



## WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ March 21, 2016 – March 25, 2016

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

### **Three VSEA Bargaining Units Heading To Vermont Labor Relations Board**

Details of the contract last-best-offers of the State and three VSEA Bargaining Units (Non-Management, Corrections, Supervisory) became public record on March 21, after the 20-day period for an agreement between the parties to come out of the fact-finder's report expired, forcing both sides to submit their last-best-offers to the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB).

The move to the VLRB prompted [VSEA to issue a press statement on March 22](#), and in it VSEA President Dave Bellini says:

“No one on VSEA’s side of the table wanted to be in front of the VLRB at this late stage of the negotiating process, and, honestly, we don’t need to be here, which is what’s so infuriating to a lot of VSEA members,” explained Bellini. “There was a fair deal to be made here, but the State chose to fight, rather than negotiate.”

Bellini also cautions that the longer that State drags out the process, the less time lawmakers have to budget the money needed to fund any agreements negotiated that include a wage increase. And he corrects the State’s assertion that VSEA members’ step increases in the first year of a contract would equal 1.7%. The fact finder said step increases in year one of the contract would equal more like 1%.

The VLRB has scheduled a hearing for Thursday, April 7.

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

#### **Just The Facts**

VSEA’s Facebook page featured two memes this week, each with an excerpt from the fact-finder’s report that challenges the Secretary of the Administration’s comment this week that “average Vermonters” (read: private-sector workers) “are not receiving the type of pay increase sought by the VSEA.” Johnson delivered the quote as a defense of the State’s decision to fight state employees, rather than negotiate with you.

[Click Here](#) To View The Memes & The Important Facts They Highlight

### **VSEA Files Motion With Vermont Labor Relations Board To Dismiss State’s “Last-Best-Offer”**

*VSEA issued the following press release this morning:*

The Vermont State Employees’ Association (VSEA) has filed a formal motion with the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) to dismiss the [State]’s contract “last-best-offer” to thousands of VSEA’s Non-Management, Corrections and Supervisory Unit members.

VSEA’s motion “is based on the fact that the State’s submission includes a new proposal to carve the State Police Lieutenants out of the 1% and 1.25% across-the-board increases to be paid to every other employee in all of the three VSEA units, and to pay the Lieutenants only a .5% increase per year. This new proposal introduces a substantial new dispute that would have been highly controversial even

standing on its own, but that also has the potential, if it were accepted, of fundamentally changing how wage negotiations are conducted in all three units.

“It’s almost as if the State did not study its own bargaining history with VSEA, because, if they had, they would have learned that VSEA successfully challenged a similar last-minute contract proposal alteration by the State in 1996 and won,” explains VSEA President Dave Bellini. “We’re very concerned that this newly introduced proposal to pay VSEA’s State Police Lieutenants a different, lesser, wage could open the door to multi-tiered wage and benefit packages. Not to mention, these are State Police Lieutenants, and the [State]’s proposal to give them a smaller raise is just wrong. It’s a slap in the face.”

From the motion:

“The [State’s] proposal thus amounts to an effort to reduce the pay of Lieutenants relative to other employees by slowing the rate of increase in their compensation relative to other unit members. If this is the State’s objective, it should have brought that proposal to the table and supported it with facts in fact-finding. Such a proposal would have been firmly rejected by VSEA members in all Units as an unacceptable attack on a small group of members, and as a dangerous precedent that threatens every unit member. The State should not be allowed to circumvent the bargaining process and slip this poison pill into its Last Best Offer.”

“This is an important fight because if this kind of last-minute tinkering goes unchallenged, it could lead to some very dangerous precedent,” adds Bellini. “We hope the Labor Board will agree.”

## **House Shelves Amendment To Allocate Money To State Employee Security. Hope For Senate Action.**

Disappointing news yesterday, after the House approved a budget bill that **does not** include nearly \$2 million in State-proposed money to augment security throughout AHS and in the Judiciary. Lawmakers pulled the money from the bill because they said the State had failed to draft a concrete plan for how to spend the money.

To combat the move, VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard sent an action alert to VSEA members yesterday afternoon that included this quote:

“While VSEA shares lawmakers’ frustration that the [State] could not produce a clear plan for how to put this money to best use, we feel strongly that there are still too many security needs throughout state government to waste this funding opportunity. VSEA members working in AHS and the Judiciary have shared their ideas for how to use the money with their respective managers, the State and lawmakers, and we hope that this money will be restored and that some security improvement ideas from frontline workers will be adopted, in lieu of a formal plan from the State. Every little bit helps, and it’s possible this money could be what is needed prevent another horrible tragedy like the senseless killing of Social Worker Lara Sobel. It needs to be back in the budget.”

