



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ March 20 – March 24, 2017

Your union's weekly newsletter, *Week In Action*, is sent every Friday afternoon. *Week In Action* is the best way to stay up to date with weekly VSEA news!

> Subscribe to Week In Action Online: www.vsea.org/wia

Sign The VSEA "Respect State Employees" Petition!

VSEA activists and organizers have been circulating a petition for months that calls on the State's top official to respect and support Vermont state employees by rejecting privatization, protecting the defined benefit pension plan, enhancing on-the-job safety and security and respecting employees' right to collectively bargain. To date, hundreds of signatures have been collected but more are needed.

VSEA is conducting a big push right now to collect as many frontline worker signatures as possible. If you have yet to sign this important petition, you can do so [here](#). Thanks in advance for your support.

Progressive & Liberal Lawmakers Publicly Push Back Against Some Lawmakers' "Cuts Before Revenue Generation" Budget Mentality

In the final days of the 2017 budget debate at the State House, *Seven Days* reports on March 21 that a group of "liberal" and Progressive lawmakers held a press conference this week to announce their support for the legislature to generate some new revenue, as opposed to cutting public services and Vermont workers.

"The [legislature's] Workers' Caucus is not interested in cutting the human services budget," said Rep. Paul Poirier (I-Barre). Instead, Poirier and the others floated ideas like raising taxes on the wealthiest Vermonters, increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and capping or cutting several programs that solely benefit businesses.

"These are things we can do to address the needs of our budget," added Rep. Johannah "Joey" Donovan (D-Burlington), co-chair of the Workers' Caucus. She also suggested "nixing the Vermont Employment Growth Incentive," which offers grants to businesses that promise to create jobs, saying it would save \$4 million a year. Another \$3 million in savings, she said, could come from cutting the Department of Tourism and Marketing's budget.

Update: *VT Digger* reports on March 23 that the House Appropriations Committee is now ready to move a bill to fully address Vermont's current budget deficit

State Shopping For Private Firm To Run Secure Residential Recovery Facility

VSEA members working in the field of mental health are urged to review this copy of the "Request For Proposals" that the Department of Mental Health recently issued. It concerns finding a qualified private firm to administer a yet-to-be-built Psychiatric Secure Residential Recovery facility that will replace the state-run, "temporary psychiatric hospital" that was erected in Middlesex, post-Irene. VSEA members have staffed the temporary facility since it opened, and, needless to say, many are concerned about opening the door to any private firm and, most important, what the repercussions might be for them down the road. As one current employee tells *WIA*, "After Irene, a poor decision was made to cut a lot of experienced workers at the old State Hospital. We told legislators and the Governor that it was a big mistake, and a lot of us believe that the mental crisis Vermont is having right now could have been avoided if we had stuck with the tried and true. Now, here we go again, trying some new idea, just to save money, but at what cost to Vermonters who need qualified, experienced mental health care providers? Can a private company deliver the same level of service? I know I will be looking at this RFP closely."

Private companies have until April 14, 2017, to submit a proposal, and VSEA will be asking for a list of bidders, once available. **If you have thoughts about the RFP to share with VSEA, please send an email to VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson (dgibson@vsea.org) and write "RFP" in the subject line.** We'll also be seeking your input if a private firm is approved and a contract is then negotiated.

Note: VSEA will be keeping an eye open for any bid submitted by Correct Care Recovery Solutions, which is a spinoff of the notorious private-prison firm Corrections Corporation of America. As Cate Graziani, a community organizer at Grassroots Leadership, a California group critical of privatization told KPCC Radio in October 2016, "[CCRS is] securing these contracts by promising to treat the most people at the lowest cost. And what this results in is a dangerous practice of cutting corners, especially staff. And this is where we see incidents of abuse, neglect and death."

Private, For-Profit Firm's State Job Applicant Data Hacked. Vermont Is One Of 10 States Impacted

One of the giant pitfalls to privatizing state-run services is that Vermont and other states must depend on the private company to install the safeguards necessary to ensure the security of the firm's online functions. *VT Digger* reports on March 22 that a third-party, private, for-profit vendor called America's Joblink Alliance--which operates a nationwide web-based database called Joblink--was recently hacked. Vermont is one of 10 states using Joblink.

The *Tribune News Service* published a story about the hack's impact on Maine, which also uses the private company, and determined that the switch from state-run to private saved Maine a whopping \$48,000 a year. Is that paltry amount

really worth allowing thousands of Maine job applicants' personal information to be exposed? Or thousands of Vermont job applicants?

The Vermont Department of Labor is advising any Vermonter, including state employees, whose information was compromised to refer to this [FAQ](#) about the Joblink hack.

