



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ April 18 – April 22, 2016

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BREAKING: Senate Appropriations Committee Unanimously Approves Fully Funded “Pay Act,” Setting The Stage Now For Full Senate Vote

Risk Management Not Out Of The Woods

Late this afternoon, the Senate Appropriations Committee unanimously approved full funding for the “Pay Act,” or, translated, full funding for VSEA’s contract last best offer, which the VLRB ruled in favor of earlier this week.

That’s the good, now for the bad.

To meet the funding obligation, the Committee left in a proposal by the State to save \$500,000 by privatizing the Office of Risk Management; a real bone of contention that WIA has written about several times in past issues.

“This continues to be a very bad idea, and VSEA will be working very hard to prevent this privatization from ever happening, because we do believe it will lead to a reduction in services and a loss of more than one hundred years of combined experience and dedication,” says VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard. “VSEA has provided lawmakers with privatization alternatives and other ideas to stop this from happening. It’s going to be a fight, but it’s one VSEA is prepared to participate in until we are able to protect these jobs and this critical service.”

>> VSEA continues to urge its members to call the senators who represent the district where you live and urge them to fully fund your contracts.

VSEA Prevails At VLRB! Says Union’s LBO Is “More Reasonable And In The Public’s Interest.”

Rallying Cry Is Now “Fund It!”

VSEA members loudly cheered Tuesday afternoon’s news that the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) had ruled in favor of your union’s last-best contract offer, calling the offer “more reasonable and in the public interest.” It was a huge victory for state employees across Vermont, but the heavy lifting isn’t over just yet. VSEA members must now lobby lawmakers to fully fund the contract, and that effort began in earnest yesterday with an urgent request to members who live in the districts of Senate Appropriations Committee members to call and leave their member(s) a message to “fully fund our contract.”

VSEA also conducted a press conference on April 20 to highlight the VLRB decision, call for full funding and receive public statements of support for VSEA’s position from three gubernatorial

candidates, two lieutenant governor candidates and the Speaker of the House. The Speaker reminded the crowd, which included a healthy contingent of VSEA members, about his promise to state workers earlier this year during VSEA's annual State House Day event.

"I will do whatever I can as Speaker of the House to make sure that the offer, or last-best-offer, is funded fully, recognizing that the process that was chosen is the process we've gone through, and we have to respect it," Smith said. "So that is my promise to you. Promises made, promises kept."

VSEA live-steamed the press conference, and members are urged to [view it here](#) to hear for yourselves the outpouring of support there was to fund your contract.

Here is the press VSEA's event received:

Burlington Free Press: <http://bfpne.ws/1Wf8wbI>

VTDigger: <http://bit.ly/1TkYZNU>

Vermont Press Bureau: <http://bit.ly/1ND96sY>

WCAX: <http://bit.ly/210mfUE>

It looks like VSEA members will be doing a full-court press in the coming days and weeks to secure full contract funding from the General Assembly. For this reason, members are urged to keep your eyes open for VSEA legislative alerts and calls-to-arms, as the process to procure this funding is not set in stone and there will most likely be a need for member engagement and advocacy at some point. Thanks in advance for your help.

In the meantime, VSEA is urging members who are talking with their local Representatives and Senators to remind them about the VLRB's decision and ask them if they will stand and fight with state employees to secure full funding of our contract.

Call & Message Your Senators Today!

VSEA's Legislative Team put the urgent call out this morning to all VSEA members to contact the Senators who represent the district where you live to ask them to fully fund the NMU, Corrections and Supervisory contracts.

If you are unsure who your Senators are, please [click here](#) to be redirected to a page where you can search for them.

The message is simple:

"Fully fund our contract, as was recommended by the VLRB."

On weekdays, you can leave messages for your Senators by calling the Sergeant at Arms at: 802-828-2228. The Sergeant at Arms desk also can be reached toll-free at 800-322-5616.

Vets' Home Members Call In VOSHA After Management Disciplines Workers For Actions Of An Abusive Resident. Citations Issued.

It's no secret that being a frontline worker in a health care facility or nursing home can sometimes be a dangerous job, as workers must deal with all kinds of different personalities and disorders, but a recent incident of resident-on-worker abuse at the Vermont Veterans' Home (VVH) was the straw that finally broke the camel's back.

Recently, a VVH resident injured a frontline shift nurse so badly that the worker was forced to go out on workers' comp. Management's immediate response to the incident was to remove all the staff on the unit and open a misconduct investigation on each for their role in the resident acting out, including the nurse who suffered injuries. VSEA Union Representative Rachael Fields quickly filed a grievance, reminding of the numerous worker complaints filed previously about this resident and the lack of a

proper management response to the complaints. She also filed a complaint with VOSHA on behalf of members who were naturally in fear of further retaliation. Recently, VOSHA issued its findings, which supported the workers' allegations and included two citations to be issued to the VVH.

- The first citation is a 132 DI-Hazard Assessment and documentation; and
- The second is a General Duty Clause Citation (581) for "not providing safe and healthful workplace with regards to hazards that can cause serious physical harm or death." This is in regards to the Workplace Violence regulations. It is a failure to create, implement and train a workplace violence program.

