



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ May 15 – May 19, 2017

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

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Controversial Budget Passes! VSEA Legislative Team Highlights What's In It For State Employees

[VTDigger reports this morning](#) that lawmakers adjourned yesterday after passing a budget that, by all reports, will be vetoed by the State. If that happens, lawmakers will reconvene at the State House in June to try again to craft a budget that the State can palate. On a separate note, Rep. Tom Stevens (D-Waterbury) issued a statement this week on a veto possibility, warning that if the State vetoes the budget and one is not in place on July 1, [the State] "is threatening to raise [Vermonters'] local property tax rates by \$400 million. That is the price [the State] would have you pay to punish our teachers for doing their job."

From the Legislative Team:

"The budget that came out the Conference Committee addresses many of the proposals outlined in the State's budget proposal, such as providing funding to enhance Vermont child care and improve our higher education system. What the lawmakers' budget doesn't include however is the State's proposal to strip Vermont teachers of their right to collectively bargain their health care with local school boards and instead throw all teachers in one statewide pool to negotiate with the State.

The budget being shopped by lawmakers does adhere to the strict fiscal parameters the State established early on in the process, meaning it keeps state spending below Vermont's economic growth and does not include any new taxes or fees."

Here is the VSEA Legislative Team's breakdown of the budget passed and how it impacts VSEA members and your services:

How did VSEA 2017 Priorities Fare?

- **Pay Act** - The FY18 Pay Act is fully funded, ensuring departments will NOT be expected to "eat" a portion of the Pay Act by absorbing the cost of the contractual 2.25% cost-of-living-adjustment scheduled for July and step increases throughout the fiscal year. Additionally, \$1.9 million has been allocated for Executive Branch reclassifications;

- **Docket Clerks**—The Judiciary reclassification for Docket Clerks, Court Officers and Court Room Operators has been fully funded, including \$324,000 for retroactive pay increases to December 15, 2016;
- **Vermont State Colleges**—A substantial 12.5%, \$3 million, increase in base funding for the Vermont State Colleges. While the increase is not the \$4 million the Colleges had requested, the appropriation will assist to shore up the institutions' troubled finances and help correct decades of underfunding. Furthermore, the budget includes \$880,000 in one-time money to assist in the merger of Lyndon and Johnson State Colleges into Northern Vermont University. The fight for increased funding for the Vermont State Colleges will continue next year; this is a significant step in the right direction.
- **New Authorized Positions**—The budget authorizes one classified Microbiologist in the Agency of Agriculture, two classified Tax Examiners in the Department of Taxes, and three limited-service Security Guards in the Department of Military. The budget also extends the position-pilot program, which allows cost-neutral conversions of contractors, temporary employees and overtime into classified positions without approval by the General Assembly, to the Department of Public Safety. The Department of Corrections budget includes the conversion of twenty-nine (29) temporary correctional officers into full-time classified correctional officers;
- **Liquor Control Privatization**—Language to preclude the State from enacting its proposed privatization of the state's Liquor Warehouse for the duration of FY18. Legislation was adopted to create a plan for the eventual merger of liquor and lottery, but this plan would still need to be approved by the Legislature;
- **Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center**—The FY18 Budget assumes that the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services will restore funding to Woodside half way through the fiscal year. If funding is not restored, language in the budget directs the Department for Children and Families to produce a report on the fiscal impact and a plan to suspend operations at Woodside after accommodations have been found for the delinquent youth currently housed there;
- **Southeast State Correctional Facility (A.K.A. Windsor Work Camp)**—The budget does NOT include the State's proposal to permanently close Southeast State Correctional Facility. However, the SESCOF will close for six months for renovations, after which the facility will be repurposed as a re-entry facility for inmates who are soon to be released into the community. The Department of Corrections will present a plan on the repurposing of Windsor by November 1, 2017. The proposal includes language for employees who work at SESCOF on or after November 1, 2017, which extends the Reduction in Force reemployment rights period beyond the contractual 2 years for these employees who have not found state employment during that period, and extends the geographic area allowing these employees to RIF solely into vacant positions at any State correctional facility that management intends to fill. The budget also provides a one-time mandatory offer of re-employment to these same employees at the repurposed facility in Windsor when it reopens;
- **Department of Labor/Agency of Commerce Merger**—Includes language to prohibit the State from merging the Department of Labor with the Agency

of Commerce and Community Development, by precluding the transfer of positions and their underlying appropriations. Legislation outside of the budget creates a study committee, composed of 7 members of the Workforce Investment Board and one member of the Labor community, that is charged with coming up with a variety of options, including the possibility of all programs staying within the DOL.

