



## WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ March 14, 2016 – March 18, 2016

**>> View the full issue of *Week In Action* by visiting [VSEA.ORG](http://VSEA.ORG)**

### **State Meets With VSEA Bargaining Teams**

Shortly after *WIA* was sent last week, VSEA received two letters from State negotiators, one requesting to meet yesterday with the Corrections and Supervisory Unit Bargaining Teams and one requesting to meet today.

The Corrections and Supervisory Teams did meet with the State yesterday, and the NMU Team and the State are meeting right now to determine if the terms and conditions contained in the fact-finder's report are agreeable, or even negotiable. All Teams are waiting for the completion of today's meeting between the NMU Bargaining Team and State negotiators before meeting to discuss a possible unified strategy to move forward, depending on the outcome of this week's meetings. Remember, if the Teams cannot come to an agreement with the State, both sides will be forced in front of the Vermont Labor Relations Board to argue their case.

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

### **VSEA Supporters Hold Solidarity Event At State House**

Heading into meetings this week with the State on a new and fair contract, the spirits of VSEA Bargaining Team members were lifted by a strong show of support on March 16 from labor groups and labor-friendly groups across Vermont. At a press conference at the State House, representatives from all the groups publicly declared their solidarity with VSEA members and your fight for a fair contract. VSEA thanks all the folks who came out to participate in the event and show solidarity with state workers at a particularly pivotal time in the bargaining process.

The Vermont NEA issued a really nice press statement of solidarity with VSEA members on March 16. [Click here to read what it said.](#)

### **New \$35 Million Hole In State Budget**

[VTDigger reports on March 15](#) that Vermont lawmakers will be scrambling again this year to find \$35 million in new revenue to balance the budget. This is an unanticipated budget hole, primarily due to lawmakers rejecting certain pieces of the State's budget proposal. This is an especially tough pill to swallow when you consider that the State built no money into its budget for state employee wage and benefit enhancements, so if VSEA Bargaining Teams are able to negotiate a deal, the money to fund the contracts will also need to be found. But VSEA members who attended your union's State House Day on February 25 are reminding that House Speaker Shap Smith told a large contingent of state employees that he was aware of the State's omission and that he would be "keeping an eye on the budget as it nears its vote in committee" to try to make sure some money was in there.

VSEA members and the union's legislative team will be watching the budget debate closely in the next few weeks and months, hoping that cuts to public services don't once again become the primary vehicle to fund Vermont's annual budget holes.

There are alternatives. Just ask the [VT Blue Ribbon Tax Commission](#) or the [Public Assets Institute](#).

## ***Free Press Reports On Proposed Work Camp Closure***

[The Free Press published a story on March 14](#) about the State's proposal to save \$2 million by closing the Work Camp in St. Johnsbury. As the paper reports, the expected \$2 million in savings will really only be a \$1 million because you have to send the 56 inmates at the Work Camp to an out-of-state, for-profit private prison in Michigan.

VSEA member Gary Guyer is the Work Camp's supervisor, and he is quoted in the piece, questioning some people's thinking that there is no longer a need for work camps.

"I wanted to ask [these people] what magic ball [they are] looking into, because as far as I'm concerned when it comes to seeing the future, it's nothing but a snow globe," he says. Guyer also laments the ramifications of stopping the vocational rehabilitation being offered at the Work Camp, reminding that "[We're] teaching them life skills that they haven't been taught, and it's nice to see these guys progress."

In the story, Suzi Wizowaty, the executive director of Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform (which fights the State's use of private prisons) joins Guyer to oppose the State's proposal.

"The work camps are the best part of corrections," Wizowaty says. "The idea that we would close the work camp and send more people to a private prison -- it's going from the best to the worst."