Note: Don't believe the hype about privatization's cost savings. Remember, Governor Shumlin said privatizing the state's Risk Management Division last year would produce 10% savings (the threshold required to be eligible by statute to privatize a service) but the savings in year one were determined to be just 7%.

Update: The March 23 Burlington Free Press reports that the scope of the hack was much larger than originally thought and it could impact as many as 180,000 Vermonters, or all who have used the JobLink service since its adoption by the State in 2003. VSEA is urging any member who is concerned to go to the DOL's informational webpage. The story reports that America's JobLink Alliance (AJLA) is setting up a toll-free hotline today.

VSEA Chapter Officers Must RSVP By Today For April 13 Training!

VSEA sent an email this week to all current Chapter Officers, reminding them to RSVP by today for the April 13 Chapter Officer training in Montpelier. The agenda features a review of Chapter structure and finances, as well as discussions about communication strategy, local member and issue organizing and worksite mapping.

Chapter Officers are asked to RSVP to VSEA Operations Director Ray Stout (rstout@vsea.org) by close of business today.

Brattleboro Chapter Meeting Rescheduled From March 29 to April 19

Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske asked *WIA* to let Chapter members know that the March 29 meeting has been postponed and is being rescheduled to Wednesday, April 19. The meeting is being held at the PanAsian Restaurant on Putney Road in Brattleboro, beginning at 4:45 p.m. Dinner is being provided!

Please RSVP to VSEA Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske by email at robin.rieske@vermont.gov.

Central Vermont Chapter Members Participating In Upcoming Climate Change Events. Inviting All VSEA Members To Join Them!

Activists belonging to VSEA's Central Vermont Chapter are casting a net to find other Chapter and VSEA members who would like to participate with them in two upcoming climate-change events, including:

- Earth Day "March for Science" – Saturday April 22 – Washington D.C.; and
- People's Climate March – Saturday, April 29 – Montpelier, Vt.

If you would be interested in marching with VSEA members at either of these events, please contact VSEA Central Vermont Chapter member Ned Swanberg for more information. You can email Ned at ned.swanberg@gmail.com. Members of the Chapter will be carrying the Chapter's banner at each event.

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; and
- 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. Exceptional candidates will be scheduled for an interview.

Reminder: VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee Sponsoring 2017 Recruitment Drive. Prizes Being Awarded!

Last fall, VSEA's Membership Recruitment Committee launched a "Membership Engagement and Recruitment Initiative" to grow the union's ranks. The Committee asked members to talk with current agency-fee payers about the benefits of full-fledged membership and why the member should make the switch. If the member decides to upgrade their membership, the recruiting member will have the satisfaction of knowing they helped their union become stronger, but, in addition, the Membership Recruitment Committee will be awarding different levels of prizes to members, based on the number of new VSEA members recruited.

Here are the guidelines to participate and be eligible for a prize:

- Whether submitting your recruited member(s) name(s) on a physical recruitment card or online, **you must include your name as the recruiter**;
- Every member who recruits a new member will have his or her name entered into a drawing for the Grand Prize. The winner's name will be drawn at VSEA's Annual Meeting in September 2017, and the winner must be present to claim the prize;
- Team entries are being accepted. Please register with Membership Recruitment Committee Chair Katelyn Chase by emailing her at kchase@vsea.org.
- Members who recruit a new member, who then agrees to join your union's political awareness committee (VTPAC) will receive an additional chance to win the Grand Prize, and
- The cut-off date for this competition is **August 30, 2017**.

Here are the different prize levels:

75 prizes awarded - \$10 gift card and a VSEA water bottle

40 prizes awarded - \$25 gift card and a VSEA hat

15 prizes awarded - \$50 gift card and a VSEA tote bag

8 prizes awarded - \$100 and a VSEA vest

1 Grand Prize - \$1200

Note: WIA is periodically reminding members about this effort until its culmination in August 2017.

Bolton Valley Already Offering VSEA Members Discounted 2017-2018 Passes

Bolton Valley (BV) Ski Resort has been a VSEA Advantage Program participant for years, offering state employees discounted season passes. It's a popular item, and while winter 2016 is not even over yet, BV is already offering VSEA members discounted 2017-2018 ski passes.

[Check out the different options and pricing here.](#)

Important! To purchase an online, discounted BV 2017-2018 pass, you must first receive a special promotional code directly from the VSEA Advantage Program. To get a promo code, contact VSEA's Susan DeVoid by email (svoid@vsea.org) or by phone at 802-223-5247. Susan is only available during normal VSEA operating hours.

After receiving your VSEA online promotional code, simply log on to www.boltonvalley.com/industry to purchase your pass(es).

Enjoy the slopes—and the discount!