- **Vermont Life Magazine**—The budget includes language instructing the Agency of Commerce and Community Development to issue an RFP for the sale of *Vermont Life* magazine, with the goal of recouping the mounting \$3.2 million of debt the magazine owes the State's General Fund. This language was improved during the budget process to not preclude the Agency from bidding on the continued operation of *Vermont Life*, so long as the magazine operations are funded by the Agency of Commerce by FY19. It is our understanding that the State prefers the latter option;
- **Electronic Monitoring**—The budget includes authorization for the Commissioner of Corrections to establish a more robust electronic monitoring program for home detainees and offenders on home confinement. The language allows DOC to consult with the Department of State's Attorneys and Sheriffs to enter into an agreement to electronically monitor offender positioning. DOC will continue to provide enforcement for home confinement and may now also provide that enforcement for detainees in conjunction with sheriffs in some capacity; and the
- **Vermont Veteran's Home**—VVH received a \$300,000 reduction in funding. \$260,000.00 of this cut was a result of erroneous and outdated information provided by the management. The other \$40,000.00 is anticipated savings from purchasing medications through the VA.

Earlier In The Week: Lawmakers Declare Budget Impasse With State Over Teachers' Health Care!

Vermont House Speaker Mitzi Johnson (D-South Hero) and Senate Pro Tempore Tim Ashe [announced on May 17](#) that because there is no path forward to resolve a budget dispute with the State, relating to teachers' health care and their right to bargain the benefit at the local level, impasse is being declared.

"We have reached an impasse," Johnson said at a State House press conference. "We've really worked to bring as many ideas and compromises to the table as possible, and we don't have much of a negotiating partner, and that's unfortunate." [*Note: The Speaker's comment will probably ring familiar to any recent VSEA Bargaining Team member*]

Now that impasse has been declared, the Senate and House Budget Conference Committee will resume budget discussions (including Windsor Prison's future, *Vermont Life's* future and retro pay for Judicial workers) and, at some point, approve a final budget proposal to send to the State for approval or veto. If the State vetoes lawmakers' budget, which is expected due to the teachers' health care issue, the General Assembly will reconvene in June to try and pass another budget; one the State will hopefully find acceptable.

Press Generated By Impasse Announcement

[VPR](#)

[Associated Press](#)

[VTDigger](#)

[Vermont Press Bureau](#)

[Seven Days](#)

VSEA Members Join Teachers To Rally Against Erosion Of Working Vermonters' Collective Bargaining Rights

Hundreds of Vermont NEA members and their supporters, including VSEA members, conducted a spirited rally outside the State House on May 17 to send a message to lawmakers to protect working Vermonters' collective bargaining rights.

In remarks to the crowd, VTNEA President Martha Allen blasted the State and lawmakers for putting forth a proposal that was a non-starter from the get-go. She also made reference to the State's actions mirroring those of anti-union Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker.

"The [State] and [its] allies see this issue as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to take power away from working people in this state, and in particular, to take power away from working women," Allen said.

Press On NEA Rally

[VTDigger](#)

[WPTZ](#)

[View VSEA Photos From VTNEA Rally](#)

***Times Argus* Editorial On Teachers' Fight Is Best Explanation Of What Is Really Going On Here**

The *Times Argus* published an editorial on May 16 titled "Budget Impasse" that provides a pretty good overview of what's really going on in Montpelier with respect to the State and teachers' health care benefits.

Here's an excerpt:

"...a downward spiral of wages and benefits hurts everyone. Teachers are trying to maintain ordinary middle-class lives. They are hard-working professionals who don't enjoy deluxe salaries and benefits. Their health care packages are going to be reduced next year whether the state steps in or not. What [the State's] proposal represents is an initial grab onto the teachers' contracts, based on the mistaken notion that it is the state's job to get school spending under control."

Senator Sanders Weighs In On Teachers' Collective Bargaining Rights

Senator Bernie Sanders posted to his Facebook page yesterday, blasting the State's attempt to strip Vermont teachers of their right to bargain health care with their local school boards. Sanders' statement reflects the view of thousands of working Vermonters who are proud of our state and what we have built here, in terms of quality educations for our kids and quality public services for all Vermonters.

Thank you Senator Sanders! Glad to have you in the fight!

