



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ October 23 – October 27, 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

VSEA FAQ Clarifies What Is Private Vs. Public Record For Classified State Employees

The Vermont Supreme Court ruled late last Friday that a classified state employee's private phone, email, etc., accounts are subject to the state's Public Records Act—if state work is/was conducted on the device. In response to this new and pretty big twist, VSEA President Dave Bellini sent an email this week to all members that included a public-records FAQ prepared by your union's legal team to clarify your rights and educate members about how to avoid trouble.

VSEA President Dave Bellini and the Board of Trustees are asking members to take some time soon to read and understand the contents of the FAQ. In the meantime, members with questions--or members who are being asked to produce a record(s) and aren't sure how to proceed—are being asked to contact a member of VSEA's Legal Team at 802-223-5247.

[Click Here To View Public Records Primer](#)

VSEA Treasurer Election Email With Ballot-Link Coming Soon

VSEA's ERN Committee is charged with educating and informing the member electorate about your choices in union elections, including the current election being conducted to be VSEA Treasurer. To fulfill this charge, the Committee asked every Treasurer candidate to submit a statement about why s/he is running, and you can link to each candidate's statement below.

In the coming weeks, the ERN will be sending eligible members a link to your official online ballot to vote in the Treasurer election. Remember that recent bylaw and policy changes have allowed VSEA to conduct elections electronically. If you wish to receive a paper ballot and opt out of electronic balloting, please send an email to VSEA@VSEA.org and write "paper ballot" in the subject line. Please include your full name and your preferred mailing address. The deadline to request a paper ballot for this election will be November 1, 2017.

The Treasurer shall oversee the receipt and disbursement of all funds of the VSEA and its various sub-entities. S/he shall keep or cause to be kept a true record of all receipts and disbursements. S/he shall disburse funds only when directed to do so by the Board of Trustees and then only when the disbursement is approved by the

President or by the President's authorized representative; provided however, that s/he shall reimburse any member of VSEA for necessary expenses in connection with the performance of his/her duties when so authorized by the Board of Trustees or the President.

The Treasurer shall keep all corporate funds in accounts under the name of the Corporation and shall submit all books and accounts to the auditor within thirty (30) calendar days following the close of the fiscal year or any other time when so directed by the Board of Trustees. The Treasurer shall furnish a bond in such amount as the Board of Trustees may require, the cost thereof to be paid by the Corporation.

In the absence of the President, the First Vice-President, and the Second Vice-President, the Treasurer shall preside at Council Meeting.

Below is a full list of candidates for this office:

Candidates for VSEA Treasurer:

(Click a candidates name to read their candidate statement, *opens a PDF*)

[Jacklyn "Jackie" Hickerson, Tax Department](#)

[Robert "Bob" Stone, Department of Public Safety](#)

[Michele Webster, Department for Children and Families](#)

VT Labor Board Rules Judiciary Branch Didn't Follow The Law When Implementing New Cell-Phone Policy For Workers

VSEA issued the following press release on October 23:

VSEA members belonging to the union's Judiciary Unit applauded news late Friday that the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) had issued an unfair labor practice (ULP) against Judiciary management for recently circumventing the bargaining process to unilaterally implement a cell-phone policy in the Washington County Courts office.

"Management tried to implement new restrictions on Judiciary employees' personal cell-phone use at the workplace, but they did it without using the legal process in place to make such a change, which is to sit down and bargain the policy with the workers," explains VSEA Judiciary Unit Chair Margaret Crowley. "We tried to point this out to management before taking any formal action—in hopes they would understand—but they didn't and went ahead and did it anyway. This left us with few options but to file a ULP, and it was wonderful news to learn on Friday that the VLRB agreed with us and was ordering management to rescind the policy."

In its decision, the VLRB found and ruled, in part that:

- The State of Vermont Judiciary Department refused to bargain in good faith and interfered with employees' exercise of rights, in violation of 3 V.S.A. Section 1026(1) and (5). through unilaterally implementing a cell phone

policy in the Washington Unit; and

- The employer shall rescind this policy and give it no further force or effect.

"We were very disappointed that the Vermont Judiciary itself couldn't follow the law, and that we had to resort to filing a ULP against this particular branch of government," adds VSEA President Dave Bellini. "That said, the VLRB's decision was great news, and we hope it sends a strong message to other divisions of state government that your managers cannot simply implement policies or rules without sitting down first with VSEA members to talk about the policy being suggested and any potential conflicts it might have with our negotiated contract language."

