



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ April 11 – April 15, 2016

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VSEA To Conduct Gubernatorial Straw Polls

In order to provide your VSEA Board of Trustees with better insight on how VSEA members feel about all the declared candidates for Governor in 2016, the union's Legislative Committee will be conducting two electronic straw polls for members to participate in; one before the primary election and another before the general election. The Board of Trustees governs VSEA's political process, so input to the body from as many members as possible is very important.

IMPORTANT!! In order for a member to participate in the straw polls, VSEA must have an updated home email address for the member. VSEA cannot send emails of a political nature, such as the straw poll announcement, to state email addresses. If you are unsure, or don't remember ever providing VSEA with your home email, please take time today to submit your name and home email address to VSEA@VSEA.org (please write "Home Email" in the subject space) To ensure you can vote, VSEA need this information no later than May 20, 2016.

The first electronic straw poll will be conducted in early June. Keep an eye on *WIA* for updates, but for now, send us those home email addresses.

VSEA & State Appear Before Labor Board. 30-Day Wait Begins.

Representatives of VSEA's Non-Management, Corrections and Supervisory Unit Bargaining Teams made a strong case on April 7 for a fair contract for state employees, appearing before the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) along with representatives for the State of Vermont, who continued to play hardball, arguing against most of the Teams' contract proposals, including a fair wage increase.

The VLRB now has 30 days to thoroughly review both sides' proposals, as well as the comprehensive fact-finder's report, to determine the terms and conditions of the contract that the VLRB will eventually impose on state employees.

VT Digger had the wherewithal to place a reporter in the hearing room and [published a story about the proceedings on April 8](#), but, because the arguments can sometimes be hard for the layperson to follow, some facts were lost in translation. This prompted VSEA retiree Kathy Callaghan to post a lengthy comment to the story, which read, as follows:

"Several points of clarification are needed here:

There is a general misconception that "step increases" in the State's pay system are given to all union employees along with a cost of living increase. That is incorrect. All union employees receive a cost-of-living increase if one is negotiated but only certain union employees are eligible for a "step" increase.' It is not a double dip for all employees as the article implies.

Another popular misconception is that union employees always get a pay increase. That is also not true. As a former state employee, I took a -3% pay cut for two years running. The VSEA agreed to this to help the state during the 2008 economic downturn. State employees did their part. That income was never made up.

Another misconception is that union employees are vastly overpaid. That is also not true. The independent fact finder, who was hired by both the state and the VSEA has found that union employees are in fact not overpaid and that the increases they are seeking are justified.

“[The State’s lead negotiator Joe]McNeil said that the state considers there to be ‘no justification, no compelling reason’ to increase state worker salaries to the degree proposed by the union.

That is very interesting, as the [State] has seen fit to richly reward its NON union employees, at levels far exceeding what the union is requesting.

Through a public records request, VSEA obtained from the [State] a 28-page single spaced list of 791 NON union state employees who received “Lump Sum Merit Bonuses” in 2015. These bonuses are in addition to their regular salaries, and range from the hundreds of dollars to the high thousands of dollars – \$1,000, \$1,500, \$2,000, \$2,500, \$4,000.

In addition, some of the bonuses were percentages of pay, ranging from a 2% of pay bonus all the way to 7% of pay as a merit bonus on top of regular salary. Salary levels are also included in the report. Several examples of merit pay bonuses include: 7% of pay for someone making \$48.63/hr; 5% of pay for a person at \$35.68/hr; and 6% for someone making \$30.98/hr.

One wonders what the “compelling reasons and justifications” for these merit bonuses can possibly be, if the union employees request is so outrageous? It appears that the pot is calling the kettle black. Me thinks the [State] doth protest too much.

The public records request that Callaghan refers to found the following:

The State awarded 821 bonuses from January 2015 to March 2016, totaling approximately \$600,000 (\$300,000+/exempt, \$270,000+/classified). Of the 821:

708 went to classified (employees covered under contract)
113 went to exempt (managerial employees)

Note that the bulk of the monetary awards were given to exempt employees, who made up just 13.7% of the total population to receive an award/increase. The majority of bonus money the State awarded went to exempt employees, 54% to 46%.