Rep. Paul Poirier (P-Barre) did hear state workers’ call and introduced an amendment to put the money back in, but he, unfortunately, ended up pulling his amendment.

VSEA’s legislative team is telling *WIA* that all hope for this money being in a final budget is not lost yet because the Senate could decide to take some action, now that the bill has now moved to their body for debate and a vote.

VSEA members are urged to contact your Senators to tell them to put the \$2 million for security back in the budget.

## **Sen. Pollina Goes To Bat For Workers In State's Risk Management Division**

Last week's *WIA* post about BGS unsealing the bids of eight private, for-profit companies who want to take over workers' comp, liability, etc. services from the State's Risk Management Division caught the attention of Sen. Anthony Pollina (D-Washington), who issued a press release this week criticizing the State's desire to privatize the service.

Here's an excerpt:

*"The [State]'s plan to eliminate the...Risk Management Division is just bad policy, and will result in the loss of jobs and a weaker economy with no real benefit to the State.*

*We need to bring jobs into Vermont - not send jobs out of Vermont. There are real costs to sending jobs out of State. The proposal to outsource Risk Management makes no sense.*

*I plan to introduce legislation to stop the outsourcing of these jobs until there is a detailed analysis of the real costs and any benefits, including impacts on Vermont's economy and budget."*

Risk Management Division employees thank you for your advocacy Senator Pollina.

[Click here](#) to read Pollina's entire release.

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

## **VSEA Legislative Team Updates Now Online**

VSEA's Legislative Team has been sending bi-weekly updates on State House happenings to about 500 members, but now the updates are available for VSEA members to read online. To read one of the three updates the Team has issued to date, please [click here](#).

Please note that in order to view the updates on [www.vsea.org](http://www.vsea.org), you must first be a registered user of the site, which will grant you "member-only" status. If you are not a registered user of VSEA's website, you can [click here](#) to sign up today. If you are not a registered user, you will receive an "Access Denied" message when trying to view the updates.

## **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.

## **NLRB Passes New Rule To Make It Harder For Employers To Hide Union Busting**

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) announced its final version of a new rule on Wednesday that will require employers to acknowledge any indirect “persuading” to thwart a union organizing campaign, done for the employer by a lawyer or consultant, which the rule refers to as “contentious persuaders.”

[Huffington Politics](#) reports on March 23:

“Employers are already required to report to the federal government any direct work these consultants do on their behalf — that is, any talks or presentations the consultants personally deliver to workers. However, consultants can also advise company supervisors on what to say to workers and how to say it, thus bypassing the reporting requirements with behind-the-scenes work that doesn’t have to be disclosed.

Under the new rule, employers and their contractors will have to acknowledge any indirect “persuading” that was done and the fee structure for it. For example, if a lawyer helps a company craft a video presentation that paints unionizing as a bad idea, or drafts a speech for a manager, then both parties will have to inform the agency that they had a relationship and report how much money changed hands.”

U.S Labor Secretary Tom Perez hails the NLRB’s decision in the story, explaining that employees have a right to know who is helping shape their employer’s message during an organizing drive, and that the rule will provide them with transparency.

“Informed decisions are the best decisions,” Perez says. “This rule will pull back the curtain on the consultants who craft the employer’s message.”

Examples of activities that the rule will require reporting include training supervisors to conduct meetings about union organizing efforts; coordinating the anti-union activities of supervisors; and drafting or providing speeches to oppose union organizing. “Identifying employees for disciplinary action, reward or other targeting” will also require disclosure, a Labor Department [fact sheet](#) said.

## **New This Week To The VSEA Advantage Discount Program**

VSEA’s Advantage Discount Program is pleased to welcome:

Springfield SNAP Fitness  
363 River St.  
Springfield  
Phone: 802-886-2407  
Email: [springfieldvt@snapfitness.com](mailto:springfieldvt@snapfitness.com)  
[Website](#)

*5% Discount On Membership Dues. Half-Price “Standard” Enrollment Fee.*

## 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: 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

### **Quote Of The Week!**

*"We asked the State to sit down and try to reach agreement, working with the fact finder's report, but they decided to play politics for reasons no one was able to explain to VSEA negotiators and Teams. It felt mean-spirited."*

VSEA President Dave Bellini in a press statement earlier this week about the State's decision to fight with bargaining units, rather than negotiate.



## **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](mailto:gnaylor@vsea.org) or call her at 223-5247.

## **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

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:**

#### **March 30**

Steward Training: Investigations & Working w/DHR

VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Rte. 302

Berlin

9:00 a.m

#### **March 30**

VSCSF Executive Board Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

9:30 a.m.