



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ August 14 – August 18, 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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Bargaining With State Begins Anew

Seems like the ink is barely dry on the last contract negotiated by a majority of VSEA Bargaining Units, but most are already back at the bargaining table, sitting down recently with the State to begin discussing ground rules for this round of negotiations. Units at the table this year include Non-Management, Corrections, Supervisory, Defender General and the Judiciary. In preparation, VSEA Bargaining Teams have been meeting for weeks to draft and vet a host of proposals, some that will make it to the table and others that won't—for now, or ever.

VSEA members will remember that the State played some serious hardball the last round of negotiations, dragging VSEA Units to fact finding and finally forcing them in April 2016 to ask for a ruling from the Vermont Labor Relations Board that thankfully ended up favoring a many of VSEA members' contract positions and proposals.

As a new bargaining season commences, VSEA is aware that some members will want to know what's happening, the status of negotiations, etc., which is why members are urged to [save this link to view your Unit Bargaining Team members](#) and their contact information. These are the handful of elected frontline workers who take the time to ensure that all state employees are treated fairly and that your wages and benefits are protected and enhanced.

Note: If you are talking with one of your Bargaining Team members, please remember to thank them for their service to their Unit and to VSEA.

Phew... Vermont Services Spared More Cuts In State's Latest Rescission Plan To Address Budget Deficit

VSEA and its members breathed a little easier on Thursday, after the State's plan to address Vermont's latest budget deficit of \$12.6 million was made public. Thankfully, the plan does not include any new cuts to services or positions, and, [according to VT Digger](#), instead relies on a reduction in Medicaid spending, increased revenue from licenses and from the Secretary of State's office, a reallocation of some DPS money and more.

President Bellini Wants Your Cost-Savings Idea(s)!

Thankfully, Vermont's public services were spared this week, when the legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee voted to approve a State-drafted rescission plan to address a budget hole in this year's budget—without any cuts. But heading into the January 2018 session, VSEA members already know it's going to be another case of "new budget year, new budget deficit." It's a Vermont problem that refuses to go away, and our state's quality public services and many of the men and women who deliver them continue to suffer as a result.

In past deficit years, VSEA members have been asked to voluntarily submit cost-savings ideas to headquarters, in hopes that some of your ideas could be adopted and implemented, eventually generating the funds needed to save a service or jobs. In 2010, the Vermont Legislature followed VSEA's lead, passing legislation to provide cash awards to state employees whose ideas were vetted by a special committee and found to generate savings. Unfortunately, this legislation sunset in 2012, and lawmakers have not resurrected it--yet.

For this reason—and in advance of the 2018 legislative session—VSEA President Dave Bellini is again asking frontline state employees with "department- or agency-specific cost-savings ideas" to please submit them to VSEA as soon as possible. Again, President Bellini is looking for department or agency-specific ideas, and nothing "philosophical," he politely requests.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this very important request.

[**Submit Your Cost-Saving\(s\) Idea\(s\) Online At VSEA.org**](#)

Important Email Poll Being Sent Monday To NMU Members!

VSEA's Non-Management Unit Bargaining Team is sending an important email poll to all Unit members on Monday, August 21. It is a simple one-question poll about a proposal that the Team would like members to weigh in on before it is adopted or rejected.

The subject line of the email will read "Attention: Important VSEA NMU Poll Question. Response Requested."

The Team thanks all NMU members in advance for your attention to this email and for your response.

District 2 Board Seat Ballots Emailed Today!

VSEA's Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee is asking members belonging to VSEA's Waterbury or Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Chapters to look for an important District 2 election email coming to your inbox today, Friday, August 18.

This email contains a link to your ballot to vote in the election to fill the District 2 seat on the VSEA Board of Trustees. **Your vote must be cast by 4:30 p.m., Friday, September 1, 2017.**

Paper ballots are being mailed today to all VSEA District 2 members who requested them.

The newly elected D.2 Board member's term will end in September 2019.

If you are a member of the VSEA Waterbury or VSEA Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital Chapters and did not receive a District 2 ballot in your inbox, please check that it did not end up in your spam filter. If you have checked your spam filter and still cannot find your ballot, please email vsea@vsea.org with the subject line "District 2 Ballot."

Did You Receive Your Link To The VSEA Officer Election Ballot?

Link Was Emailed To Member's Work & Home Emails on August 14.

By now, all VSEA members should have received an important email that contains a link to your official online ballot to vote in the 2017 VSEA Officer election. Members should have received the ballot link in emails sent on August 14 to both home and work email, provided VSEA had the correct email addresses on file.

The subject line of the August 14 email read "VSEA Officer Election 2017."

