



## WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ Sept. 13 – Sept. 15, 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 Seeks New Treasurer**

Since *WIA* reported the results of VSEA's recent officer elections on Monday, newly elected Treasurer and DVHA employee Sawyer Joecks wrote to VSEA President Dave Bellini to say that he is unable to serve in the important position for personal and professional reasons.

"I should have come to this conclusion before the petitions and elections," Joecks wrote in his email to Bellini. "I sincerely apologize for any extra work this has caused (or will cause) staff or members as a result of my resignation. I need to do what is best for me, my family, and my career."

According to VSEA's Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee, **VSEA will conduct a special election for Treasurer** as a result of Joecks' unanticipated decision. Joecks has committed to actively serving as treasurer until a replacement is elected.

**VSEA members interested in serving as your union's next Treasurer must submit a petition bearing no fewer than 25 VSEA members' names, signature and employee number.**

[Download Treasurer Petition Here](#)

(Petitions can also be found on VSEA.org under "[Forms, Documents & Downloads](#)")

Deadline to submit your petition is **Wednesday, October 4!**

*Note: VSEA encourages candidates to obtain more than 25 members' signatures to ensure compliance with the eligibility requirements. Please note that "agency fee payers" are not full-fledged members and their signatures are not valid on your petition. You must provide petitions bearing original signatures. No faxes/scanned documents will be accepted.*

### **ERN Committee Thanks Membership For Officer Election Participation**

*Note: The ERN Committee asked WIA to share the following with the membership:*

The Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee would like to thank the membership for another great officer election cycle. This year, many members stepped up to the plate to become candidates for an office. We would like to thank each of you who were willing to take the time to serve your fellow union brothers and sisters. We would also like to express our thanks to all members who not only voted, but supported the candidate of your choice. We are sure the candidates greatly appreciated your support.

This year, for the first time, officer elections were done electronically. Paper ballots were available for those who wanted them, but the majority voted using the electronic ballot. This process was a huge success as the total number of ballots cast was just about double what had been cast in past years. There were a few paper ballots to count, but our job was so much easier and less time consuming. Again, our thanks to everyone!

In Solidarity:

The ERN Committee

Ruthie Leithead  
Holly Peake  
Sandy Noyes

## ***Vermont Life* Staff's Future Even Muddier After State Puts Magazine Out To Bid**

After months of speculation on its future by the State and lawmakers, [VTDigger reports this week](#) that the Agency of Commerce and Community Development is officially putting the iconic publication *Vermont Life* out to bid to a private vendor. VSEA had been monitoring discussions at the State House this session about the publication's future because the magazine employs a handful of VSEA members and their future is now really in limbo. Earlier this year, lawmakers mandated that ACCD not be "precluded" from submitting its own bid—and VSEA and its members were holding out hope that it would—but no word yet on whether it will or won't, and the prospect, it seems, is growing dimmer.

## **"Talking Union": A VSEA Video Series**

A few weeks back, *WIA* informed readers about an interview we recently conducted with longtime VSEA activist Ed Thomas, who spoke candidly with *WIA* about VSEA and what it means to him and his family. *WIA* is pleased to now feature Ed in the first of we hope will be many face-to-face sit-downs with VSEA members to talk union and why every member needs to be engaged and informed. A rough cut of the video premiered at the VSEA Council meeting last week and was well received.

View "Talking Union," Episode 1 – Ed Thomas (Military Dept.)

Some VSEA Council members did sign up last week to appear in a future video, but *WIA* urges any member who wants to be heard about what VSEA means to you and your family to contact VSEA Communications Director Doug Gibson ([dgibson@vsea.org](mailto:dgibson@vsea.org)).

"I want to thank the Council members who filled out a sign-up form at the meeting last Friday," says Gibson. "Your voice matters and state employees—especially younger employees who might not know much about VSEA or about unions and their history here in Vermont—need to fully understand what life would be like without a union being here for workers. A wise person once said to me, 'You pay for representation in your personal life, sending representatives to Congress, why wouldn't you want to pay for representation in your work life, which is the union?' We hope these video vignettes will help VSEA drive home this and many other important points about why unions matter. Ed was a fantastic voice and big thanks to him for being our first in this series."

## **Chittenden Chapter Will Meet September 20!**

VSEA's Chittenden Chapter will meet next Wednesday, September 20, beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the DVHA office, located at 312 Hurricane Lane in Morrisville. Refreshments are being provided.

## **Lamoille Valley Chapter Meeting Is September 21!**

VSEA's Lamoille Valley Chapter will meet next Thursday, September 21, beginning at noon in the AHS Conference Room of the State Office Building, located at 63 Professional Drive in Morrisville. The meeting will feature a primer on how the collective bargaining process works and a member's role in it. Refreshments are being provided.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact the VSEA Lamoille Valley Chapter President Aimee Towne via email: [atowne@vsea.org](mailto:atowne@vsea.org).