A total of 65 exempt state employees were awarded annual salary increases, ranging from 3% to as high as 7%. There were also 26 awarded, valued at 1% to 2%. It broke down as follows:

1% = 3 employees
2% = 23 employees
3% = 15 employees
3.6% = 1 employee
4% = 7 employees
5% = 13 employees
6% = 11 employees
6.3% = 1 employee
7% = 17 employees

Also note that the monetary award given to an exempt employee is attached to his or her annual salary for perpetuity, but all the awards given to classified employees were one-time.

Wonder if the State will now have to explain its "justification" and "compelling reasons" for awarding a chosen employee population some pretty generous pay increases.

What Happens From Here?

Because this VLRB process is such an anomaly, here's another short primer about how it works from here:

LAST BEST OFFER

Each party's last best offer (LBO) was filed with the VLRB under seal on March 21.

The VLRB held a hearing on the LBOs on April 7. Within 30 days of hearing, the VLRB shall select between the LBOs of the parties, considered in its entirety without amendment.

Should the Board find the LBOs of both parties unreasonable and likely to produce undesirable results, or likely to result in a long-lasting negative impact upon the parties' collective bargaining relationship, the Board may select the recommendation of the fact finder as to those disputed issues submitted to the Board in the LBOs.

The decision of the Board shall be final and binding. No membership ratification vote on the LBO selection, the contract will be imposed without mutual agreement, pending appropriation.

The Board shall determine the cost of the agreement selected and request the General Assembly to appropriate the amount determined to be necessary to implement the selected agreement.

FUNDING BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE VLRB IMPOSED AGREEMENT

If the General Assembly chooses to appropriate sufficient funds, the agreement shall become effective at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

If the General Assembly appropriates less than the amount requested, the terms of the agreement affected by the lesser appropriation shall be renegotiated based on the amount of the funds actually appropriated, and the agreement with the negotiated changes shall become effective at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

No portions of any agreement shall become effective separately except with mutual consent of both parties.

Gubernatorial Candidate Issues Statement Supporting VSEA Members In Contract Fight

One of the five declared candidates to be Vermont's next Governor issued a statement of support for state employees in your fight for a fair contract.

The statement read, in part:

"I stand with our hard-working state employees and members of the Vermont State Employees' Association - VSEA. I strongly encourage the Vermont Labor Board to stick to the fact-finder recommendation and support the 2% COLA adjustment in 2016 and 2.25% COLA in 2017. As governor I will work with the Legislature to fully fund this contract, and I will treat our state employees as partners, not adversaries."

"We really appreciate the support, and we're thankful for the statement," VSEA President Dave Bellini tells *WIA*. "It's nice to see a candidate who is willing to put politics to the side in order to try to do what's best for Vermonters who use public services, which is most of us, and for the people who provide them."

[Click here to read the candidate's full statement.](#)

Membership Recruitment Committee Looking To Reinvigorate VSEA Advantage Discount Program. Soliciting Member Input!

VSEA members belonging to your union's Membership Recruitment Committee are actively working to reinvigorate the VSEA Advantage Discount Program; a popular member benefit that provides state employees with special discounts to Vermont and national businesses and services.

"The Committee is really interested in hearing from members right now about what new businesses and services you would like to see added to the program, from all across Vermont," explains Membership Recruitment Committee Chair Katelyn Chase. "We want to learn more about where VSEA members shop and where you use services? We also want to find out what kinds of leisure and recreational activities you enjoy, which will let us target vendors who are offering goods and services that are important to VSEA members."

VSEA members are urged to send your ideas and thoughts to Katelyn at kchase@vsea.org. Please write "Advantage Program" in the subject line.

"The Committee is really hoping to roll out a beefed-up Advantage Program soon, so keep an eye on future *Week In Actions* for progress updates and announcements of new vendors offering discounts," adds Chase. "Thanks everyone for sending us your ideas."

Note: The VSEA Advantage Discount Program is open to all members currently paying full dues to the union. A majority of participating businesses do require state employees to present their green VSEA membership card as verification of their full-fledged union status. In the future, VSEA will be making presentation of the card mandatory in order to receive a discount. If you do not have a green membership card, and you are paying full dues to VSEA, please contact Ayla Hudson at ahudson@vsea.org to be verified and receive a card. Thank you.

