



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ August 7 – August 11, 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!

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

Link To Your Online VSEA Officer Election Ballot Coming To Your Inbox August 14!

Link Being Emailed To Your Work & Home Email, If Applicable

VSEA members are being urged to watch your email inboxes on August 14 for an important email that will contain a link to your official online ballot to vote in the 2017 VSEA Officer election. If VSEA has your correct home email address, you will receive the ballot link both at home and work.

The subject line of this important August 14 email will read "VSEA Officer Election 2017."

The body of the email will look like this:

Hello Test Voter,

You are registered to vote in the Officer Election 2017. This ballot ends at 2017-09-04 16:30 US/Eastern.

To vote, please visit: PROVIDED IN EMAIL

Then enter:

Elector ID - PROVIDED IN EMAIL

Password - PROVIDED IN EMAIL

Or follow this link to access the ballot directly: PROVIDED IN EMAIL

Regards,
Vermont State Employees' Association

VSEA appreciates your attention to this email and thanks you in advance for participating in this important officer election. We are confident this new online ballot system will prompt an even greater number of VSEA members to cast their votes.

Update Your Contact Information Here!

Special Events Committee Extends VSEA Annual Meeting Registration To August 22!

To allow additional VSEA members time to register to attend VSEA's Annual Meeting on September 9 at the Stoweflake Resort in Stowe, the Special Events Committee decided this week to move the registration deadline from August 8 to August 22.

This year's meeting, your union's 73rd, is an important one, as it's being held just after a new round of bargaining is scheduled to start with the State and in advance of October's expected federal budget cuts, which could adversely impact many public services. Members attending Annual Meeting will also be the first to hear the results of the officer elections that VSEA will be conducting in the coming weeks.

Friday night, September 8, there is a dinner banquet followed by an ADULTS ONLY dance - "**Flashback to the 50's & 60's**". Members are urged to come dressed in their best 50's or 60's attire and dance to the music of DJ, Allen Brown. Allen is a former VSEA member and AOT Employee. Prizes will be awarded for the best 50's and 60's costume. Have your picture taken in the photo booth by Emile.

VSEA members can register online at VSEA.org.

VSEA Emails Electronic Annual Meeting WARN

In advance of VSEA's 73rd Annual Meeting on Saturday, September 9, at Stoweflake Resort in Stowe, VSEA, on August 10, emailed every member an electronic version of the Annual Meeting's official WARN.

A hard copy of the VSEA WARN is also being mailed to every member's home address, via U.S. Mail, and should be arriving soon in members' mailboxes.

Please take some time to review the candidate profiles and proposed budget and bylaw changes included in the WARN. Also, all members will be receiving an email ballot on August 14 for you to cast your vote in VSEA's officer elections, so please familiarize yourself with the members who are running and their positions, goals, etc. so you can cast an educated vote.

Note: VSEA's Special Events Committee has extended the Annual Meeting registration deadline until August 22. [Register Here!](#)

ERN Committee Declares Winners In Three District VSEA Board Of Trustees' Elections

Members of VSEA's Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee were at headquarters on Monday to count the votes cast in three recent District Board of Trustees' elections.

And the winners were:

District 4 (Chittenden) – John Federico, Department of Motor Vehicles
Corrections Unit – Jonathan Bruce, Northern State Correctional Facility
Supervisory Unit – Joe Silvestri, Northern State Correctional Facility

The newly elected Board members assume their official duties on October 1, 2017.

Retirement Board Election Information

This year there will be an election for one (1) VSEA seat and one (1) VSEA alternate seat on the Vermont Employees' Retirement Board elected from the VSEA membership at our Annual Meeting. If you are interested in serving on the Vermont State Retirement Board—and wish to have your name on the printed ballot for Annual Meeting—you must submit a letter of intent to the VSEA Elections Committee no later than September 4, 2017. You should send an email to Ray Stout (rstout@vsea.org), or mail your letter to:

VSEA Elections Committee
VSEA Headquarters
155 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Special Note: VSEA asks that interested candidates consider if they really have the ability to dedicate the time needed to fulfill the role of this position. For more information about the position, please contact Ray Stout at VSEA HQ, 223-5247. If you cannot ensure your attendance at the Retirement Board meetings, and fulfill the other requirements (including outside reading, conference calls, workshops, etc.), you may want to reconsider applying for this role.

