enrollment form will be in mid-May. Premium deductions from employee paychecks will begin in early June. The Supplemental Program's new contract year begins July 1, 2016, and ends June 30, 2017.

VSEA members who already belong to the Supplemental Program will not be required to re-enroll. VSEA members who wish to leave the Program will be able to do so, using the enrollment forms that are coming in the mail.

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

November 23

State Budget Webinars (See *WIA* Entry)

1:00 p.m. - AHS Budget

4:00 p.m. – All Other Agency/Dept. Budgets

November 26

Thanksgiving Day Holiday

December 1

Board of Trustees' Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

9:00 a.m.

December 1, 2 & 3

Meet VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock

108 Cherry Street

Room 3B (12/1)

Room 2C (12/2)

Room 3A (12/3)

Burlington

Noon to 3:00 p.m.

December 2

Training: Labor/Management Committee

VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Rte. 302

Berlin

9:00 a.m.

December 2

NMU Contract Update Meeting

DOL

5 Green Mountain Dr.

Lobby Conference Room

Montpelier

Noon

December 3

Labor Educator's Monthly Worksite Meeting – Burlington
Conference Room 3A
108 Cherry Street
Burlington
9:00 a.m.

December 3

Barre Chapter Meeting
Quarry Restaurant
Upstairs
Barre
5:00 p.m.

December 3

Training: Protecting The Contract & Building The Union
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Rte. 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

December 4

NMU Contract Update Meeting
DMV
120 State St.
First Floor Room
Montpelier
Noon

December 4

NMU Contract Update Meeting
BGS
120 State St.
Basement Break Room
Montpelier
Noon

December 7

Meet VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock
Chittenden Correctional Facility
Front Conference Room
Burlington
Noon to 3:30 p.m.

December 8,9, & 10

Meet VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock
DVHA
312 Hurricane Lane
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