Support Striking Verizon Workers!

VSEA members are being urged to sign an online petition to let Verizon CEO Lowell McAdam that you are another working American who stands with the Verizon workers in their fight for fairness. The Verizon workers belong to the Communication Workers of America (CWA), and the strike has put more than 40,000 employees on picket lines.

[Click To Sign Petition](#)

[Click To Go To Strikers' Website](#)

VSEA Begins Scheduling Election Dates In Deputy State's Attorneys' Offices Across Vermont

Just a few months after the Vermont Supreme Court voted to reverse a Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) that was preventing VSEA from organizing workers in Deputy State's Attorneys' (DSA) offices across Vermont, VSEA organizers are now scheduling election dates.

Here's an excerpt from a January 8 VSEA press release to provide some background about what happened:

[VSEA is applauding a decision by the Vermont Supreme Court to overturn a 2014 ruling by the \[VLRB\] that \[DSAs\], Victims Advocates and Secretaries in the State's Attorneys Offices cannot be organized under either the under the Municipal Labor Relations Act \(MERA\) or the State Employee Labor Relations Act \(SELRA\). "This is an important victory for VSEA and working Vermonters, as it addresses a number of significant labor law questions and allows VSEA to now organize most of the employees in State's Attorneys Offices," explained VSEA President Dave Bellini. "Under the Court's ruling, we'll have to do it on a county-by-county basis in in offices with five or more workers, but it's a start, and the Board will be meeting to discuss a plan on how best to move forward."](#)

Here are the election dates VSEA's Organizing Department has scheduled so far:

Chittenden – April 28

Franklin – May 6

Rutland – May 12

Windsor – May 13

WIA will let readers know the results, as the elections occur. Looking forward to welcoming these workers to the VSEA family!

VSEA Activist Spotlight: Suzanne Arrand

Periodically, *WIA* will profile an activist who is helping build your union and make it stronger.

Suzanne Arrand
Systems Developer II
Agency of Education - Barre

If you've attended a recent VSEA rally, State House Day or Annual Meeting, chances are you've run into Suzanne Arrand; a VSEA activist who always comes out to support her union and who is also a leader in her workplace, serving as both a Steward and Council member. In an effort to expand her union activist/advocate knowledge and skill set, Arrand decided to attend this year's popular Labor Notes conference in Chicago in early April, along with a small delegation of other VSEA members and staff.

WIA asked Arrand to share her experience with all VSEA members, and she was happy to oblige, hoping her positive experience might cause other members to think about attending next year's conference, or to get more involved with their union today.

"This was my first Labor Notes conference and I was blown away by the amazing workshops and group events," Arrand begins. "I started with the **Secrets of a Successful Organizer**, which was facilitated by Joe Fahey from the Teamsters. The workshop was about getting your co-workers inspired to participate in actions to help strengthen our unions. I even decided to buy facilitator's the book and read it because it is full of ideas and is connected to this and many of the other workshop themes. I also attended **Beating Apathy**, which was run by Jane Slaughter, a co-author of the aforementioned book. She led a panel of union activists to explain how they got co-workers to band together to solve some of their workplace problems. But one of the best workshops was **Direct Action**, where panelists spoke about stopping 'business as usual.' Some of the panelists methods were legal and some not so legal: occupations, blockades, manure dumps, etc. A lot of their ideas on disrupting sounded like fun and a way to get workers involved who wouldn't ordinarily participate."

Arrand was also impressed with the diversity she experienced in Chicago.

"Because Labor Notes participants came from all over the world, many of these events and workshops were in languages other than English," she explains. "I was very impressed with the skillful way translators were able to simultaneously translate the ideas of the participants unobtrusively. For example, I attended an excellent workshop called **Teachers Around the World Battle Privatization**, where panelists from England, Mexico and Brazil described their struggles against teacher de-professionalization and school privatization. There is a realistic danger that these struggles can happen here in the United States."

