



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ February 29, 2016 – March 4, 2016

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Three Bargaining Teams Meet To Review Fact Finder's Report!

After a weeks-long wait, VSEA and the State received a long-awaited fact finder's report on Monday, and Labor Relations Director Gary Hoadley wasted no time scheduling meetings to discuss its contents with VSEA members sitting on the Non-Management, Corrections and Supervisory Bargaining Teams.

VSEA members will remember that the three Teams were forced in front of a fact finder, after State negotiators rejected what Team members called "fair" contract proposals and refused to budge from their "unfair" proposals.

On March 2, Hoadley met with the Corrections and Supervisory Teams to discuss what was in the report and solicit Team members' input and direction for how to move forward. Hoadley is meeting the Non-Management Unit Team today.

Following the conclusion of today's meeting, Hoadley says he will be reviewing all the input from the Teams and then hopefully sending a letter to the State very soon, asking its negotiators to re-convene bargaining, based on the contents of the fact finder's report. If the State chooses not to return to the table, and, instead, opts to take the fact finder's report to the Vermont Labor Relations Board, VSEA Teams will have to fight the battle there.

As always, if you have a question, please contact a member of your Unit Bargaining Team. [Click here](#) for a list.

Special Alert To Stewards From VSEA Labor Educator

Note: Be sure to read #3 and then click to sign up .

1) Save the Date! Friday, May 20: VSEA Steward Summit Training.

All Stewards are urged to attend this special, all-day training. VSEA officers and staff will join us to collectively explore ways to improve public services, strengthen our contracts, and build our Union. This event is being held in central Vermont and may include an overnight option for May 19. More information and registration details will be sent out in the next two weeks.

2) Spring Trainings

[Click Here To Sign Up](#)

See *WIA* entry "Labor Educator's Winter/Spring 2016 Training Schedule" for more information.

3) Individual trainings/meetings at your worksite.

I would like to hold **one- to two-hour individualized trainings** with you, depending on your availability. Stewards can sign up for a training by clicking below on whichever link is nearest your worksite, and then select a time and suggest a location to meet. I will follow up with an email to confirm and discuss logistics.

Topics range from your experiences and worksite challenges to statewide issues and current VSEA campaigns.

[Burlington & St. Albans](#)

[Newport & St. Johnsbury](#)

[Morrisville & Waterbury](#)

[Montpelier & Barre](#)

[Rutland & Middlebury](#)

[White River Junction & Springfield](#)

[Bennington & Brattleboro](#)

VSEA Congratulates Member On Election To Selectboard

VSEA is congratulating Council member and Steward Karen Tendrup on being elected to the Sandgate Selectboard on March 1. Tendrup works is an LPN at the Vermont Veterans' Home in Bennington.

Rights & Democracy Hosting 3/9 Event To “Raise Up Vermont”

Rights & Democracy Vermont—an organization tackling issues of social and economic justice—is hosting a “Raise Up Vermont” press conference on Wednesday, March 9, and VSEA members are invited to attend.

“It’s past time for Vermont to take the steps necessary to shrink the wage gap between everyday, working Vermonters and those at the top of the earning scale,” Rights & Democracy Chairperson and VSEA Non-Management Unit Chair Michelle Salvador tells *WIA* in advance of March 9. “We’ll be at the State House next Wednesday to urge action on several pieces of legislation we believe will help level the playing field for working Vermonters. I hope VSEA members who are able will come to the press conference to support our message of economic justice for all.”

Rights & Democracy
“Raise Up Vermont” Press Conference
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
State House, Montpelier

New VSEA Union Representative For Chittenden, Lamoille Valley and Waterbury

VSEA is pleased to announce that newly hired Union Representative Nikolas Stein will be serving members in the Chittenden, Lamoille Valley and Waterbury Chapters. He officially began his duties on Monday, February 29. You may know Nikolas because, prior to becoming a Union Representative, he worked for years as an Administrative Professional at VSEA headquarters. Prior Union Representative Kelly Burns-Everhart was recently promoted to the position of Staff Attorney with the VSEA.

Nikolas says he is looking forward to meeting members in his territories and helping you with your issues and concerns.

Nikolas can be reached by email at nstein@vsea.org, or by phone at 223-5247.

Michigan Veterans' Home & The Dangers Of Privatization

When VSEA member and Vermont Veterans' Home worker Barbara King spoke eloquently at State House about the importance of the service she and hundreds of her colleagues provide daily to Vermont veterans, she also warned against a rush to privatize this historically public service. Judging by a recent story out of Michigan, lawmakers would be wise to heed King's advice.

A [February 18 story in the *Detroit Free Press*](#) reports that an audit about to be released on conditions at the Grand Rapids Home for Veterans exposes numerous problems that occurred after nursing care was partially privatized in 2013, in an effort to save money.