Final 2017 VSEA Steward Summit Is November 3! Register Today!

On November 3, VSEA's Field Department closes out a series of "Steward Summits" it has been hosting across Vermont this year.

The six-hour training is being conducted at the Holiday Inn in Rutland, located at 476 Holiday Drive. Here is the day's agenda:

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

- Meeting Registration
- Networking Breakfast

9:00 a.m. – Noon (Basic Steward Training Orientation/Steward 101)

- Grievance Handling/Contract Overview
- Representation in Investigative Meetings
- Duty of Fair Representation (DFR)

Noon – 1:00 (Networking Lunch, Unit Specific)

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

- Membership Recruitment/Organizing Around *Janus* Decision

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

- Reduction in Force Overview (RIFS)

3:30 p.m.

- Evaluations

Remember, every current VSEA Steward is required to attend one session, so here's your last chance in 2017.

Thursday, November 2, Is The Deadline For VSEA District 5 Members To Submit Trustee Petitions

Next Thursday, November 2, is the deadline for VSEA members interested in running to fill VSEA's District 5 Board seat to submit a petition. The District 5

Trustee serves as the voice for **Rutland & Bennington's** VSEA members on the Board.

Two years remain on retiring Vets' Home employee Barbara King's current term, meaning whoever is appointed to the position will serve out her term and then have to run for official election in the next campaign cycle.

To be eligible for election to the District 5 seat, a member must reside or have an assigned workstation--and continue to reside or have an assigned workstation--in District 5.

If interested, you must be a member in good standing, and you must collect the signatures of 25 or more full, dues-paying VSEA members.

If you are unable to access a petition online, please contact VSEA headquarters at 223-5247 to request to have a hard copy petition mailed to your home.

Your Survey... Your Future: VSEA Corrections Survey 2017

VSEA sent an email to Corrections members this week, reminding them to complete a recently posted, comprehensive, online survey to find out how DOC employees feel about their working conditions and what their priority issues are moving forward.

VSEA Corrections leaders on the Unit's Bargaining Team and Executive Committee will be using employees' answers to help them shape their agendas and draft beneficial policies. Your Unit's survey results will also be shared with VSEA's Legislative team, so it can begin to educate lawmakers about how they can help Vermont's Corrections workers provide the safest and best service possible to our state's taxpayers.

Questions? Contact VSEA Organizer David Oppenheimer by email at Doppenheimer@vsea.org or call him at 223-65247.

Thanks in advance for completing this very important survey!

Brattleboro Chapter Raises \$350 For The Homeless

Brattleboro Chapter President Robin Rieske is thanking members belonging to the Chapter for hearing her call to donate to an annual, local charity event called "Hike For The Homeless." Brattleboro Chapter members raised \$350 to benefit the area's homeless.

Rieske wants to especially thank VSEA members Will Wells, Shyla Foss, Deb Kitzmiller, John Davy and Kathleen White for their assistance and support.

Next Waterbury Chapter Meeting Is October 30

VSEA's Waterbury Chapter will meet on Monday, October 30, beginning at noon in the Waterbury State Office Complex's Cherry A meeting room. Food is being provided.

If you have any questions in advance, please feel free to contact Waterbury Chapter President John Mangione via email: mangioneart@comcast.net.

More Time Contributions Needed Now To The Non-Management Unit's Sick Leave Bank!

Donations Being Accepted October 1 To December 31

VSEA member Dawn Carrillo staffs the Non-Management Unit Sick Leave Bank, and she is again asking *WIA* to sound the alarm that the bank really needs your donated hours. NMU members can donate a few hours to your Unit's sick leave bank from **now until December 31, 2017**.

"Just donating an hour of your time can mean the world to a fellow employee," reads a new flyer DHR is circulating. It also informs state employees that they can **donate any amount of annual- or personal-leave time** to the NMU Sick Leave Bank. "Know that you are performing a wonderful service by helping your friends and fellow employees, who, along with their families, are struggling due to serious health issues," the flyer concludes.

[VSEA members interested in donating some much-needed time to the NMU, Corrections and Supervisory Sick Leave Banks can find a donation form here.](#)

"I want to thank every member for considering a donation to your Unit sick leave bank," says VSEA President Dave Bellini. "Even if you only donate one hour to the bank, these one-hour donations add up. It's so worthwhile because your donation is going to help a fellow state employee who is battling a serious illness."