Arrand adds that a conference theme was labor history, and that one of her favorite workshops was **What We Can Learn from Labor History**.

"Toni Gilpin, a labor historian and an expert on Chicago labor history, gave a lively presentation with lots of photos from local and national labor struggles," Arrand says. "Another popular subject was

media and especially the use of film. I was able to see four excellent films with wonderful discussions with those involved with making and distributing these films. Two are already widely known, Michael Moore's **Where to Invade Next** and **Pride**, a film about a partnership between striking Welsh miners and a group of London gay activists. Two films that were lesser known: **The Hand That Feeds**, about exploited Latino workers organizing at an Upper East Side deli and **The Factory**, about auto workers in India organizing their union despite jail terms and violent oppression. The discussions before and after the screenings were inspiring even when the outcomes described in the films were not always happy."

WIA thanks Suzanne for sharing her Chicago experience, and if her excellent adventure has got you thinking about wanting to attend next year's Labor Notes conference in Chicago, send an email to vsea@vsea.org and write "Labor Notes 2017" in the subject line.

House Gov Ops Holds Hearing On PSAPs' Future

The House Government Operations Committee held a hearing (on very short notice) on April 7 to take testimony from the State, the Department of Public Safety (DPS), the Vermont 911 Emergency Board, VSEA frontline dispatchers and others after last week's surprise announcement by the 911 Board that DPS wants to close and privatize Vermont's last two remaining Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) in Williston and Rockingham.

Three of the people the Committee heard from who oppose closing the State-operated PSAPs are pictured in the photo accompanying this story. They are VSEA Dispatchers Sarah Copen and Louise Field and St. Albans Chief Gary Taylor.

VSEA's Legislative team reports that, following the hearing, some legislators are already at work on an amendment to prohibit DPS from closing the two remaining state PSAPs until first approved by the General Assembly.

Update! House Votes To Apply Brakes To 911 Privatization

The [Burlington Free Press reports on April 13](#) that the House voted 137-1 on April 12 "to require the state Department of Public Safety, which currently answers about three-quarters of Vermont's 911 calls, to continue doing so unless the Legislature decides on a new plan. Meanwhile, the House bill would create a working group to study 911 call taking. The group would include representatives from the Enhanced 911 Board, the Department of Public Safety, **the state employees union**, the Vermont Association of Chiefs of Police and others."

Does Yesterday's Terrible News About Jay Peak & Burke Now Present Opportunity For State Officials To Renegotiate The Mountain Leases & Generate New Revenue?

Remember early in 2015, when the State was threatening to cut as many as 400 workers to find money, and, at the same time, State Auditor Doug Hoffer released an audit that found that some Vermont ski operations were enjoying very lucrative lease deals?

VSEA & Sen. Tim Ashe (D/P-Chittenden) began floating the idea to renegotiate some of these leases to provide some new revenue to Vermont, and possibly prevent service and job cuts in the process. Here's what *WIA* wrote about the audit:

"Early in 2015, State Auditor Doug Hoffer released an audit that showed some of the leases the State signed with major ski resorts are outdated and that payments have declined over the years, when adjusted for inflation. This has resulted in the resorts enjoying some very lucrative deals, which has allowed them to expand and reap higher profits. In fact, Vermont's ski industry recently announced that 2015 was record breaking, with 4.67 million skiers flocking to our state's resorts.

Senator Ashe had the courage this session to pen a letter to the ski industry, asking the owners of Bromley, Okemo, Killington, Stowe, Smuggler's Notch, Burke and Jay Peak to willingly reopen lease

negotiations, even though their leases don't expire for several decades. Ashe wrote, "the ski world of the lease's origin would be unrecognizable today." Auditor Hoffer supported Ashe's effort, saying, "I don't think it's unreasonable for someone to ask the question 'are taxpayers getting a fair term?'"

So what was the ski industry's response to renegotiating their outdated leases and giving a little more to help Vermont better weather these tough economic times? A non-starter...not going to happen."

Maybe now it can, at least at Jay Peak and Burke, right?

Brattleboro Chapter President Seeks Green-Up Day Volunteers

Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske is urging VSEA members in her Chapter to help out on Green-Up Day, which is Saturday, May 7.