According to the story, the audit says "the contractor the state hired to provide nursing aides, J2S Group, did not meet staffing requirements most of the time, during four sampled months, and mishandled prescription medication and complaints of neglect and abuse."

In addition to the understaffing issue, the auditor found:

- The Home did not track or properly investigate or respond to residents' complaints, including complaints of abuse and neglect;
- The Home did not properly administer non-narcotic prescription drugs, causing insurance reimbursement problems and potential quality of care issues. During the period the auditor reviewed, many prescriptions were refilled either late or five days early. |
- The Home also had not established adequate controls over non-narcotic pharmaceuticals, which were valued at \$5.2 million over the 23-month review period, to ensure that they were not lost or misused; and
- The Home did not bill residents' insurance companies for all eligible prescription drugs and did not follow up with insurers when claims for prescription drugs were rejected. Those practices put at risk up to \$883,700 in eligible insurance reimbursements over 23 months, the draft audit summary said.

After the audit was made public, Jeff Barnes, who had served as director of the Michigan Veteran Affairs Agency, resigned.

Recently Retired DEC Employee Honored With Lifetime Achievement Award

At a recent New England Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conference in Boston, 30-year Department of Environmental Conservation engineer Andy Fish received the EPA Regional Wastewater "2015 Regional Lifetime Achievement Award." The award recognizes personnel in the wastewater field who have provided invaluable public service managing and operating wastewater treatment facilities throughout New England.

At the conference, Curt Spalding, regional administrator of EPA's New England Office, praised Fish's service, saying, "The professionals operating these wastewater treatment plants, as well as the municipalities and the state environmental agencies that support them, are essential to keeping our environment healthy by protecting water quality. I am proud to acknowledge Mr. Fish's outstanding contributions to help protect public health and water quality for so many years and to give him the credit he deserves."

Reminder: 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.

VSEA Labor Educator's Winter/Spring 2016 Training Schedule

VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lenoach asked WIA to remind about the latest round of trainings he is conducting in the 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.

Steward Training: VVH

Wednesday, March 9
First Floor Community Room
Bennington State Office Building
200 Veterans Memorial Dr.
Bennington

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

VSEA Insurance Representative In Middlebury Next Week

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

March 10 & 11

Vocational Rehabilitation Conference Room
Middlebury
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.

Quote Of The Week!

“The growth of the problems is outpacing our ability to manage them and help families respond.”

VSEA DCF Caseworker Alyssa Dawson, responding to a WPTZ reporter’s a question about the reality confronting her and hundreds of other frontline DCF workers. [See the Feb. 25 story here.](#)

Important Reminder About Messages to the Legislature or the Public!

VSEA members are under attack, both at the bargaining table and in the Legislature, and members’ voices are the most powerful force we have. Members are already speaking out, particularly to legislators, so we need to remember some basic ground rules. [Click here](#) to view a memo that outlines some basic points about how to make sure your speech is protected. One of the key rules is this:

When you communicate with legislators, the media, or the public, make sure you are not on work time and don’t use the employer’s computer!

Nothing will undermine your message more effectively than the suspicion that you are using work time or the employer's property for personal purposes. Electronic messages to lawmakers should originate from your personal email account and not from your state email account. The same goes for posting on websites or blogs. Send your messages from your personal email on break time, or pre- or post-work.

VSEA thanks all members for your attention to this request.

Joint Safety & Health Committee Posts “Complaint Form” To Gather Data From State Employees

For years, VSEA members and staff have served with management on a specially created Joint Safety and Health Committee, which meets periodically to discuss current safety and health issues impacting state employees, your worksites and/or the public. Committee members also strategize together about the best course of action to address a safety or health issue or concern, and they make recommendations to the State.

The Committee asked *WIA* to share that it has recently created [a new downloadable “complaint” form](#) for VSEA members to fill out and submit to the Committee if they are dealing with a safety or health issue and want to file an official complaint. The Committee will review all submitted forms at upcoming meetings to determine if action is warranted, and, if so, what kind of action is appropriate.

If you have any questions about the form, please contact VSEA's staff liaison to the Committee, Field Services Director Gretchen Naylor. You can email her at gnaylor@vsea.org or call her at 223-5247.

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 your 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;

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

March 8

Board Of Trustees' Meeting
Large Board Room
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m

March 9

Steward Training: VVH
First Floor Community Room
Bennington State Office Building
200 Veterans Memorial Dr.
9:00 a.m.

March 10

Meet w/VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock
District Office
Vocational Rehabilitation Conference Room
Middlebury
12:00 to 3:00

March 10

Retirement Study Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
1:00 p.m

March 11

NMU Executive Committee Meeting
Large Board Room
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m

March 11

Chapter Presidents Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m

March 11

Meet w/VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock
District Office
Vocational Rehabilitation Conference Room
Middlebury
12:00 to 3:00