Public Assets Paul Cillo Blasts State's Budgeting Approach In Commentary

The Vermont Public Assets' Institute's Paul Cillo published a commentary this week entitled "[More State Control Is Not The Answer](#)," and, in it, he blasts the State's last-minute gamesmanship with respect to the future of teachers' health care and their right to bargain for it.

Here's an excerpt:

"The [State]'s simplistic and unnecessary proposal has created chaos in Montpelier and put the Legislature two weeks beyond its scheduled adjournment. The [State] has provided little information about how this hastily drawn plan, which would upset long-established labor law, would work. A [seven-page memo](#) by Legislative Council lawyers lays out myriad problems with and unanswered questions about the proposal."

VSEA Mourns Death Of DMV Member In Crash

VSEA is sending heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and co-workers of Montpelier DMV employee Claudia Pelkey, who was tragically killed in an automobile accident on May 18 in Barre. Pelkey was a 24-year state employee and a consistent supporter of VSEA campaigns to win a fair contract and for the State to treat public employees fairly.

State Employees Work Mother's Day Weekend To Ensure Vermont's Internet Safety. Thanks!

[WCAX reports on May 15](#) that state employees were on the job throughout the Mother's Day weekend to ensure state government IT networks were not vulnerable to—or already infected with—a computer virus that was part of a large-scale, well-publicized, May 11 worldwide cyber attack.

So far, so good, and VSEA knows it's due in large part due to the knowledge and experience of so many dedicated Vermont state employees and VSEA members. Thank you for safeguarding our state's valuable data and protecting Vermonters' privacy.

Register Today For A Future VSEA "Steward Summit"

In an effort to better educate frontline worksite Stewards about their role in VSEA, as well as provide them with enhancements to their existing skill set, VSEA's Field Department this week began hosting a series of "Steward Summits" across Vermont.

VSEA Stewards are learning the latest developments relating to contract enforcement and receiving an overview of the budget, safety and health and other challenges that lie ahead for state employees. Stewards attending are being asked to immediately help out by taking some of what they learn back to the worksite to educate their colleagues.

Three, six-hour trainings remain, and every current VSEA Steward is required to attend one session.

Future Steward Summits (all 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.) are scheduled for:

August 18 – Best Western, 45 Blush Hill Road, Waterbury

October 20 – Hotel Coolidge, 39 South Main St., White River Junction

November 3 – Holiday Inn, 476 Holiday Drive, Rutland

Register For Steward Summit on VSEA.org

VSEA's Revitalized Advantage Program Adds Vendor—Paquin Auto!

Last week, VSEA launched a new and improved Advantage Discount Program that provides VSEA members with savings from businesses across Vermont but also from across the nation.

This week, the Program added Bert Paquin Auto in St. Albans. Matt from the dealership says VSEA members can enjoy a 1% over invoice deal or a free winter pothole alignment check along with a Vermont state inspection (\$39.95).

Here's more information about the new and improved VSEA Advantage Discount Program:

GET EXCLUSIVE OFFERS, DISCOUNTS & MORE

It's free, just for being a Vermont State Employees' Association PerksConnect member!

SIGN UP ON THE WEB FOR EXCLUSIVE DISCOUNTS

1. Go to VSEA.org and login to your VSEA account. Don't have an account? VSEA Members can [sign up for a free account here!](#)
2. Once you have logged in click the "My Account" link in the "Quick Links" menu on the top left hand side of VSEA.org.
3. On this page, find the headline, "VSEA Advantage Discount Program" and click the link labeled "Click to login"
4. Select a category and start saving!

Present your VSEA union card, mobile device or printed coupons and offers at participating businesses and receive immediate discounts.

Receive offers and access through direct Perks relationships with:

- Local discounts
- National deals
- Discounted gift cards
- Discounted travel
- Cashback mall

Don't see what you are looking for?

Request a merchant by filling out the [Vendor Information form here](#). Please note submissions are subject to approval.

Questions? Feel free to email vsea@vsea.org

Bennington Chapter Still Seeking Volunteers For May 20 Youth Appreciation Day Event

VSEA Bennington Chapter President Victoria Thorpe is still actively looking for members to help her staff a craft tent the Chapter is hosting tomorrow at a Youth Appreciation Day event being held in Willow Park's Upper Pavilion. This free community event begins a noon and goes until 4:00 p.m.

Any VSEA member who would like to help Victoria staff the Chapter's craft tent should email her at vthorpevsea@gmail.com or call her at 802-753-6485.

F&W Reminds To “Watch Out For Turtles!”