The story includes a list of alternatives that are being discussed, including:

- St. Johnsbury Police Chief Clem Hood wants the State to consider filling the beds with some non-violent offenders in the community who seem to need more support to stay out of trouble. "What once used to populate the work camp is now living out in the community, and we're dealing with those folks," Hood says;
- The DOC has considered loosening the Work Camp eligibility criteria so that more of Vermont's prison inmates would qualify. The State could allow people convicted of arson or caught with contraband to join a work crew, for example. But the DOC has yet to find a reasonable eligibility standard to fill 56 additional beds;
- Vermont could save more money (\$1,263,192) by using the beds for inmates with felony convictions or inmates who need medication-assisted drug treatment, who would not participate in work crews. But this plan requires approval from the Legislature and a new agreement with the town of St. Johnsbury.

The House Appropriations Committee and the House Corrections and Institutions Committee are trying to find a solution for the empty space that works for everyone, including the local community.

## **VSEA NEK/St. Johnsbury Chapter Places "Save The Work Camp" Ad In Local Paper**

In response to the State's proposal to save money by closing the Work Camp in St. Johnsbury, NEK/St. Johnsbury Chapter President Ellen Hinman worked with VSEA to produce a half-page ad to support keeping the facility open. The ad also urges Vermonters, especially those in St. Johnsbury, to call the Governor and tell him to drop this ill-advised proposal.

"This proposal doesn't make good economic sense," explains Hinman. "So our Chapter wanted to do something to try to educate the local community about how this proposal will take more good-paying jobs out of the Northeast Kingdom and could make it so the State has to send 50 or more offenders off to for-profit, out-of-state prisons, probably at a greater cost to the taxpayer. Worse, the rehabilitation and work skills being provided to offenders at the Work Camp will be hard for Vermont to replace."

[Click here to view the ad.](#)

## **Eight Private, Out-Of-State Firms Bid To Take Over State's Risk Management Division Services. Workers Say, "Keep It Local!"**

Yesterday, BGS' Purchasing Division unsealed the bids from eight private, for-profit companies who want to take over workers' comp, liability, etc. services from the State's Risk Management Division. The State proposed cutting the Division and its dozen-plus workers as part of its budget package. As WIA readers hopefully know, VSEA members in the Division have been fighting back for months now at the State House, and now they will be able to openly question why lawmakers would want to contract these services to an out-of-state firm, driven by profit. Looking at the list of bidders, none are based here in Vermont, so taxpayer dollars could now go to:

- Sedgwick Claims Management Services (HQ in Memphis TN);
- Gallagher Bassett Services (HQ in Tucson, AZ);
- The Lawson Group (HQ in Concord, NH);
- CorVel Enterprise Co. (No Vermont Office Listed);
- Helmsman Management Services (HQ in Boston, MA);
- PMA Management Corporation of New England (HQ in Blue Bell, PA);
- Cross Insurance TPA (HQ in New Gloucester, ME); and
- FutureComp & York Risk Services (HQ in Parsippany, NJ)

“One of the primary messages our Risk Management workers are delivering is that they are Vermonters serving Vermonters, but equally important, they are state employees serving state employees,” says VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson. “They know the nature of all state work, as well as the state worksites, which is huge. Then there’s the question of why Vermont would want to send taxpayer dollars to New Jersey, Arizona or anywhere else outside our state. There’s more than 100 years of experience in this small office, and now we just want to throw all that away to take a chance on an unproven entity from Arizona or Massachusetts? It makes zero sense.”

VSEA is asking members to call or message your lawmakers to ask them to keep the State's Risk Management Division local and State-run. Thanks!

## **Local Morrisville Businessman's Commentary Blasts DCF Leadership, While Defending Frontline Workers**

A commentary penned by Morrisville businessman Caleb Magoon appeared in the March 17 *Stowe Reporter*, and the piece is very tough on DCF leadership but very compassionate about the nature of DCF work and the frontline workers who provide the department's critical services. Here is an excerpt from Magoon's commentary, which is titled "State Agency Needs a Makeover. Poor Leadership, Stress Hurt Department for Children and Families.”

