



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ August 21 – August 25, 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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State Not Yet Saying How \$5 Million Savings Will Be Achieved

[The Times Argus reports this morning](#) that the State is still “months away” from divulging how it intends to achieve \$5 million in “administrative savings” it included in the budget passed by the legislature. According to the story, the State says it will be October or November before a plan to address the placeholder language will be announced.

Needless to say, VSEA members have reason to be a little nervous when there’s talk of budget cuts, but the State says the savings will not result in “cutting programs used by Vermonters.” The State is also promoting its dialogue with frontline workers about savings, saying, “[Workers have] come up with some great ideas on how we can make Vermont more efficient in their own agencies and departments. They’re very excited about that.”

VSEA would be interested in hearing from a few of the frontline workers who have been involved in the savings discussions the State references in the article. If you participated in one of these discussions, please contact VSEA and let your union know what ideas are being talked about and what is the impact to your service. Send an email to vsea@vsea.org and write “\$5 Million Ideas” in the subject line. Your email to VSEA will be kept confidential, as will your identity. Thanks in advance.

September 4 Is Deadline To Vote In VSEA Officer Election!

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

VSEA hopes you received your ballot and have taken some time to vote in this important officer election. Thanks to your union’s new online ballot system, VSEA is already seeing a rise in the number of members who are participating in the process. **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."**

Non-Management Unit Members Urged To Vote On Proposal

VSEA's Non-Management Unit (NMU) Bargaining Team emailed an important poll question this week to all members' home and work emails. Your answer to the question will help dictate the Team's response to a particular bargaining proposal that could impact all new hires to state government, if adopted.

Thanks in advance for your attention to this important email.

VSEA Legislative Committee Surveying "Group C" Retirement Plan Members

VSEA members enrolled in the "Group C" Retirement Plan are urged to keep your eyes open for an email on Monday, August 28, from VSEA's Legislative Committee. The email will contain a link to a very short survey Group C members are being asked to complete and send back to the Committee.

VSEA's Legislative Committee is thanking Group C members in advance for completing this important survey.

August 30 Is Deadline To Participate In Membership Recruitment Committee's Engagement and Recruitment Initiative

August 30 is the deadline to participate in the VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee's 2017 "Membership Engagement and Recruitment Initiative" to grow the union's rank. As reported, since launching the campaign, more than 500 state employees have already signed cards to be full-fledged VSEA members. All members participating are 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

VSEA Members Tell It Best...

In the coming weeks and months, VSEA's Communications team hopes to visit with members who are interested in sharing their views about what it means to belong to VSEA and how getting involved and being engaged is essential and needed, especially now with the challenges that lie ahead (i.e. new round of bargaining, Supreme Court rulings, federal budget cuts, state budget cuts, etc).

On Thursday, VSEA's team was at the Vermont Air National Guard Base in South Burlington to sit down and talk with VSEA members Ed Thomas (left) and Barry Nye (right), who provide security at the Base and have nearly 60 years of combined service to Vermont between them. We'll be sharing some of their interviews with members in the coming weeks, so stay tuned. These guys had some powerful advice for any VSEA members questioning the need for unions in this day and age, and they don't mince words.

Interviews will be posted on VSEA's Facebook page and website.

VSEA Discontinuing VSEAUnite App

Since the launch of the VSEAUnite App several years ago, less than 100 VSEA members have signed up for the free service, which was intended to let members know about important happenings in a more timely way...but the App never really caught on and is not appealing to members in the way envisioned. In fact, members seem to prefer being text messaged, which is another system entirely, so VSEA's Communications Department is discontinuing the App.

"We tried this for a few years, but it never seemed to catch fire, and much of the information found on the App can be found just as easily at vsea.org," explains VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson. "One of the primary reasons for creating the App was to be able to send timely text messages to a targeted audience, but now that VSEA has other programs in house that can perform this service, the App seemed like overkill."

Gibson is reminding VSEA members to make sure their contact information is up to date with VSEA so when important text messages are sent from headquarters, you are receiving them.

[Update Contact Information Here on VSEA.org](#)

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) On 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.

Upcoming Chapter Annual Meetings!

Brattleboro Chapter - August 28

The VSEA Brattleboro Chapter is holding its Annual Meeting on Monday, August 28, at Top of the Hill Bar-b-Que on Putney Road in Brattleboro, beginning at 4:45 p.m. **Chapter President Robin Rieske is asking members who want to eat while at the meeting to contact her by Monday, 3:00 p.m., with your meal order, up to \$10 ([see menu here](#)).** Beverages being provided.

Upcoming Member Appreciation Day Events!

Brattleboro Chapter - August 31

A Member Appreciation Day event is being held Monday, August 28, at the State Office Building in Brattleboro, located at 232 Main Street, beginning at 12:00 p.m. There will be free ice cream for all who attend!

Northern State Correctional Facility - August 31

A Member Appreciation Day event is being held Thursday, August 31, at the Northern State Correctional Facility, located at 2559 Glen Road in Newport, beginning at 7:00 a.m.

Barre Chapter Offering To Help Members With Annual Meeting Costs

Barre Chapter President Sue Lafleche sent an email this week to Chapter members, informing them that the Chapter is offering to pay mileage for members traveling to and from Stowe on September 8 and 9 to attend VSEA's Annual Meeting at the Stoweflake Resort. The Chapter will also be trying to obtain some funds to help Barre members with lodging costs.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the VSEA Barre Chapter President Sue LaFleche via email: suzanne.lafleche@vermont.gov

VSEA Past President Shelley Martin Reminds About August 28 Price Increase On Senior National Park Passes

Past VSEA President and retired ANR employee Shelley Martin asked *WIA* to remind interested VSEA members that the U.S. National Park Service is raising the price of Senior passes on August 28 from \$10 to \$80.