***Tomorrow Is The VT Chapter Of The Alliance For Retired Americans' 13th Annual Conference!**

The Vermont Chapter of the Alliance for Retired Americans (VT ARA) is holding its 13th annual conference tomorrow, **Saturday, October 28**, and VSEA retirees and members are invited to attend.

The feature topic of this year's VT ARA conference is "From Expensive To Affordable: Vermont's Health Care Future" and featured speakers include Dr. Deb Richter and Public Assets Institute President Paul Cillo. A representative from Senator Bernie Sanders' office will also be providing an update on S. 1804, which is also known as the "Medicare for All Act of 2017."

Conference participants are invited to join in the discussion about how we can work together to overcome the challenges that are currently preventing Vermont from being able to provide quality, accessible and affordable health care coverage to all its citizens. The VT ARA wants to send conference participants home with the knowledge and tools they need to educate their fellow Vermonters about the need "to establish universal, publicly financed primary health care in Vermont."

The official meeting begins at 9:30 a.m. and ends at 2:00 p.m. It's being held at the Montpelier Senior Activity Center, located at 58 Barre Street in Montpelier.

Conference Registration is \$15 per person or \$20 for 2 and includes

morning refreshments. The cost of lunch is \$10, and membership in the Vermont Alliance for Retired Americans is \$10 per year.

For information or to register, contact Jane Osgatharp,
President: annajaneo@aol.com or **(802) 229-0850**.

Sign Up Today For February 2018 VSEA Trip To TD Garden For Boston Bruins Game

Based on the popularity of the first few member bus trips sponsored by VSEA, your union's Membership Recruitment Committee (a small group of rank-and-file state employees who coordinate and host VSEA's outings) recently polled members to find out what kinds of bus trips you want the Committee to pursue in the future. Coming up number one was a trip to Boston for a Bruins game, so the Committee is wasting no time responding, scheduling the following:

VSEA Boston Bruins Bus Trip

Saturday, February 3, 2018

TD Garden, Boston

7:00 P.M.

Section: Balcony 321

\$170 Per Person - Includes a bus ride to and from the park, as well as a ticket to the game.

If you and your family would be interested in joining your union and fellow members at TD Garden on Saturday, February 3, contact VSEA Union Representative Bob South. You can reach Bob by email at bsouth@vsea.org or by phone at 223-5247.

Important! VSEA will be taking the names down of those interested, as members contact VSEA, but you will not be officially on the bus until full payment is received at headquarters. Please make checks payable to VSEA.

Celebrate Old Labor Hall's 19th Anniversary On November 11

VSEA members are invited to attend the Vermont Workers' Center's 19th anniversary celebration of the Old Labor Hall on November 11, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Hall, located at 46 Granite Street in Barre. A meal is being provided by The People's Kitchen (sliding-scale donations accepted!).

To RSVP for the anniversary celebration, please email kate@workerscenter.org and write "2017 Dinner" in the email subject line.

[Facebook Event Page](#)

Iowa Public Employees Thumb Nose At RTW Proponents & Vote Overwhelmingly To Remain UNION!

Right-to-Work (RTW) proponents/lawmakers/State officials in Iowa were handed a stunning defeat yesterday, after 400+ units of Iowa public employees voted overwhelmingly to re-certify their respective labor unions. The vote was a punch in the gut to the RTW crowd, who had hoped that by mandating a recertification

vote, workers would reject union representation and dues--BUT THEY DIDN'T, and in a major way.

"[The vote] shows that public sector employees, working men and women, both members and non-members, want to have a union, want to have a voice at the table," says Danny Homan, president of AFSCME Iowa Council 61, which represents more than 40,000 public employees in Iowa. "... I believe this sends a very strong message."

Way to go Iowa public employees!

[Read Des Moines Register Story](#)

NH Lawmakers Begin Suggesting Proactive Steps To End Assaults On Frontline State Workers

The [New Hampshire Union Leader reported this week](#) on the status of four state employees' requests for payment from the State after being assaulted while at work. The piece talks about the payments but also about several other approaches NH lawmakers are considering to better protect frontline workers and ensure each assault is fully documented.

From the story:

"The recent spate of [state employee] injury reports and publicity surrounding them is prompting legislative action on at least two fronts.

As previously reported nurse June Garen of Gilmanton approached her state senator, Jim Gray, R-Rochester, about possible legislation after she was assaulted in June by a patient who punched her in the head, neck, chest and back.