*“Despite the difficulty of the job, most social workers understand that the work they do is extremely important to the social good, and they are in it for the right reasons. Unfortunately, the unavoidable psychological stress is compounded by a destructive and unsupportive management culture that devalues social workers’ ideas and opinions.*

*Comments and suggestions from the ground-level workers are not encouraged, not taken seriously, and often ridiculed. The result is a crushing blow to employee morale. Why would anyone want to do a dangerous and profoundly upsetting job when they don't even feel respected by their own bosses?*

*Making matters worse is what every social worker knows: When something terrible happens, the blame never rolls uphill.”*

[Read Full Commentary Here](#)

## **Brattleboro Chapter Meeting Monday, March 21**

VSEA Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske asked *WIA* to remind the Chapter's next meeting is Monday, March 21, at the PanAsian Restaurant on Putney Road in Brattleboro. The meeting begins at 5:00 p.m. Dinner and non-alcoholic beverages provided. Please RSVP to Robin at [rieske@sover.net](mailto:rieske@sover.net).

## **Bolton Valley Already Offering VSEA Members Deeply Discounted 2016-2017 Season Pass Rates**

Bolton Valley Ski Resort has been a participating member of the VSEA Advantage Discount Program for years, offering full-fledged VSEA members and their families discounted day and season passes.

Even though the 2015-2016 ski season isn't over quite yet, Bolton is already offering VSEA members an early-bird special deal on a 2016-2017 season pass. This is special pricing that Bolton Valley is offering on a trial basis to gauge Vermonters' interest in purchasing a pass way ahead of time if the price is deeply discounted.

Bolton is offering an adult "All-Access" season pass for \$269 to VSEA members. This is a \$230 savings per pass from last year. This price is good until October 31, 2016. Youth passes (\$159) include an added discount that Bolton will stop offering on April 4, 2016, so, if interested, book these sooner, not later.

[Click here](#) to order your pass(es) today! On the page, you'll find a list of prices and instructions to order. Members will need a promo code at the time of checkout, which will apply discounts to the full price passes. VSEA's promo code is 51VSEA.

## **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](mailto:jhenderson@vsea.org).

## **AFL-CIO Releases Results Of "National Survey Of Working Women"**

The national AFL-CIO launched its *National Survey of Working Women* last fall in an effort to gain a multi-faceted picture of American women, and yesterday the AFL-CIO released the survey results.

Here's an excerpt from an AFL-CIO press release about the survey:

*"The results of the National Survey of Working Women reflect what I have been hearing from working women all across the nation: they are working harder than ever but still can't make ends meet, too many are forced to make an impossible choice between caring for their families and providing for them, and pay discrimination makes it impossible to just break even, let alone get ahead," says Rep. Bobby Scott. "The good news is that joining a union is one of the surest ways that workers can raise their pay, and secure benefits like paid leave and fair work schedules. That's why I introduced the Workplace Action for a Growing Economy Act, to strengthen women's ability to speak up together, and to help them make*

*a better life for themselves and their families."*

*The survey revealed that 59% of women fill the role of primary breadwinner in their household and that women view healthcare costs and low wages as major barriers to their economic stability.*

*"Millions of American women are juggling work and family responsibilities and it is not getting any easier. From equal pay and an increased minimum wage, to affordable healthcare and paid leave, nearly 25,000 working women have made their voices known in this survey and spoken on the issues that can help families succeed," says Rep. Rosa DeLauro. "Now it is up to Congress to listen and to enact legislation that makes the workplace a better place for all women. We can start by passing the FAMILY Act, to guarantee paid family and medical leave for all employees, and the Healthy Families Act, to allow workers have access to job-protected paid sick days. The time to act is now. The American worker deserves nothing less."*

*In addition to being the breadwinner and financial decision maker for their families, the survey found that over 25% of women spend over 30 hours a week on caregiving activities.*

The comprehensive report can be found online [here](#).

## **VSEA Seeks Union Organizer**

VSEA is seeking an experienced Union Organizer.

