



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ January 25, 2016 – January 29, 2016

Podcast Explores What It's Like To Be A DCF Employee, From The Worker's Perspective

Independent broadcaster Erica Heilman has been producing podcasts about hidden Vermont stories and personalities for the past two years, and occasionally, she takes on a serious issue, like her latest piece on what it's like to be a frontline DCF Social Worker and the daily challenges confronting these workers.

Here is how Heilman bills her latest podcast on the ["Rumblestrip" website](#):

"The people we never hear from are the people who actually do the work. And this is by design. The work that DCF caseworkers do is intensely private, and in order to protect the privacy of parents and children, caseworkers are not allowed to talk publicly about their cases. In a way, their silence shields us from some of the darkest, most complex, most intractable problems in our state. These are the problems that DCF caseworkers live with every day."

The show is 45 minutes and WIA warns that sometimes the subject matter can be difficult to listen to, but it's as close a description of what it's like to work as a DCF Social Worker as you'll hear. The three DCF workers featured in Heilman's podcast are not named, and she explains it was a conscious choice "for their own safety." This is a testament to how difficult this work sometimes is.

[Click here to listen to podcast!](#)

VSEA "Issue" Receptions Kick Off! Members Make Case To Lawmakers For More Staffing & Against Privatizing Workers' Comp, Liability and Safety Workers

WIA informed readers last week about a series of "issue" dinner receptions your union began hosting this week at headquarters, inviting lawmakers to come and meet personally with state employees about the issues important to them.

Jan. 27 - Staffing

The series kicked off on January 27, when a small group of lawmakers heard from members about the need to improve staffing in many areas of state government, especially, as DCF Social Worker Kara Haynes told them, at the DCF, continuing this group of workers' full-court press this session to secure the staffing levels and safety enhancements. A VSEA Judiciary Court Clerk talked about how staffing issues are impeding the public's access to justice. Other workers talked about the rising public need in many sectors of government, and their frustration with not being able to meet it sometimes due to decisions they have no voice in making. Rep. Susan Hatch Davis (P-Orange) attended the meeting and later posted about it on her Facebook page, writing, "So glad I went because it doesn't get any better than to hear directly from the frontline workers when making policy decisions."

Jan. 28 - Privatization

On January 28, a new group of lawmakers was joined by VSEA members to talk about the dangers of privatization. The discussion was led by Cheri Goldstein, a member working in the Risk Management Division who, like her colleagues, is on high alert after learning that management is actively shopping a formal proposal to privatize their services. She reiterated the workers' main points on why the Division's services should not be privatized

- Workers represent more than 100 years of combined and specialized knowledge;
- Workers are the ones helping state employees get back to work after suffering a work illness or injury;
- Workers are “Vermonters serving Vermonters,” and they know the people they serve;
- Workers know state worksites and the nature of state employee work, across the board; and
- Workers they understand the system’s challenges and how best to navigate them.

The workers stressed again that they have worked hard to help management streamline the claims process and “smooth out the bumps.” **They also stressed that when state employees contact their office, they are talking with a fellow state employee and not some person representing a private company that may not even be based in Vermont.**

VSEA members who are talking with lawmakers are asked to please make a personal pitch to protect this important division of state government. The workers’ situation will also be a focus of VSEA’s State House Day, which is scheduled for February 25.

WIA will keep readers updated on how you can help the Risk Management workers protect their service.

VSEA “Issue” Receptions With Legislators Wrap Up Next Week

- Temporary Workers – February 3
- Security – February 4

All VSEA members are invited to attend one or more of the dinner reception, which are being held at VSEA headquarters in Montpelier, beginning at 5:30 p.m. and ending at 7:00 p.m.

If you are interested in attending a reception(s), please RSVP to:

Danielle Warner
 Phone: 223-5247
 Email: legintern@vsea.org

Has A Workers Compensation, Liability Or Safety Worker Helped You?

Employees in the Risk Management Division’s Workers’ Compensation, Liability and Safety subdivisions are asking any VSEA member/retiree who has been helped by a worker in the division to please share your story with them. The more stories collected, the better, and the accounts don’t have to be long and detailed, just a quick overview of your positive experience with the service. Thanks in advance for your help. Send your story to vsea@vsea.org and write “RM Story” in the subject line.

The employees thank those who have already responded to this request. Your kind words are appreciated.

VSEA Signs Popping Up! Help Needed With Distribution.

VSEA recently began distributing yard signs to leaders, activists and members, asking them to distribute them to family, friends, neighbors and businesses in their local communities. The signs are timed to coincide with what has unfortunately become very tough bargaining with the State on new contracts covering VSEA members in the Non-Management, Corrections, Supervisory and Judiciary Units.

The next few weeks and months will be critical, as VSEA members in three Units await a fact-finder’s report, and Judiciary Unit members continue to combat seriously detrimental proposals. This is why VSEA is renewing its call to members to help your union with sign distribution, or post a sign in your own yard. Let’s give Vermont a strong visual show of support for state employees and the quality public services you provide. **If you want a sign, but can’t make it to Montpelier, please contact**

vsea@vsea.org, write “I need a sign(s)” in the subject line, and VSEA will do its best to get you one or more in a timely fashion.