[The website announcing the price change](#) is warning that the USGS is "experiencing a major increase in Senior pass sales" and includes the following:

"All eligible Senior pass orders placed online before 11:59 pm eastern daylight time on August 27 or mail orders postmarked on or before August 27 will be processed at the \$10 price. Lifetime Senior pass orders placed online after 11:59 pm on August 27 eastern daylight time or mail orders postmarked after August 27 will be processed at the \$80 price. Additional processing fees of \$10 apply. For more information on the price changes. [click here.](#)"

VSEA Advantage Discount Program 2017 Ski Offers Begin

Keep your eyes on *WIA* in the coming weeks and months for announcements about 2017 ski pass offers from resorts across Vermont. VSEA Administrative Assistant Sue Devoid has been working hard to bring some new resorts into the program, so VSEA skiers will see some new names and deals this year.

To begin, the VSEA Advantage Discount Program is pleased to welcome back this popular long-time program participant:

Bolton Valley

Bolton Valley is offering discounted 2017-18 Bolton Valley Access Season Passes for VSEA members, but you must obtain a "Promo Code" from headquarters to purchase one or more.

For the Promo Code, please call or email Susan DeVoid at sdevoid@vsea.org or call 802-223-5247.

Bolton Valley All-Access Season Pass Includes:

- Unlimited alpine skiing and riding;
- 100km of Nordic and backcountry skiing;
- A 20% discount on rentals, retail shop purchases, group ski and ride lessons, and lodging (includes condos, suites, or hotel rooms); and
- Sports Center membership, including access to an indoor heated pool, hot tub, and sauna

Some restrictions apply. See [website](#) for complete details.

Next Up: Sugarbush (with a tight deadline!)

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.

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](#)

New Report Details Why Unions Still Matter!

The Economic Policy Institute has released a new report on why unions are good for American workers, and it's timely, especially in advance of some serious anti-union legal challenges being brought before the U.S. Supreme Court.

VSEA members are urged to study and save this report, as well as share it with your colleagues.

Remember, there is a reason corporate America wants to severely restrict or even abolish labor unions, and it has nothing to do with looking out for the best interests of working Americans, but plenty to do with taking care of CEOs and shareholders.

Here are some of the key findings from the report (<http://bit.ly/2wILB3q>):

- Unions raise wages for union and nonunion workers alike. Union workers typically earn about 13 percent more in wages than peers with similar credentials, and the decline in unionization since 1979 depressed wages for nonunion men in the private sector by 5 percent in 2013;
- Unions help raise the wages of women and black and Hispanic workers — whose wages have historically lagged behind those of white men— by establishing pay 'transparency' (workers know what other workers are

making), correcting salary discrepancies, establishing clearer terms for internal processes such as raises and promotions, and helping workers who have been discriminated against achieve equity;

- Unions protect worker health. There are fewer injuries and fatalities in unionized mines and fewer health and safety violations on unionized construction sites. In recent years, unions have helped nurses secure protection from violence in the workplace, helped laborers avoid exposure to disease-causing silica dust, and helped firefighters receive treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder;
- Unions help workers obtain better health, retirement, and leave benefits. For example, more than 90 percent of workers covered by a union contract have employer-sponsored health-care benefits, while under 70 percent of nonunion workers do. The employer contribution to unionized workers' benefits is 77 percent higher than the employer contribution for otherwise similar nonunion workers; and
- Unions help workers share ideas about how to improve workplaces without fear of retaliation. Unions have played an important role in developing professional development systems for teachers and training programs for manufacturing workers, for example.

Most Working Americans Living Paycheck To Paycheck

[CNBC reports this week on a new CareerBuilder survey](#) that found 78 percent of full-time working Americans are living paycheck to paycheck, up from 75 percent in 2016. In addition, 71 percent of workers are now in debt, which is up from 68 percent in 2016.

From the story:

“While 46 percent said their debt is manageable, 56 percent said they were in over their heads. About 56 percent also save \$100 or less each month, according to CareerBuilder. The job-hunting site polled over 2,000 hiring and human resource managers and more than 3,000 full-time employees between May and June.

Most financial experts recommend stashing at least a six-month cushion in an [emergency fund](#) to cover anything from a dental bill to a car repair — and more if you are the sole breadwinner in your family or in business for yourself.

While household income has grown over the past decade, it has failed to keep up with the increased cost-of-living over the same period.

Even those making over [six figures said they struggle to make ends meet](#), the report said. Nearly 1 in 10 of those making \$100,000 or more said they usually or always live paycheck to paycheck, and 59 percent of those in that salary range said they were in the red.”

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.

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!

"The erosion of unions has been especially damaging for the growth of middle-class wages. If you want to boost wage for the middle you have to rebuild the collective bargaining."

Economic Policy Institute President Lawrence Mishel, commenting on a new report his organization released this week, titled "[How Today's Unions Help Working People](#)."

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 27

VSEA Day At Fenway Park

Boston

1:35 p.m.

August 28

Brattleboro Chapter Member Appreciation Day Event
State Office Building
232 Main Street
Brattleboro
12:00 p.m.

August 30

Deadline - 2017 Member Recruitment Drive

August 31

Northern State Member Appreciation Day Event
Northern State Correctional Facility
2559 Glen Road
Newport
7:00 a.m.

August 31

Corrections Unit Bargaining Team Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
12:00 p.m.

September 1

Personnel Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.