Areas of Responsibility Include:

- **Leadership Development** - Identify existing leaders within VSEA and build relationships with those members through the work of building the union; Identify and recruit members to fill leadership roles within the structure of VSEA; Educate members on ways in which they can talk to their colleagues about the union, develop effective strategies to identify issues, use direct action to make workplace improvements, and staff Labor/Management Committees;
- **Support VSEA's Broader Organizational Goals and Activities** - Facilitate turnout to events, trainings and meetings; Support key legislative, political, and community and workplace actions as outlined by the VSEA Strategic Plan;
- **Identify Member Issues & Move a Plan of Action:** Meet with members to discuss current issues of importance; Work to develop and execute a clear work plan around the issues;
- **Increase Union Membership:** Demonstrate success in signing up fee payer and new employees as VSEA members while engaging union activists and leaders in the process of signing up new members; and
- **Communication with Members:** Be a frequent worksite presence in worksites, holding face-to-face conversations with VSEA leaders, activists and rank-and-file members; Provide the VSEA Communications Department with regular updates on internal and external organizing efforts; Update VSEA bulletin boards in worksites by providing activists and leaders with updated materials as often as possible.

VSEA seeks to interview dynamic candidates with a track record of commitment to the labor movement and preferably two (2) years of experience as a union or political organizer. Any applicant must have reliable transportation as daily in-state travel is expected. Interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to submit their resume and a cover letter detailing their labor or political experience to [Rstout@VSEA.org](mailto:Rstout@VSEA.org). Exceptional candidates will be scheduled for an interview.

## VSEA Seeks Administrative Assistant

The Vermont State Employees' Association is seeking an experienced Administrative Assistant.

Areas of Responsibility Include:

- Administrative support of the VSEA legal team;
- Querying employee information from the database;
- Processing grievances for the Field Team;
- General filing and document processing;
- Answering incoming calls and directing them to appropriate extensions/individuals;
- Greet and direct members and visitors coming to VSEA; help maintain the scheduling of conference rooms/meetings;
- General database administration;
- Preparation and production of membership mailings; and
- Event support for Council and Annual Meeting, as assigned by the Director of Operations.

VSEA seeks to interview dynamic candidates with a track record of commitment to the labor movement and preferably two (2) years of administrative experience conducting database queries. Interested and qualified candidates are encouraged to submit their resume and a cover letter detailing their labor movement experience to [Rstout@VSEA.org](mailto:Rstout@VSEA.org). Exceptional candidates will be scheduled for an interview.

## VSEA & State's Child & Elder Care Committee Announce Benefits To State Employees

*The VSEA/State Child and Elder Care Committee met this week at headquarters and asked WIA to announce the following programs available to state employees in the Executive Branch.*

1) **The Child Care Reimbursement Program** provides reimbursement for care supplied by a state-approved provider (separate from FSA).

- Reimbursement will be available for employees who spent at least \$300 dollars for regular, ongoing, work-related child care for children who were under 14 years of age (as of 12/31/15);
- Employee's (plus spouse's or partner's) federal taxable income (after deductions) must not exceed \$60,000;
- The application deadline for 2015 reimbursement is 4/16/16; and
- Applications and additional information are available by calling (800) 287-8322 or [click here](#).

2) **The Child Care Referral Service** provides parents of infants and children (through age 12) with assistance in locating suitable child care.

- A network of referral agencies are located throughout the state to serve your geographic area;
- Assistance with year-long and summer child care;
- Available free of cost; and
- FOR MORE INFORMATION: Contact the Child Care Resource and Referral Service at 1-800-339-3367

Additional information about these programs and their guidelines can be obtained by calling (800) 287-8322.

3) **The Elder Care Reimbursement Program** offers mini grants to help Vermont state employees with their elder care expenses.