Rieske says there will be a VSEA table in downtown Brattleboro from 8:00 a.m. to noon, where members can pick up Green-Up Day bags, donuts and coffee. It will be located at the Restless Rooster Café, corner of Elliot and Elm Street. Wear your VSEA t-shirt (or pick one up at the table from Robin) and grab a bag to help clean up Vermont.

Rieske adds that all VSEA members should consider participating in Green-Up Day events all across Vermont. [Click here to see a list.](#)

If you have a question, please e-mail Robin at robin.rieske@vermont.gov.

World Social Forum Coming To Montreal, August 9-14

Some of the VSEA members who attended the Labor Notes conference in Chicago earlier this month learned about the 2016 World Social Forum (WSF) and asked *WIA* to share information about it with the membership.

The WSF is an annual event that brings together activists and activist groups from around the globe to learn from each other, form partnerships and strategize about the best ways to achieve common goals, especially in the areas of social, economic and environmental justice. This year's event is being hosted by Quebec's three largest labour unions, the Confédération des syndicats nationaux (Confederation of National Trade Unions), the Centrale des syndicats du Québec (Quebec House of Labour), and the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec (Quebec Federation of Labour).

Here's the intro paragraph from [the event webpage](#):

"We invite citizen's movements from around the world to make the next World Social Forum (WSF) a meeting essential for sharing our mobilizations, our resistance and for strengthening our struggles. We want the WSF in Montreal to be not only a place for sharing broad guidelines but also be a space that allows social movements to put forward political responses that can change the course of history."

The forum is being held in downtown Montreal, on the campuses of the Université du Québec à Montréal, McGill University and the CEGEP du Vieux-Montreal. Easy to get around by foot, by bike or by the Metro (subway).

Individuals and groups are invited to attend. To reserve a room(s), please [click here](#). There are separate reservation forms for individuals and for groups of 10 and more. The registration fee is \$40 per person, and you can [click here](#) for an online registration form.

California Commission Recommends Cutting Mandatory OT By 50%, Citing Worker Burnout & Cost

For years, VSEA members working at the Veterans' Home, the Vermont Psychiatric Hospital and other health care facilities across Vermont have been working with their union to educate lawmakers about the

dangers of forced, mandatory overtime to the residents and patients in their care—and to the frontline worker. This week, the [Sacramento Bee published a story](#) about a special commission California established to investigate the issue of mandatory overtime and its impact on workers and taxpayers. The Commission’s findings support what VSEA frontline workers have been telling Montpelier for years; forced overtime can have adverse ramifications, especially in health care facilities.

From the story:

“The Little Hoover Commission found that the state’s mental and health care services rely ‘so heavily on overtime as a staffing tool, that at times there are not enough volunteers to staff every shift.’ So employees were ordered to work more than 417,000 overtime hours last year. One Tennessee health administrator told the commission that forced overtime amounts to “indentured servitude.”

From the report itself:

“Not only does excess overtime take a toll on the health of state employees, it also is expensive and may leave the state vulnerable to lawsuits resulting from health care errors.”

The report recommends requiring facilities to cut overtime by 50 percent within two years eliminating mandatory overtime with few exceptions, streamlining hiring and setting up “on call” staffing.

Wikipedia defines the “Little Hoover Commission” as “an independent California state oversight agency that investigates state government operations and promotes efficiency, economy and improved service through reports, recommendations and legislative proposals.”

AOE Seeks 2017 Top Teacher Nominations

The Agency of Education (AOE) announced this week that it is looking for nominations for the 2017 Vermont Teacher of the Year. Educators and the public are invited to nominate teachers.

AOE says the state teacher of the year serves as an advocate for Vermont's teachers, students and education system. The winner also is a candidate for the National Teacher of the Year award.

Nominees must have a current Vermont teaching license, a minimum of five years teaching experience, and be employed by a Vermont public, private, or approved independent school.

The deadline for nominations is by May 31.

More information about the Vermont Teacher of the Year program is available by [clicking here](#).

What Does “Member-Driven” Mean To You? VSEA First VP Wants To Know.