The body of the email looked like this:

Hello 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 hopes you received your ballot and have taken some time to vote 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.

If you did not receive a ballot in your inbox, please check that it did not end up in your spam filter. If you have checked your spam filter and still cannot find your ballot, please email vsea@vsea.org with the subject line "Ballot."

Last Call! VSEA Annual Meeting Registration Ends 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

Want To Serve On The VSEA Retirement Board?

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.

Springfield Chapter Holds Annual Meeting

Pictured here are VSEA members attending the Springfield Chapter's Annual Meeting on Thursday, August 17, at the State Office Building. The Chapter Annual Meeting season is wrapping up soon, but VSEA's VPCH, White River Junction and Chittenden Chapters have yet to meet but will be doing so next week. Members belonging to these Chapters are urged to attend your meeting, much like these members did in Springfield.

Upcoming Chapter Annual Meetings!

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!

Chittenden Chapter – August 24

The VSEA Chittenden Chapter is holding its Annual Meeting on Thursday, August 24, at 5:30 p.m. at the DVHA office, located at 312 Hurricane Lane in Williston. Food and beverages being provided!

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the VSEA Chittenden Chapter President Kara Haynes; karahaynes802@gmail.com

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).

Only Two VSEA Steward Summits Remain In 2017. 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.

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

Here is the tentative agenda for the upcoming summits:

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 Online At VSEA.org](http://vsea.org) or email vsea@vsea.org

National Survey Finds Disturbing Number Of American Workers Label Their Workplace "Hostile"

From a [Santa Monica Patch story](#):

“More than one in four American Workers say they have too little time to do their job, and that complaint was most common among white-collar workers, according to a RAND statement released alongside the study. And workers say the intensity of their work frequently spills over into their family lives, with about half reporting they perform some work in their free time to meet workplace demands.

The survey also found that:

Most Americans (two-thirds) frequently work at high speeds or under tight deadlines, and one in four perceives that they have too little time to do their job. More than one-half of Americans report exposure to unpleasant and potentially hazardous working conditions, and nearly one in five American workers are exposed to a hostile or threatening social environment at work.

Four out of five American workers report that their job met at least one definition of "meaningful" always or most of the time.

The majority of Americans — eight out of 10 — have steady and predictable work throughout the year.

Nearly three-fourths of Americans report either intense or repetitive physical exertion on the job at least one-quarter of the time.

While a large proportion (62 percent) hold jobs whose tasks are typically monotonous, an overwhelming majority of American workers views "solving unforeseen problems" and "applying own ideas" as integral parts of their jobs (82 and 85 percent, respectively). Similar percentages say their jobs involve complex tasks (70 percent) and learning new things (84 percent).

Workers appear to have a certain degree of autonomy, most feel confident about their skill set and many receive social support on the job.

More than one-half (58 percent) of American workers describe their boss as supportive, and 56 percent say that they have very good friends at work. Only 38 percent of workers state that their job offers good prospects for advancement.”

Note: How does your workplace compare VSEA members?

Killjoys! North Carolina Clamps Down On State Workers Watching Monday's Solar Eclipse

[The Raleigh News & Observer is reporting](#) that it obtained a leaked memo that read, in part:

"Employees should be instructed that they may only observe the solar eclipse while on an official break from job duties and not during regular work hours," the memo says. "In addition, agencies should not encourage or endorse any solar eclipse watching events or allow employees physical access to areas that are not associated with their regular work duties in order to view the solar eclipse."

Seems a little extreme for an event that doesn't happen all that often. Hope a lot of NC state workers know when to schedule their Monday break.

Monday's eclipse is expected to pass over the southern U.S., and the next eclipse in 2024 is expected to pass right over the northeastern U.S.

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!

"It seems that we have closed the revenue downgrade of the \$12.6 million in a way that has very little impact, if no impact, on Vermonters."

Sen. Jane Kitchel (D-Caledonia County), chair of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, [commenting to VPR](#) about the committee agreeing this week to a plan that addresses Vermont's current budget deficit without resorting to cuts.

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 21

VPCH Chapter Annual Meeting
VPCH
Conference Room
Berlin
2:00 p.m.

August 22

VSEA Annual Meeting Registration Deadline
[Register Here](#)
4:30 p.m.

August 23

Defender General Unit Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.

August 23

Awards & Scholarship Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
10:00 a.m.

August 24

White River Junction Chapter Annual Meeting
State Office Building
118 Prospect St.
Room 170
White River Junction
12:00 p.m.

August 24

Chittenden Chapter Annual Meeting
DVHA
312 Hurricane Lane
Williston
5:30 p.m.