



## WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ September 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](http://www.vsea.org/wia)

### **VSEA Annual Meeting 2017 Concludes! Officer Election Results Announced**

More than 150 VSEA members and retirees took time on Saturday to attend VSEA's 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting in Stowe at the Stoweflake Resort. The highlight of the day was the announcement of the results of VSEA's first-ever online election, which President Bellini announced had doubled the number of members voting in this year's contest. The winners, and your new VSEA officers for the next two years are:

President – Dave Bellini (DOC)  
First Vice President – Aimee Towne (DCF)  
Second Vice President – Cassandra Edson (DOL)  
Clerk – Katelyn Gauthier (ESD)  
Treasurer – Sawyer Joecks (DVHA)

VSEA members attending Annual Meeting also got to participate in a new, on-site, electronic voting experiment to determine the winners of a Retirement Board sitting and alternate seats. They were:

Board Seat – Eric Davis (ANR)  
Alternate – J.P. Isabelle (Sec'y of State)

Other important business was also concluded at this year's meeting, including **strong passage of an operating budget that includes a 3-cent dues increase, raising full-fledged member dues to \$17.75 a pay period and agency-fee payer dues to \$14.73**. Members also weighed in on two bylaw proposals, voting to reject one that would have required retiree dues and passing another to change existing bylaw language to reflect the Vermont State Colleges' impending name change.

The Annual Meeting awards luncheon was kicked off by a speech from State Treasurer Beth Pearce, who reassured VSEA members that she would continue to fight back hard against any and all proposals to force new hires to state government into a 401K retirement plan, as opposed to a defined-benefit plan. That declaration received a rousing ovation from the crowd.

Pearce was followed by the VSEA Awards & Scholarships Committee's annual presentation of merit awards to members and staff, as well as one deserving Chapter. Ruthie Leithead (Retired) and Ed Thomas (Military) announced the winners, and they were:

**Frank Mazza Award – Margaret Crowley (Judiciary)**

*Presented annually to a VSEA member whose time and efforts are helping VSEA achieve its primary goal of better wages, benefits and working conditions for all state employees.*

**Terence Macaig Award – Nick Davis (AOT)**

*Presented annually to a VSEA member for their outstanding contributions or actions that directly or indirectly promote the positive image of VSEA and/or public employees.*

**Steward of the Year Award – Peter Bartlett (VPCH)**

*Presented annually to a VSEA member who has demonstrated exceptional dedication or outstanding service in their role as VSEA steward.*

**Chapter of the Year Award – Brattleboro Chapter**

*Presented annually to a VSEA Chapter that has demonstrated excellence in member participation, activism and organizing to achieve VSEA's goals.*

**Linda Coan Award – Kris Lizzari (Communications Specialist)**

*Singles out one particular VSEA staff person's dedication and service to VSEA and its membership.*

VSEA members attending this year's meeting were also treated to a fiery keynote speech from longtime staff Labor Relations guru Gary Hoadley, who reminded members of the power they have when they come together as one and urged unity instead of division in the tough months ahead for VSEA and all of America's labor movement. Hoadley's speech received a standing ovation.

[View Video From Gary Hoadley's Keynote Address](#)

[View Photos From VSEA's 73<sup>rd</sup> Annual & Council Meetings & 50s / 60s Party](#)

DOC member Jeff McKee won the Membership Recruitment Committee's \$1200 grand prize for his amazing work in the past year recruiting agency-fee payers to become full-fledged members. The Committee also awarded other members for their work throughout the drive.

As always, throughout the Annual Meeting, dozens of raffles were conducted and an amazing number of cash and other prizes were awarded to members present. A special collection was also conducted for a VSEA leader who is battling a terminal illness, and members really stepped up to help.

VSEA thanks every member who attended all or part of this weekend's meetings and festivities.