Please note that future Lamoille Valley Chapter meetings are scheduled for:

October 19  
November 16  
December 21

## **Oops! Next Bennington Chapter Meeting Is Actually September 28!**

VSEA Bennington Chapter President Victoria Thorpe contacted *WIA* on Monday to let us know that the Chapter's next meeting was not this week, and that it is actually being held on Thursday, September 28. The meeting begins at 5:00 p.m. at the AOT Garage, located at 359 Bowen Road 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).

## **Union Rep Schedules Vet's Home Meetings**

VSEA Union Representative Rachael Fields has scheduled a series of meetings to talk with Vet's Home employees about their issues and concerns.

If you work at the Vet's Home, please mark one of these dates and times down to stop by and talk with Rachael:

September 27 (Crispe Room)  
October 25 (Upstairs Board Room)  
November 29 (Crispe Room)  
December 27 (Crispe Room)

Available Times: 6:30 a.m., 1:00 p.m., 2:30 p.m., 3:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

## **Burlington Teachers' Strike: How VSEA Members Can Help**

Teachers belonging to the Burlington Education Association are on strike, and here's how VSEA members can help:

- Burlington residents should contact their school board member immediately and call for a fair settlement. [Contact information here.](#)
- Join a picket line at all Burlington schools from 7:45 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. weekdays, for the duration of the strike. If you are able, please join us and make a sign indicating where you are from to show solidarity. We will have extra picket signs as well. We will have an end-of-the-day picket for all teaches and supporters starting by 3:00 p.m. [Check here for latest times and locations each day.](#)
- Donate to the Strike Fund to support the BEA. [Please go here](#) to make a donation to help support the striking teachers. Checks may be made payable to Burlington Education Association and mailed to BEA Strike Fund, c/o Vermont-NEA, 10 Wheelock St., Montpelier, VT 05602. Your union/organization may also consider fully or partially sponsoring coffee or lunch for strikers (ex: adopt a school) by indicating so via email or by calling Emma Mulvaney-Stanak, Vermont-NEA Organizer at emstanak@vtnea.org or 802-310-0781.
- Visit BEA HQ and/or donate food in-person. The BEA HQ is located at 294 N. Winooski Ave, Suite #125, in the Old North End. Healthy snacks and bottled water are particularly helpful!
- Volunteer. BEA may have volunteer opportunities while on strike that support the most vulnerable kids such as helping make food or deliver food during the strike when school food service programs are unavailable. For more information on this, please contact Emma at emstanak@vtnea.org.
- Send words of support to the membership outreach@beaworks.com and directly to President Fran Brock at beaworkerspres@gmail.com.

Remember: A Wrong To One Is A Wrong To All!

## **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](#)

## **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](#)

## **Union Workers Respond In Force To Hurricanes**

*Workday Minnesota* reports on September 12 that many of the utility line workers, health care professionals and FEMA employees on site in hurricane-ravaged Texas

and Florida are union members, and they are providing essential and sometimes life-saving services to Americans in need.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) is describing Irma's wrath as forcing the deployment of the "largest power restoration workforce in U.S. history."

"When disasters like Irma strike, you can always count on IBEW lineworkers to be the first on the ground, bringing power back to the people who need it most," says International IBEW President Lonnie R. Stephenson. "To all the linemen, tree-trimmers and more who traveled into the storm to work 16-hour days, 7 days-a-week, I'm grateful to you, and the people of Florida are grateful to you."

The story goes on to highlight many other union efforts to help, including an AFT drive to provide basic school supplies to teachers and students in Texas and Florida, as well as a \$100,000 donation to relief efforts by the AFL-CIO and the organization's Relief Fund is looking to raise an additional \$5 million.

## **Unions End Partnership Agreement With Harley Davidson After Thailand Announcement**

Scratch the American-made label off another U.S. manufacturing icon's legendary product.

[The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reports this week](#) that United Steelworkers' and International Association of Machinists production workers are ending a 22-year agreement with motorcycle manufacturer Harley Davidson to send a message to their employer that they oppose the recently announced opening of the company's first-ever overseas plant in Thailand.

"Building motorcycles abroad is a slap in the face to every one of our members. We find it appalling that the company continues to dismantle what we built up for all these years," IAM International President Robert Martinez tells the paper.

The unions' agreement with Harley Davidson had fostered collaboration and joint decisions on a wide range of issues.

## **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.

## **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](http://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:**

### **September 18**

NMU Bargaining Team Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

8:00 a.m.

### **September 19**

VSCSF Executive Board Meeting

VSEA HQ

Montpelier

9:00 a.m.

### **September 20**

Deadline To Order Discounted Sugarbush Season Passes



**September 20**

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

**September 21**

Corrections Bargaining Team Meeting  
VSEA HQ  
Montpelier  
8:00 a.m.

**September 21**

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

**September 21**

Lamoille Valley Chapter Meeting  
State Office Building  
63 Professional Drive  
Morrisville  
12:00 p.m.

**September 22**

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

**September 24**

VSEA NASCAR Day 2017  
New Hampshire Motor Speedway  
Loudon, NH  
Bus Is Full!