- Reimbursement will be available for employees who spent at least \$50 for elder care for immediate family members who were aged 62 or older. The maximum reimbursement per household per year is \$500;
- Elder care items eligible for reimbursement include but are not limited to: respite care, Lifeline or similar service, home modification, ramp installation, safety bars, door widening, rental or purchase of medical equipment, transportation to medical appointment or needed medical services, housekeeping provided by a service, mileage over 50 miles (round-trip) for an appt., etc. Items not on this list will be considered by the committee. Items not eligible for reimbursement are: nursing home care, medical & dental bills, eyeglasses, hearing aids, medications and hospital bills; and
- Applications are available by calling (800) 287-8322 or [click here](#).

## **VSEA First Vice President Looking To Fill Vacant Council Seats**

VSEA First Vice President Aimee Towne asked *WIA* to remind members about several open seats on the VSEA Council. These Council seats (by departmental heading) still remain open:

Aging and Independent Living

Agriculture

Auditor of Accounts

Buildings and General Services

Children and Families

ACCD/Housing

ACCD/Economic Development

ACCD/Marketing and Tourism

Commission on Women

Criminal Justice Training Council

Education

Finance and Management

Financial Regulation

Forests and Parks

AHS/Rate Setting & Auditing

AHS/IT Unit

Labor

Library

Liquor Control

Lottery

Mental Health

ANR

Public Safety - Civilian

Public Service Board

Public Service Department

Secretary of State

Tax Department

Transportation

Transportation Agency/DMV

Treasurer's Office

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](mailto:ahudson@vsea.org).

## **Special Alert To Stewards From VSEA Labor Educator**

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

### **1) UPDATE! 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. The day will include breakout sessions and workshops by bargaining unit, department and Field territory. Breakfast and lunch will also be provided on May 20.

**New!** Folks are invited to stay overnight at the hotel on May 19, especially if you are traveling from far away. You will need to make your own room reservation by April 11. Call Best Western directly and ask for the VSEA rate for May 19. VSEA will reimburse you for the hotel stay. There will also be a group dinner on May 19.

Best Western Waterbury: 802-244-7822

Questions about the training, contact Tim Lenocho: [tlenoch@vsea.org](mailto:tlenoch@vsea.org)

Questions about hotel reservation, contact Amy Haskins: [ahaskins@vsea.org](mailto:ahaskins@vsea.org)

### **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 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 [tlenoach@vsea.org](mailto:tlenoach@vsea.org).*

**Trainings in blue are for all members.**

### **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 Brattleboro Next Week**

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

#### March 23 & 24

DCF Office  
232 Main St., Room 205  
Brattleboro  
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!**

*“What we need overall is to find ways to retain our social workers. Changes must be made to encourage healthier, happier workers. Social workers need to be helped to cope with the traumatic stresses of the job. The issues with the DCF organizational culture must be addressed and changed to ensure that employees feel valued.”*

Morrisville, Vt, businessman Caleb Magoon in a commentary he penned about DCF and DCF workers that appeared in the [March 17 Stowe Reporter](#).

### **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.



## **Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:**

### **March 21**

Brattleboro Chapter Meeting  
Panasian Restaurant  
Putney Rd.  
Brattleboro  
5:00 p.m.

### **March 22**

Policy Committee Meeting  
VSEA HQ  
Montpelier  
9:00 a.m

### **March 23**

Steward Training: The Hostile Work Environment  
VTrans Training Center  
1716 U.S. Rte. 302  
Berlin  
9:00 a.m

### **March 23**

Meet w/VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock  
DCF Office  
232 Main St., Room 205  
Brattleboro  
Noon – 3:00 p.m.

### **March 24**

AOT Labor/Management Committee Meeting  
VSEA HQ  
Montpelier  
9:30 a.m.

### **March 24**

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

### **March 24**

Meet w/VSEA Insurance Rep. Joanne Woodcock  
DCF Office  
232 Main St., Room 205  
Brattleboro  
Noon – 3:00 p.m.

**March 25**

Steward Training 3: The Contract & Challenges In The Workplace

VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Rte. 302

Berlin

9:00 a.m

**March 25**

Budget Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

8:00 a.m

**March 25**

Deadline To Submit Bylaw Changes!

4:30 p.m.