Nation's CEO Pay Continues To Surge When Compared To Average Worker

A piece posted this week to *The Payoff* reports that the national AFL-CIO's watchdog group "Executive Paywatch" recently updated its [website](#) to reflect new data on the amount of pay and compensation awarded in 2015 to America's Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). The data shows that the average American CEO earned \$12.4 million in 2015 while the average worker earned just \$36,875. If you factor in just the CEOs who head publicly traded companies, the ratio of CEO to worker pay is 335 to 1, and the gap surges to 2,560 to 1 when compared to America's highest-paid CEOs.

The article notes that, "The pay divide wasn't always this stark: Back in the 1950s, the S&P 500 CEO-to-worker pay ratio was a more modest 20-to-1. But by 1980, that figure more than doubled to 42-to-1. And by 2000, it leaped to 120-to-1, *Bloomberg* reported. That has represented a big cultural shift."

10 Institutional Investment Groups Call For CEO-To-Worker Pay Ratio Disclosure

The AFL-CIO [website](#) posted a story on March 22 about 10 "institutional investors with a combined \$3 trillion in assets under management" sending a letter recently to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in support of companies disclosing their CEO-to-worker pay ratio. Investors are concerned because the new requirement had been scheduled to take effect in 2018, but the new SEC head has now agreed to open the rule up to more public comment.

"It is a shame that the SEC is reconsidering its implementation of the 'pay ratio' disclosure requirement," says AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka. "Seven years is

way too long to wait for a commonsense rule that gives investors material information and increases transparency. As shareholders, we deserve to know whether CEO pay is out of balance in comparison to what a company pays its employees.”

New Graphic Novel Introduces Young Americans To Labor Movement & Labor Activism

The [AFL-CIO NOW website](#) posted information this week about a new [graphic novel](#) titled “When The Rules Aren’t Right: 7 Time Travel Tales Of Activism.” It features the story of Emma, a typical teenager tired of her family and her chores, who goes back in time with her nana in a time machine made out of kitchen appliances and participates in parts of activist history. From the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire to international child labor activism to farm worker safety, the book focuses on the long arc of social justice.

The graphic novel’s target audience is 8 to 16 year olds.

March 25 Is Anniversary Of 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire

The website [TheProgressive](#) posted a story today to remind Americans about this Saturday’s anniversary of the infamous Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in Manhattan. The March 25, 1911, fire claimed the lives of 146 workers, many of whom were just teenage girls. Upon entering the building, investigators found locked doors and a system of hallways purposely created to funnel workers into one place so the boss could inspect their pocketbooks and whatever when they exit. The fire hose in the factory was broken, there was no sprinkler system and the water valve was rusted shut. The tragedy caused Congress to act quickly to pass stronger safety and health laws to protect American workers. It also led to the creation of the International Ladies Garment Workers’ Union.

From the story:

The Triangle Shirtwaist factory in Manhattan’s Asch building employed several hundred workers, as many as 600 by some estimates,, most of them immigrant women and girls. It was a true sweatshop: the work week was long and arduous, sometimes lasting eighty or more hours for a paycheck of \$15, equivalent to about \$5 an hour today. The Asch Building’s owners, Max Blanck and Isaac Harris, who were known as New York’s “shirtwaist kings,” subcontracted their factory space to other businesses that hired garment workers and pocketed a portion of the profits. Subcontractors paid the workers whatever rates they wanted

April 18 Deadline To Submit Bylaw Changes

The deadline to submit proposals for changes to VSEA's Master Bylaws is Tuesday, April 18, 2017. Proposals must be mailed to: Cassandra Edson, Bylaws Committee Chair, c/o VSEA Headquarters, P.O. Box 518, Montpelier, VT 05602.

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 Cassandra by email at cassandraedson@hotmail.com.

VSEA Schedules 2017 "Day At Fenway" Event For August 27

Last year, VSEA scheduled its first-ever "VSEA Day at Fenway" event, and it was a huge success. This year, VSEA will again be sponsoring a trip to Fenway, this time to see the Red Sox battle the Baltimore Orioles in a 1:05 p.m. start on Sunday, August 27. The estimated cost is \$80 per person, which includes a bus ride to and from the park, as well as a ticket to the game.

If you and your family would be interested in joining your union and fellow members at Fenway on August 27, 2017, you should contact VSEA Union Representative Bob South. You can reach Bob by email at bsouth@vsea.org or by phone at 223-5247.

VSEA Organizer's Upcoming Worksite Meetings

VSEA Organizer Tim Lenoach is personally conducting informational meetings in set workplaces on set days in four locations. He says the purpose of the meetings is to provide members with an opportunity to "join with their colleagues and VSEA staff for updates and discussion on the issues and challenges facing state employees and the impact on your working conditions and the services they provide." He adds that members are welcome to "come share their ideas and hear from co-workers on how to build a stronger union and improve public services."

Snacks and refreshments are provided.

St Johnsbury

AHS Conference Room
DOH
107 Eastern Ave.