Fields explains that there is a remedial process, which can reduce the level of penalty if the facility fully complies and participates in acceptable corrective action. She adds that the facility must post notice of the citations in an employee area for three working days, and that if VVH has a future complaint or repeat violation within five years; the financial penalties will be stiffer.

In response to the VOSHA investigation, VVH management issued an RFP for an Occupational Health and Safety Review of VVH's published "Policy and Programs."

"The VOSHA findings are a win for VVH members because the workers' feel they validate that the facility's safety and training protocols are inadequate, which is something VSEA members have been saying for years," says Dawn Keus, a nurse who has worked at the VVH for nearly 23 years. She adds that many members were able to talk freely with investigators thanks to having their union steward Barbara King and representative right there with them in the room.

Annual Corporate Cup Seeks Volunteers! Join The Fun.

Serious and not-so-serious runners and their assembled teams will be participating again in this year's Corporate Cup & State Agency Race in Montpelier on Thursday, May 12. In past years, many VSEA members and staff have put together dozens of running teams, but just as many VSEA members and staff have volunteered some time to help with the popular event, and it's the volunteers who event organizers tell VSEA are desperately needed now.

Corporate Cup organizers are putting the call out for volunteers to help with registration, the food tent, the water stop (mid-way thru course), course director assistants, start and finish line personnel, Elm Street course monitors, race result posters, time keeping assistants, walking judges, pre-race cone placement, and post-race baggage, tent, etc. pack up.

[Click here](#) to go to the Cup's volunteer sign-up page. If you have questions, please contact Cindy at chier@zclpc.com. Volunteer arrival times vary, but most duties require you to arrive on the State House lawn anywhere from 4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Spread the word! The Corporate Cup cannot succeed without you!

May 9 Deadline Approaching To Apply For A 2016 VSEA Scholarship!

VSEA's Scholarship & Awards Committee asked *WIA* to remind members that the deadline to apply for a 2016 VSEA scholarship award is May 9, 2016. The scholarship program is open to members and their spouses, dependents and domestic partners. The application process is easy. All it requires is for the applicant to write a couple of short essays, as well as provide a grade history, employment history, personal references and a few other things. All applications received before the May 9, 2016, deadline will be reviewed and ranked by Committee members to determine who this year's winners will be. Winners will be announced at VSEA's June Council meeting.

View and download a 2016 VSEA Scholarship application here: <http://bit.ly/1k245f4>

VSEA Policies Now Available Online

Wondering about a VSEA policy and want to look it up online? Now you can.

VSEA's website now has a page listing your union's governing policies, and members with "member-only" website access can review any or all of them by [clicking here](#).

Again, note that in order to view the policies on www.vsea.org, you must first be a registered user of the union's website, which will then 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.

This Year's "Workers' Memorial Day" (April 28) Has Special Significance For VSEA Members

Next week, on April 28, working Americans will be remembering and honoring their fallen colleagues on Workers' Memorial Day; a nationwide day of remembrance, recognizing the thousands of U.S. workers who die each year on the job and the more than 1 million people in the U.S. who are injured each year at work. The observance is traditionally held on April 28 because Congress passed the Occupational Safety and Health Act on that date in 1970.

With DCF worker Lara Sobel's tragic murder still fresh in many state employee's minds, next week's national Workers' Memorial Day takes on even greater importance to VSEA members. It's also relevant because, right now, VSEA members are at the State House trying to convince lawmakers to fund much-needed workplace and worker safety enhancements.

To learn more about the AFL-CIO's annual Workers' Memorial Day, [click here](#).

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.

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 Katelvn 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.

Bennington Chapter Meeting Is Monday, April 25

VSEA Bennington Chapter President Victoria Thorpe asked *WIA* to remind the Chapter’s next meeting is Monday, April 25, at the Bennington Free Library (upstairs) on Silver Street. The meeting begins at 5:30 p.m. Questions? Send Victoria an email at victoria.thorpe@vermont.gov.

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.

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](#)

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 noll 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.

Texas Life Insurance Online Application Period Ends April 30!

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.

Final Announcement – April 22 – Don’t miss your chance to protect your family with permanent, portable life insurance from Texas Life Insurance Company.

The online application deadline April 30, 2016!

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:

Ageing 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 Lenoach: tlenoch@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](#)

Quote Of The Week!

“You show respect and support [for state employees] by putting your money where your mouth is — funding our contracts, our retirements, making investments in safety for the hardworking Vermonters who are state employees.”

VSEA President Dave Bellini delivering a message to lawmakers during VSEA’s April 20 press conference to call on legislators to fund the NMU, Corrections and Supervisory contracts. Several high-profile candidates for office, all of whom fully supported funding the contracts, joined Bellini at the conference.

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.

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.”

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 25

Bennington Chapter Meeting
Free Library, Upstairs
Silver St.
Bennington
5:30 p.m.

April 27

Steward Training: Introduction & Basics
VTrans Training Center
1716 U.S. Route 302
Berlin
9:00 a.m.

April 27

Benefits Advisory Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
2:00 p.m.

April 28

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

April 28

Workers' Memorial Day
Observed Nationwide