VSEA Chapter Presidents have developed a few simple talking points about the purpose of the signs, in case you need help explaining to a friend or business owner why state employees matter and why they should post a sign. They are:

- Vermont state employees are primarily Vermonters;
- Vermont state employees are your family, friends, neighbors;
- Vermont state employees live in communities across our state, and the wages we negotiate for with the State go back into our local communities to help keep them economically vibrant;
- Vermont state employees’ negotiated wages and benefits raise the standard for all working Vermonters;
- For years, state employees have been asked to give back to help Vermont weather fiscal crises. Because of this, Vermont’s quality public services are stretched very thin today and there just aren’t enough employees in some areas to keep up with increased demand. State services and the workforce have been cut the marrow, not just the bone;
- Since Vermont leaders have chosen to rely heavily a tourism economy and seasonal employees, it makes employment in state government that much more desirable and also one of the last, viable jobs in Vermont still paying a living wage with fair health and retirement benefits. These are the kinds of jobs Vermont needs to support;
- By supporting state employees, you are supporting a continuation of the quality public services Vermonters have come to depend upon;
- Vermont state employees make Vermont work; and
- Supporting Vermont public services and state employees is truly “the Vermont way.”

Post Your Sign Photos To VSEA Facebook Page!

Please remember too, in the coming weeks and months, if you spot a VSEA yard sign, snap a photo and [post it to VSEA’s Facebook page](#) or send it VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson at dgibson@vsea.org, and he’ll post it for you.

The signs featured with this WIA entry were submitted by VSEA First VP Aimee Towne and Retirees’ Chapter President Joanie Maclay. Thanks! Keep them coming!

Call Your Senators Today! Paid Sick Leave Bill Will Benefits Hundreds Of Temporary Workers

The Senate Economic Development, Housing and General Affairs Committee voted unanimously, 5-0, this week to move H. 187, the paid sick leave bill, to the Senate. The Paid Sick Days Coalition expects the full Senate to consider the bill next Wednesday, and VSEA, as part of the coalition, is asking all members to call your Senators today and urge them to vote “yes” on the paid sick leave bill.

For more information on how to leave a message for your Senator click here <http://www.voicesforvtkids.org/paidsickdays/psdaction/>

For more information on why we need paid sick leave click here <http://www.voicesforvtkids.org/paidsickdays/>

Included in the 60,000 working Vermonters who will benefit from passage of a paid sick leave bill are hundreds of temporary employees who currently work in state government. Some of the larger numbers of qualifying temps exist in:

- DCF = 46
- Corrections = 37

- AOT = 27
- Vets' Home = 21
- BGS = 18
- DMH = 14
- DPS = 14
- DOL = 13

Deadline To Submit Bylaw Changes Is March 25!

The deadline to submit proposals for changes to VSEA's Master Bylaws is Friday, March 25, 2016. Proposals must be mailed to: Janis Henderson, Bylaws Committee Chair, c/o VSEA Headquarters, P.O. Box 518, Montpelier, VT 05601-0518.

Proposals should reference the number, section, sub-section, etc. of the bylaw you would like to change. You should also include the language you want to add, delete or substitute. Also include the reason(s) you are making this proposal. Example: "Bylaw 0 A (1) (b) Change: Monday to Sunday. Reason: Makes it easier to work with the calendar."

Please be sure the changes you are recommending include all Articles and/or Bylaws that may be affected by the proposed change.

If you have questions, please contact Janis at jhenderson@vsea.org.

Judiciary Unit Schedules Bargaining Update Meetings

Members of the VSEA Judiciary Unit Bargaining Team are embroiled in tough negotiations right now with the State on a new contract. To update members on the status of bargaining and let them know what help is needed in the coming days and weeks, Team members and staff are currently conducting a series of information meetings across Vermont

Here are the remaining meetings scheduled:

February 2
 Burlington
 175 Main St.
 Third Floor Jury Lounge
 11:30 a.m.

February 3
 Newport
 Civil Division
 247 Main St.
 Break Room
 11:30 a.m.

February 4
 Burlington
 Costello Courthouse
 Champlain Room
 Noon

February 10
 Middlebury
 7 Mahady Court
 Break Room

February 11
Montpelier
RIS & Finance
112 State St.
Conference Room
Montpelier

VSEA VVH Members Invited To Meet With Union Representative On Monday

VSEA Union Representative Rachael Fields sent an email this week to members working at the Vets' Home, inviting them to one of three shift informational meetings she is conducting on Monday, February 1. Fields will be updating VVH members about the status of bargaining, and what's going on at the State House (where Fields also serves as an elected representative). She also wants to hear about the issues important to VVH workers and promote a nursing survey VSEA is currently urging nurses to complete.

3rd Shift - 6:30 a.m. - Crispe Room
1st Shift - 2:30 p.m. - Upstairs Board Room
2nd Shift - 10:30 p.m. - Crispe Room

If you have any questions, call Rachael Fields at (802) 595-0150.