April 11
May 9

Brattleboro

Room 148
State Office Building
232 Main Street

May 12
June 9

White River Junction

Room 170
State Office Building
118 Prospect Street

April 18
May 16
June 20

Springfield,

First Floor Conference Room
State Office Building
100 Mineral Street

April 19
May 17
June 21

VSEA Spring 2017 Training Schedule

VSEA Labor Educator Tim Lenoach asked WIA to make members aware that he has made some changes to his previously announced winter 2016 trainings schedule. Some trainings have been cancelled and the date for others has been changed (= date change).*

If you are interested in registering to attend one or more of the remaining trainings, you can do so by [clicking here](#). Please direct your training questions to Tim at tlenoch@vsea.org.

All trainings begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m.

Location may change based on worksite location of registered participants. If this happens, registered participants will be notified at least a week ahead of the training. Mileage and lunch may be reimbursed or provided.

TARGETED DEPARTMENT/BARGAINING UNIT TRAININGS

Vermont State Colleges' Stewards

VTC Campus, Randolph Center
Thursday, April 6

Judiciary Stewards

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin
Tuesday, April 11

NEW STEWARD TRAININGS

Steward 3: The Contract and Challenges in the Workplace

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin

*Thursday, March 30

Steward 2: Protecting the Contract and Building the Union

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin

*Friday, March 31

Steward 2: Protecting the Contract and Building the Union

VTrans Training Center, 1716 US Rte. 302, Berlin

Thursday, May 16

[Click here](#) to register for a training(s)!

Subscribe To VSEA Today!

VSEA's Communications Department is happy to disseminate any and all communications the leadership, Chapters, Units, and others request, however, the lists the Department currently pull from are provided to the union by the State of Vermont. VSEA's Communications Department has found the lists to be dated, incomplete and sometimes lacking key information that was entered by a VSEA staff person but later overwritten or deleted during a State data dump.

To help VSEA more effectively reach active members—and really all those members who want to know what's going on in their union—VSEA will be working hard in the coming months to collect members' emails on its own and begin to build contact lists that cannot be altered by a State download.

You can help us get started by [clicking here](#) and signing up for the VSEA communications you are interested in receiving.

Thank you in advance for subscribing. Please urge your colleagues to do the same.

Quote Of The Week!

"Public employees don't expect to get rich, but some basic respect for the important jobs they do isn't too much to ask. Instead, in too many states and localities from coast to coast—and now more than ever at the federal level—their hard work is rewarded with pettiness and scorn. Not from their neighbors, but from politicians with an agenda."

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) President Lee Saunders in a [March 23 commentary he penned for Governing.com](#), titled "An Era of Scorn for Our Government Workforce."

VSEA Legislative Updates Available Online

VSEA's Legislative Team has begun to post weekly updates to let members know what's been happening at the State House in Montpelier. To get the latest VSEA updates from under the Golden Dome, **click here**.

VSEA 2017 Scholarship Applications Now Online!

Every year, the VSEA Scholarship & Awards Committee solicits scholarship applications from VSEA members and their spouses, dependents and domestic partners. The 2017 scholarship applications are now available online, and VSEA students who are seeking financial assistance this year in the pursuit of post-secondary educational goals can download one [here](#).

Important! VSEA Moving To Electronic Balloting

When VSEA conducts its next membership vote; all members will be able to vote electronically for the first time in your union's history. **Members can still receive a ballot by U.S. Mail, but you will need to let VSEA know that this is your preference as soon as possible!** Failure to inform VSEA that you would prefer your ballot via the U.S. Mail could result in you not being able to cast a vote on important decisions that impact the VSEA membership at large.

If you want to continue to cast your vote via U.S. Mail, please send an email to vsea@vsea.org or letter to VSEA headquarters, attention "My Voting Preference", 155 State Street, Montpelier, 05602.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important notice.

What's VSEA Done For Vermont State Employees? See For Yourself

A lot has happened since the VSEA was officially recognized in 1944 as the voice for Vermont's state employee workforce, and VSEA's Communications Department has now compiled many of your union's notable victories and achievements in a new online chronological history of the VSEA.

"Thankfully, VSEA formed a special committee in the mid-eighties to put together a historical synopsis of what had happened within the union from 1944 to then, and it was a great piece for us to build from," explains VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson. "This up-to-date history will hopefully help educate more VSEA members about the fights and campaigns of past state employees, reminding them how long it actually took for workers to get to where they are today, in terms of wages, benefits and working conditions. We hope it will be a good resource and tool for members."

View VSEA's new online history timeline **here**.

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:

March 28

Benefits Advisory Committee Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

1:00 p.m.

March 31

Steward Training 2: Protecting The Contract & Building The Union

VTrans Training Center

1716 U.S. Route 302

Berlin

9:00 a.m.