## **Next Bennington Chapter Meeting Is Wednesday, September 13!**

The VSEA Bennington Chapter is holding its next Chapter meeting on Wednesday, September 13, at 5:00 p.m. at the Vermont Veterans' Home in Bennington. Food is being provided!

Please RSVP in advance if able—or direct any questions or comments—to VSEA Bennington Chapter President Victoria Thorpe via email at [victoria.thorpe@vermont.gov](mailto:victoria.thorpe@vermont.gov).

## **NEA Solidarity!**

Burlington teachers have voted to strike on Wednesday, in response to management's ill-advised decision to impose a less-than-desirable contract on them last week. VSEA members who want to help can do so by:

- Joining an NEA picket line on September 12 from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at Hunt Middle School on North Avenue in Burlington;
- Attending the next School Board meeting on September 12 at Hunt Middle School, beginning at 6:00 p.m.;
- [Donating](#) (in the event of a Wednesday strike) to the teachers.

[Find more information here.](#)

## **Update! "Invitation Only" Conference Being Held To Discuss Public Employees' Underfunded Pension Plans**

*Note: Since WIA published this story, several retirees and members have contacted HQ to say they have been denied an invitation. Guess Mr. Coates and company only want to hear from one side of this debate.*

The Vermont Business Roundtable is co-sponsoring an "invitation-only" conference about public employee pensions at Champlain College on Tuesday, October 10. It will feature a panel discussion that includes David Coates, who VSEA members will remember is Vermont's resident alarmist about what he annually alleges is an impending crisis with Vermont public employees' underfunded pension plans. This is a point that VSEA President Dave Bellini has publicly refuted on many occasions, explaining that the state employee pension plan is well funded and doing fine.

Coates is also expected to resurrect his tired talking point that state can realize savings by requiring new hires to enroll in a 401K-pension plan instead of employees' current Defined Benefit Plan. This, however, is a talking point that is losing its luster of late, after several studies determined that workers are not investing properly in their 401Ks on their own and that states are not seeing the promised savings.

VSEA was pleased to see that State Treasurer Beth Pearce is also on the panel, and we trust she will defend state employee and teacher pension plans just as vehemently as she has in the past.

VSEA is urging interested members and retirees to register for the conference and see if you get an invite. [Learn more here.](#)

Reference Article:

*Mother Jones*: [Were 401K Plans Just A Big Mistake](#) (January 2017)

## **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\(s\) 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.

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

### **Sugarbush Ski Resort**

Sugarbush Resort is once again offering VSEA members discounts on 2017-18 Sugarbush Premium and Value Season Passes!

[Click Here For Pass Deal PDF Poster](#)

Sugarbush Premium Pass Includes:

- Unlimited skiing and riding at Lincoln Peak and Mt. Ellen; and
- 2600' of vertical, 111 trails and 28 wooded areas.

Sugarbush Value Pass Includes:

- Unlimited daily access to Mt. Ellen; and
- Access to Lincoln Peak midweek, non-holiday and early / late season when Mt. Ellen is closed.

[Click Here To Order Pass\(es\)](#) [**Please ensure you list VSEA as your sponsoring group!**]

**Important: Sugarbush has a September 20, 2017, deadline to order your pass(es) so don't delay.**

*Next Up: Killington*

**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

[Click Here To Register For Steward Summit](#)

**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](http://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!**

*"We are never again going to sit idly by and let [the State] push us over because we are stronger!"*

VSEA Labor Relations Director Gary Hoadley, talking about bargaining during his September 9 Annual Meeting keynote address.

## **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](mailto:vsea@vsea.org). Write " Protocol Status" in the subject line.

## **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:**

### **September 12**

Child & Elder Care Committee Meeting  
VSEA HQ  
Montpelier  
9:00 a.m.

### **September 13**

Bennington Chapter Meeting  
Vermont Vets' Home  
Bennington  
5:00 p.m.

### **September 14**

NMU Executive Committee Meeting  
VSEA HQ  
Montpelier  
8:00 a.m.