Gray is working with stakeholders on a bill that could lead to better reporting and tracking of such incidents, along with requirements for violence prevention planning and training.

State Rep. Mark MacKenzie, D-Manchester, is drafting legislation that would require timely reporting of such injuries to the N.H. Department of Labor, which would have to conduct a follow-up investigation.

And like Executive Councilor Joe Kenney, R-Union, MacKenzie believes the names of state employees injured on the job should be protected from disclosure, as is the case for injured workers in the private sector."

NH Hospital CEO To Review Assaults On Mental Health Workers

The [Concord Monitor reports on October 26](#) that in response to a string of patient-on worker assaults, the New Hampshire Hospital's incoming CEO is publicly calling for a full review.

The CEO explains that her review will primarily examine whether state-run health facilities including New Hampshire Hospital are experiencing an uptick in violent incidents in which patients injure health workers. The CEO says she will also be conducting a separate long-term review into the department's policies relating to workplace incidents.

"What my plan is is to look at the last five years and really kind of look at what's come to this council ... and see if there's patterns," says the CEO. "So, take that information that I gather in the last five years and really do an assessment on what we need to do differently."

Nebraska Corrections Workers Plead For Help From Lawmakers

An [October 20 Associated Press story](#) features frontline Nebraska Corrections employees recently telling lawmakers that they are "deeply concerned" about things like "high turnover rates, unfilled jobs, prisoner overcrowding and outbursts of inmate violence."

From the *AP* story:

"Inmates see how much we're being forced to work, and they know we're tired," said Cpl. Carla Jorgens, who works at the Nebraska State Penitentiary in Lincoln. 'I have been with the department for 20 years, and every day for the last five years, I say to myself, 'I have never seen it this bad.'

"Jorgens decried the lack of longevity pay for more experienced corrections officers, saying she now makes \$1.20 an hour more than a new employee despite her decades of service. She said mandatory overtime often forces employees to choose between family obligations and their jobs.

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'It's going to take someone getting killed for the public to understand our problems,' Sgt. Brad Kreifels of the Nebraska State Penitentiary said, adding that many prisoners have a 'give an inch, take a mile' mentality.

Kreifels said the mandatory overtime is such a problem that some employees will abandon their posts and refuse to work, only to find themselves locked inside the prison."

Note: Frontline VSEA DOC members have been going to the State House for years now with the same kinds of warnings for lawmakers, yet many DOC positions that a consultant determined needed to be filled (for safety reasons) remain unfilled and mandatory OT continues to take a heavy toll on workers.

Southern Poverty Law Center Advises State Prisons To Triple Mental Health Staff And Double Corrections Staff

[WSFA reports on October 26](#) that the Southern Poverty Law Center recently filed a brief with a federal court judge, advising that the Alabama Corrections Department address what the judge termed the state's "grossly inadequate mental health system" by tripling the number of mental health staff and doubling the number of corrections workers. In early October, the state DOC filed its own proposal with the judge, recommending only that the state double the number of mental health employees. The cost to hire the number of workers needed is estimated to exceed \$100 million, but if the judge rules that the DOC must hire the employees, the story points out that "not having the funds will not be considered an excuse."

West Virginia Dedicates Memorial To Highway Workers Killed On The Job

The [Marietta Times reports October 26](#) on this week's unveiling of a new memorial dedicated to West Virginia highway workers who have been killed on the job since the formation of the state's highway division in 1921.

"It's (an) awesome tribute to the fallen workers and my husband," said a worker's widow through tears. "(I) just wish that people would slow down in the work areas and remember that the workers do have families."

***Union Rep Holding 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:

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.

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**](#)

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!

"We were very disappointed that the Vermont Judiciary itself couldn't follow the law, and that we had to resort to filing a ULP against this particular branch of government."

VSEA President Dave Bellini, commenting in an October 22 VSEA press release about an October 19 VLRB decision against the Judiciary for failing to bargain a newly implemented personal cell-phone policy with the union.

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:

October 30

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

October 30

Waterbury Chapter Meeting
State Office Building
Cherry A
Waterbury
12:00 p.m.

November 2

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

November 2

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

November 2

Deadline To Submit District 5 Trustee Petition
4:30 p.m.

November 3

VSEA Steward Summit
Holiday Inn
476 Holiday Drive
Rutland
9:00 a.m.