VSEA First Vice President and Council Chair Aimee Towne asked *WIA* to pose a question to the membership-at-large for her. She would like to know what the term “member-driven” means to you.

“I hear people saying that VSEA is ‘member-driven,’ and I agree, but sometimes when I ask them what that means, I get all kinds of different answers,” explains Towne. “I just want to take an informal poll of our members about the term because I think the answers they give me will help guide my efforts to involve more VSEA members in our union.”

VSEA members can tell Aimee what they believe “member-driven” means by sending an email to atowne@vsea.org; subject line “Member-Driven.”

“Thanks in advance for everyone’s help,” adds Towne.

Linda Backus Award Scholarship Being Offered To College-Enrolled Children Who Are Working For Social Justice And Who Have Parents Who Belong To VSEA & Other VT Unions!

This award is presented by United Academics, the faculty union at the University of Vermont, to an undergraduate student for outstanding civic engagement in advancing economic and social justice goals. The award is named in honor of Linda Backus, former professor of education at UVM, committed union organizer, and second president of United Academics.

To be eligible, the student must have completed two years at a higher education institution--not necessarily in Vermont--and have an immediate family member who is a member of a union in Vermont.

Application deadline April 22.

[Details](#)

For more information, contact Stephanie Kaza, Chair of the UA Scholarship Committee, at skaza@uvm.edu or 802-656-0172.

Award winners will be announced by mid-May.

Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Calls For Boycott Of Nabisco

In response to recent news from Nabisco that it will be moving its OREO production from Illinois to Mexico, the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union is calling for a boycott of all Nabisco and Mondelez products.

[Boycott Nabisco Facebook Page](#)

Disturbing: GAO Determines 2/3 Of U.S. Corporations Ducked Paying Federal Taxes From 2006 To 2013

From *Yahoo News*:

“At least two-thirds of all active U.S. corporations paid nothing in federal income taxes during the 2006-12 period, despite an income-dependent statutory tax rate of 15 percent to 35 percent, the Government Accountability Office said in a recent report.

Among large, profitable entities, 19.5 percent paid nothing in federal income taxes in 2012, said the report.

The report from the nonpartisan federal auditing agency said profitable corporations were able to use tax deductions and incentives to lessen their federal tax burdens in a given year, sometimes bringing their amount paid to zero.

Profitable corporations, on average, from 2008 to 2012, paid just 14 percent of their earnings in federal income taxes.”

April 30 Is Deadline To Enroll For New Easy-Issue, Permanent Life Insurance Option

In early February, VSEA announced a new offer to members to purchase voluntary permanent life insurance through the convenience of payroll deduction and easy online enrollment. Here is a new reminder about the offer, which is being rolled out in a series of WIA announcements.

Announcement #4 – April 6 – Time Running Out To Sign Up For Affordable Purelife-Plus Life Insurance

Most people do not want to talk about death. Don't miss this chance to protect your family. The online application deadline is fast approaching. You only have until April 30, 2016 to apply online.

Have you logged in?

Enrollment Dates: 3/1/16 to 4/30/16

To enroll, [click here](#)

Login using your employee number in both the ID and password fields.

If you have any questions or need assistance with enrolling in coverage, please contact VSEA's insurance administrator, R.K. Tongue Co., at (800) 638-6353 or email info@rktongue.com.

For additional information, [click here](#).

PureLife-plus (PRFNG-NI-10) is an individual, flexible premium universal life insurance product. For details of coverage see the PureLife-plus brochure. PureLife-plus is underwritten by Texas Life Insurance Company, P.O. Box 830, Waco, TX, 76703; 1-800-283-9233 16M016-C (5) 1013 (exp0218)

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.

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.

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: tlenocho@vsea.org

Questions about hotel reservation, contact Amy Haskins: 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 Lenocho 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 tlenocho@vsea.org.

Trainings in blue are for all members.

Diversity & Solidarity For Public Sector Union Members

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

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, 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.

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.

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:

DVAHstranger):

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:

April 20

VSCSF Bargaining Team Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

8:30 a.m.

April 22

Training: Diversity & Solidarity For Public Sector Union Members

VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Route 302

Berlin

9:00 a.m.