Vermont Fish & Wildlife issued a [press release on May 15](#), reminding Vermonters that springtime means “turtles are on the move.”

“Turtles often cross roads as they search for a nest site,” says Steve Parren, a 30-year-plus biologist for the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. “They are a slow-moving animal in today’s fast-paced world, so they have a tough time making it safely across the road. Turtles grow slowly and live a long time, so losing a mature breeding female is a huge loss to the turtle population.”

The release continues, “Turtle nesting activity peaks from late May through June. At this time of year, drivers are urged to keep an eye out for turtles in the road, especially when driving near ponds and wetlands.”

It’s VSEA Election Season

It’s election season, so, next week, VSEA will be emailing members with a link where 2017 candidate petitions can be found. Members simply download a petition, collect the required signatures and then submit the petition to VSEA to place your name into nomination for one of the following union positions up for election in 2017:

Officers – Petitions due back to VSEA by 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 11

President
First Vice President
Second Vice President
Clerk
Treasurer

Board of Trustees - Petitions due back to VSEA by 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, June 1

Supervisory Unit Trustee
Corrections Unit Trustee
Defender General/Housing Authority Trustee
District 4 Trustee (Burlington)

Note: VSEA candidates for all positions are required to submit a petition bearing no fewer than 25 VSEA members’ names, signatures and employee number.

If Searching For Child Care, Don’t Forget This Important Resource For State Employees

Longtime VSEA member, now retiree, Dave Clark has served on VSEA’s Child and Elder Care Committee for many years, and he recently asked *WIA* to remind state employees about an important child-care resource that is currently available to them.

“The Committee has noticed a recent decline in employees’ usage of the valuable

child-care resources available to them, so we asked *WIA* to help us remind VSEA members about what is available,” explains Clark.

VSEA members can click [here](#) to learn more about the Committee’s “Child-Care Referral Service” and other child-care resources for state employees, including possible child-care reimbursement to qualifying employees.

Non-Management Unit Sick Leave Bank Teetering On Bankruptcy! VSEA Members Urged To Contribute

Donations Being Accepted April 1 To June 30

VSEA member Dawn Carrillo staffs the Non-Management Unit Sick Leave Bank, and she is again asking *WIA* to sound the alarm that the bank is nearly depleted of hours. She is also announcing that NMU members can donate a few hours to your Unit’s sick leave bank from **April 1 to June 30, 2017**.

“Just donating an hour of your time can mean the world to a fellow employee,” reads a new flyer DHR is circulating. It also informs state employees that they can **donate any amount of annual- or personal-leave time** to the NMU Sick Leave Bank. “Know that you are performing a wonderful service by helping your friends and fellow employees, who, along with their families, are struggling due to serious health issues,” the flyer concludes.

[VSEA members interested in donating some much-needed time to the NMU, Corrections and Supervisory Sick Leave Banks can find a donation form here.](#)

“I want to thank every member for considering a donation to your Unit sick leave bank,” says VSEA President Dave Bellini. “Even if you only donate one hour to the bank, these one-hour donations add up. It’s so worthwhile because your donation is going to help a fellow state employee who is battling a serious illness.”

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.

VSEA Organizer's Upcoming Worksite Meetings

VSEA Organizers are conducting informational meetings in set workplaces on set days in four locations. They say 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." They add 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.

Brattleboro

Room 148
State Office Building
232 Main Street

June 9

White River Junction

Room 170
State Office Building
118 Prospect Street

June 20

Continued...

Springfield,

First Floor Conference Room
State Office Building
100 Mineral Street

June 21

Lamoille (Morrisville)

AHS Conference Room
State Office Building
63 Professional Dr.

June 15

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 visiting, VSEA.org/subscribe 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!

"I'm proud that the federal government provides affordable health care to the nurses who care for our veterans and a modest pension to the Border Patrol agents who risk their lives to keep drug runners and terrorists out of our country. If more private-sector employers followed the government's model, millions more workers would make enough to care for themselves and their families, have access to affordable and quality health care, and be able to save for retirement. Instead, many full-time workers must rely on public assistance programs like food stamps, Medicaid, and subsidized housing just to survive – while corporate executives and shareholders earn record profits."

American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) President [J. David Cox, defending the right of federal government employees to unionize and collectively bargain.](#)

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 at VSEA.org

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:

May 25

Special Events Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.

May 25

VSEA Organizer's Worksite Meeting
Vermont Technical College
Maintenance Facility Break Room
Randolph Center
12:00 p.m.

May 25

Retirees' Chapter Executive Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.