VSEA Vets' Home Nursing Staff Urged To Complete Online Survey

The initial response has been great to WIA's call last week for VSEA nursing staff working at the Vets' Home to complete an online survey about your current working conditions. That said, there's still time if you haven't had completed a survey yet. Click below to go to the survey:

Mark The Date! VSEA State House Day Is Thursday, February 25, 2016!

VSEA's annual State House Day will be Thursday, February 25, 2016.

This is the perfect venue for frontline state employees to meet face to face with their local lawmakers to talk about the service you provide and the challenges that confront you daily, especially when it comes to safety and staffing.

Register to attend VSEA's State House Day by **logging on to: vsea.org/StateHouseDay2016**

VSEA Labor Educator Announces Winter/Spring 2016 Training Schedule

VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lenocho asked WIA to announce a new round of trainings he has scheduled for winter/spring 2016. 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.

Trainings in blue are for all members.

Department for Children and Families: Workplace Safety

Wednesday, February 3
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Chittenden & Lamoille County

Thursday, February 11

DVHA Conference Room
312 Hurricane Lane, Suite 201
Williston

Steward Training: Supervisory Unit

Wednesday, February 17
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward 1: Introduction & The Basics

Friday, March 4
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Health Care Facilities

Wednesday, March 9
VTrans District Office,
61 Valley View
Mendon (five miles east of Rutland)

Steward 2: Protecting The Contract & Building The Union

Friday, March 18
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: The “Hostile Work Environment”

Wednesday, March 23
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward 3: The Contract & Challenges in the Workplace

Friday, March 25
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Investigations & Working With Human Resources

Wednesday, March 30
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: Corrections Unit

Wednesday, April 6
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: The Grievance

Wednesday, April 13
VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Steward Training: The Labor/Management Committee

Friday, April 15
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

Diversity & Solidarity For Public Sector Union Members

Friday, April 22
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin

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.

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!

Quote Of The Week!

“In other words, are there bigger challenges than the change of circumstances going offline? And if there are, then I think we need to know that. And if there are bigger challenges, then I think it calls into question whether or not we should use the exchange.”

House Speaker Shap Smith, commenting on the future viability of Vermont Health Connect (VHC) in a *VT Digger* story concerning the State’s recent announcement about another customer backlogs at VHC. Given the newly publicized issue, Smith has been openly suggesting the possibility of mothballing VHC and instead transferring Vermonters to the federal exchange created under Obamacare. Meanwhile, the VSEA HAEU members working at VHC remain surprised the State is proposing to cut positions there, given the new backlog.

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Please be sure the changes you are recommending include all Articles and/or Bylaws that may be affected by the proposed change.

If you have questions, please contact Janis at jhenderson@vsea.org.

Threatened While On The Job? VSEA Wants To Know.

VSEA President Dave Bellini is asking all state employees who are threatened while performing your job duties to provide an account of the threat not only to your supervisor or the State, but also to VSEA.

“VSEA wants to begin to compile its own record of threats against frontline state employees, no matter your occupation,” explains Bellini. “I’m asking all employees who are threatened, especially those working in AHS, to take a few minutes to fill out an online form VSEA made to collect your report. The information will help us provide a firsthand account of the number of threats being made and where they are being made, in addition to some other things.”

Here are the questions:

Name:

Occupation:

Work Base:

Preferred Phone:

Preferred Email:

Date Of Incident:

Where Did Incident Occur:

Name & Relation Of Person Making Threat To Employee (i.e. client, client’s husband, unrelated stranger):

Was Threat Made In Person? If No, How Was Threat Made?

Description Of What Happened:

Incident Reported To:

On (date):

Have You Received A Response To Your Report?

If Yes, What Was The Response?

Have You Received Any Counseling? Other Help? To Deal With The Threat? Did This Help?

Are The Police Involved At All In This Incident?

If you are a state employee who is threatened on the job, please click [here](#) to find the online report form, **which will remain confidential**, unless otherwise approved by you.

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

February 1

Union Rep Meetings w/ VVH Workers

3rd Shift - 6:30 a.m. - Crispe Room

1st Shift - 2:30 p.m. - Upstairs Board Room

2nd Shift - 10:30 p.m. - Crispe Room

Bennington

February 2

Safety, Health & Maintenance Committee Meeting

State Records/Archives Building

Middlesex

1:30 p.m.

February 2

Judiciary Unit Bargaining Unit Meeting

Third Floor Jury Lounge

175 Main St.

Burlington

11:30 p.m.

February 3

Training: DCF Workplace Safety

VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Route 302

Berlin

9:00 a.m.

February 3

Judiciary Unit Bargaining Unit Meeting

Breakroom

247 Main St.

Civil Division

Newport

11:30 p.m.

February 3

VSEA Legislator Issue Reception

Topic: Temporary Workers

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

5:30 p.m.

February 4

Labor Educator's Monthly Meeting - Burlington
108 Cherry St.
Conference Room 3A
Burlington
Noon

February 4

Judiciary Unit Bargaining Unit Meeting
Costello Courthouse
Champlain Room
Burlington
Noon

February 3

VSEA Legislator Issue Reception
Topic: Security
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
5:30 p.m.

February 5

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