VPR Reports On Windsor Prison's Limbo Status

[VPR aired a story on August 3](#) that reiterated much of what had been reported in a [July 31 Valley News article](#), which is mainly that whatever happens to the Windsor facility, much of the decision will be based on a report that the DOC is preparing for lawmakers right now for November delivery.

DOC Commissioner Lisa Menard is featured in the VPR story.

VSEA DOC Members Start Fund To Help A Colleague In Need

VSEA Corrections members in northeast Vermont have started a GoFundMe page for St. Albans Probation & Parole Officer Jamie Benneig, a 30-year state employee who has been diagnosed with stage 4 liver and colon cancer.

From the GFM page:

"[Jaime's] medical bills are piling up due to the cost of his treatments and he could use some help. Jamie has worked for the Department for nearly 30 years. He has always helped anyone in need. It is our time to help him. No amount is too small. Every donation is greatly appreciated. Please find it in your heart to give. Let's all do what we can to ease Jamie's financial burden."

[Donate Here!](#)

Note: VSEA is happy to help draw more attention to this very worthwhile member-driven effort to help a co-worker in need. All the best to Jaime and to his family, friends and colleagues.

State Housing Authority Worker Meets With Federal Delegation Reps

WIA recently wrote about VSEA State Housing Authority workers reaching out early to Vermont's federal Congressional delegation to voice their opposition to proposed cuts to the federal housing budget. In response, the workers were furnished with a letter from Sen. Patrick Leahy's office that spelled out the funding he is proposing to be included in the federal housing budget. The workers approved because, all told, Leahy's proposals actually translate to an increase in funding for housing.

This week, VSEA State Housing Authority Unit Chair Nate Schmechel (pictured here ???) continued his housing budget dialogue with the federal delegation, meeting in person on August 9 with representatives from Senator Leahy and Sanders' offices, as well as a representative from Rep. Peter Welch's office.

Upcoming Chapter Annual Meetings!

Waterbury Chapter - August 17

The VSEA Waterbury Chapter is holding its Annual Meeting on Thursday, August 17, at 4:50 p.m. in the State Office Building's First-Floor Conference Room, located at 100 Mineral Street in Springfield. Pizza, salad and beverages being provided!

Please RSVP in advance—or direct any questions or comments—to VSEA Waterbury Chapter President John Mangione via email at Mangioneart@comcast.net.

Springfield Chapter - August 17

The VSEA Springfield Chapter is holding its Annual Meeting on Thursday, August 17, at 4:50 p.m. at the Waterbury Congregational Church, located at 8 North Main Street in Waterbury. Food and beverages being provided!

Please RSVP in advance—or direct any questions or comments—to VSEA Springfield Chapter President Joey Holmes via email at jholmes2013@comcast.net.

Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Chapter - August 21

The VSEA Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Chapter is holding its Annual Meeting on Monday, August 21, in the Hospital's conference room, beginning at 2:00 p.m. Food and beverages are being provided.

White River Junction Chapter – August 24

The VSEA White River Junction Chapter is holding its Annual Meeting on Thursday, August 24, at 12:00 p.m. at the State Office Building, Room 170, located at 118 Prospect Street North Main Street in White River Junction. Food and beverages being provided!

Discounted 2017 Great Escape / Splashwater Kingdom Day Tickets Now Available Exclusively At VSEA HQ!

"Two parks of fun for the price of one!"
Lake George, New York

Park Open Now!

Discount Great Escape / Splashwater Kingdom tickets are now available for purchase and pick up at VSEA headquarters—and there is no service charge attached. **VSEA is not offering the online ticket purchase option this year**, but HQ will mail your tickets to you in advance, but if you choose the mailing option, please ensure you reserve far enough in advance to receive your tickets.

2017 Regular Day Tickets = \$36 each (40% savings!)

To reserve and pickup your tickets, contact VSEA Administrative Assistant Sue Devoid by email (sdevoid@vsea.org) or by phone (802-223-5247).

Next VSEA Steward Summit Is August 18. Register Today!

VSEA's Field Department continues to host a series of "Steward Summits" across Vermont this year. At the Summits, VSEA Stewards learn the latest developments relating to contract enforcement and safety and health and find out about the 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.

Here is the agenda for the August 18 summit in Waterbury at the Best Western Hotel:

8:30 a.m. – Registration & Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – Welcome & Introductions

9:30 a.m. to Noon – Grievances (Learning the Basics) or Safety & Health

1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. – Role of Steward in an Investigation or Organizing (Member Recruitment)

2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Bullying in the Workplace

Future Steward Summits (all 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.) are scheduled for:

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](#)

To Retain IT Public Employees, California Union Says "Pay State Workers More, And You Will Save In Long Run"

The August 4 *Sacramento Bee* published a story about a newly released Service Employees International Union (SEIU) report that divulges how much money

California is spending on outsourced IT projects. The report also includes SEIU's advice on how the state could save money by bringing some of the work back in house.

According to the story, "California spent \$2.5 billion on outsourced IT contracts last year. The union says that bringing the work in house could save taxpayers \$700 million a year."

"By investing in the state IT workforce, the state has the opportunity to address their reliance on costly outsourcing," SEIU Local 1000 Vice President Margarita Maldonado says in the report.

[Read Sacramento Bee Story](#)

[Read SEIU IT Report](#)

Note: The SEIU report's findings are important to Vermont, especially given the number of questionable and very expensive IT contracts the State has inked in the past decade. Vermont is also in the process of establishing a new Agency of Digital Services, and it's still unclear how much IT work will remain in house versus being farmed out to private, for-profit contractors.

States Cancelling "Tax Holidays" Because Cost Outweighs Benefit (A Point VSEA Has Repeatedly Told VT State Officials Who Still Support The Concept)

[An article posted online August 10](#) reports on how a lot of states are beginning to abandon the once-popular "tax holiday" concept that several recent Vermont Governors have also employed--against the advice of VSEA.

From the article:

"Georgia lawmakers voted this year to scrap the state's July sales tax holiday, which applied to clothes, school supplies and computers. Massachusetts, which gave up its holiday in 2016, rejected efforts to reinstate it this year in the face of a budget deficit. Republican Gov. Charlie Baker this week filed legislation to designate a tax-free weekend in August, but House and Senate leaders are opposed to the idea, so Baker's proposal is unlikely to advance.

"In Florida, Republican Gov. Rick Scott's plan to expand the sales tax holiday from three days to 10 was rebuffed by the Legislature. In Wisconsin, Republican Gov. Scott Walker's plan for a two-day holiday was scrubbed by lawmakers in favor of eliminating the personal property tax for businesses. In Oklahoma, the sales tax holiday for school clothes and shoes was on the chopping block to help close a budget deficit, but survived by one vote.

"In Georgia, retailers fought hard to keep the holiday in place. But "policymakers came around to realizing that the benefits of the sales tax holiday didn't outweigh the cost," said Wesley Tharpe, research director of the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute, a progressive group.

"Most consumers saw only modest savings at the register, Tharpe said. But the state lost out on \$42 million in taxes in fiscal 2016, according to Georgia State

University researchers."

Millennial Women Are Closing The Wage Gap

[A story posted August 7 to CNBC](#) reports that American women are still earning 20 percent less than their male counterparts, or 0.76 cents for every dollar a male earns. Women of color fare worse.

According to the story, while some researchers believe it will take women until 2152 to achieve pay equity, others feel it could happen in the next few years.

"Since 2000, one-third more women than men have graduated from college, and more women are earning graduate degrees, too," reports Fast Company, using data from a [Pew Research study](#). "Even once-male bastions such as law school are seeing the change."

"Millennial women are so outpacing men in higher education that it's inevitable they will become their generation's top earners," the article goes on to say. "With greater education comes greater wealth. At this rate, young women's wages will overtake men's by 2020."

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.

Since Start Of VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee's 2017 Drive To Sign Up New Members, 500+ State Employees Have Joined VSEA. Still Time To Participate In Drive. Prizes Being Awarded!

VSEA's Membership Recruitment Committee reports this week that since launching its "Membership Engagement and Recruitment Initiative" last fall to grow the union's ranks, more than 500 state employees have signed cards to be full-fledged VSEA members. This said, VSEA members still have until August 30 to continue to add to the 500+ new members and be eligible for different levels of prizes, based on the number of new VSEA members you recruit.

To participate, the Committee asks 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.

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

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!

"Focusing only on budget cuts is a mistake. We can look for efficiencies but there are some basic problems with the cuts-only approach; our state budget already underfunds needed services and the tax system that raises the money that funds the budget is unfair."

Washington County Senator Anthony Pollina in a column he penned, titled "Middle Class Needs Tax Reform, Not Budget Cuts" that appeared this week in the [Waterbury Record](#).

Are Required Emergency Drills Happening Where You Work?

With the recent bomb threat at the State Office Building in St. Albans, VSEA wants to find out if the State of Vermont is following BGS emergency-situation protocol where you work.

The protocol on BGS' website reads:

"All owned and leased State Office Buildings occupied by State employees will practice a minimum of (1) evacuation fire drill every year and (1) Active Shooter and hostile intruder drill at least every two years. A record of these emergency drills should be recorded in the EML by the designated ECM on the day of the drill. The Safety Committees will coordinate drills with their respective sites. The Safety Committees shall meet within (14) days after the drills to discuss, critique, and analyze the drill."

VSEA wants to know if the proper training is occurring at your workplace and when it occurred last. Also, if you are unaware of this protocol, that's not good and VSEA wants to know this as well and also where you work.

Please send an email with your input to VSEA at vsea@vsea.org. Write "Protocol Status" in the subject line.

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:

August 15

Member Appreciation Day Event
Northeast State Correctional Facility
St. Johnsbury
7:00 a.m.

August 15

NMU Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

August 15

Child & Elder Care Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.

August 15

Bennington Chapter Annual Meeting
Bennington Free Library
Upstairs
Silver St.
Bennington
5:00 p.m.

August 16

Battle Of Bennington Holiday
Most State Offices & VSEA Closed

August 17

Member Appreciation Day Event
Northern State Correctional Facility
Newport
7:00 a.m.

August 17

Springfield Chapter Annual Meeting
State Office Building
100 Mineral St.
Springfield
4:30 p.m.

August 17

Waterbury Chapter Annual Meeting
Waterbury Congregational Church
8 North Main St.
Waterbury
4:45 p.m.

August 18

Steward Summit 2
Best Western Hotel
Waterbury
9:00 a.m.

August 14

Judiciary Unit Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
10:00 a.m.

August 18

Organizer's Worksite Meeting – Newport
Orleans County Courthouse
247 Main St.
Newport
12:00 p.m.

August 18

Defensive Weapons Committee Meeting
Conference Call
12:00 p.m. – Call Begins

Advantage Program Highlight

Capitol City Kia In Montpelier is offering several exclusive deals to VSEA members for the month of August. These include:

- State Inspection for \$9.49 (inspection only, repairs extra); and

- Vehicle Detailing "Clean Slate" Package for \$84.95 (includes exterior hand wash and wax, vacuum interior, dust down the dash and wash windows, in and out.

For VSEA members interested in purchasing a new vehicle, Capitol City has a special sale running now until the end of the month. "Zero down payments, low interest rates and payments starting as low as \$89 per month. The only catch is... you must be a VSEA member to qualify and you must have a valid drivers license w/ credit approval. So all we need is a valid VSEA card; and you are ready to take advantage of this offer. No trade in required and no gimmicks."

More Information:

Service: 802-552-4374

Sales: 802-778-0445