



## WEEK IN ACTION!

November 13 – November 17, 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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### **VSEA Negotiations Are (Again) Headed To Fact Finding**

*The following update was submitted to WIA by VSEA Labor Relations Director Gary Hoadley:*

“Once again, the VSEA must present its case before a neutral, third party fact finder to seek fair, reasonable contracts for the Non-Management, Corrections, and Supervisory Units; contracts that will become effective on July 1, 2018.

The State of Vermont and VSEA have been engaged in negotiations since early August for successor collective bargaining agreements and after several months of direct negotiations with the Administration, bargaining impasse was declared. The Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) appointed a federal mediator and the VSEA Bargaining Teams participated in mediation but were unable to reach a tentative settlement with the State and the parties remain at impasse.

The State Employees Labor Relations Act (SELRA) provides for dispute resolution processes of mediation, fact finding, and selection of last best offers by the VLRB to resolve negotiation impasses. The VLRB recently appointed Richard Boulanger, Esq. to serve as the neutral, third party fact finder. Mr. Boulanger will conduct fact-finding hearings on December 15, 2017, and December 18, 2017, to hear testimony and review evidence relevant to the issues remaining in dispute. The State and VSEA will then receive a fact-finding report from Mr. Boulanger with written findings and recommendations.

You may recall that in early 2016, *WIA* reported on fact-finding hearings in the previous round of bargaining, when the Shumlin Administration showed little interest in reaching a fair, negotiated settlement. At that time, the State rebuffed the recommendations of the fact finder and VSEA was forced to take its case to last best offer at the VLRB for a binding decision. **VSEA encourages Non-Management, Corrections, and Supervisory Unit employees to stay informed about the issues and [contact Your Bargaining Team members](#) for specific details or with your questions.”**

### **VSEA Probation & Parole Members Need Your Help!**

*Note: The following message was submitted to WIA for publication by VSEA's Probation and Parole members:*

"Your fellow VSEA members working in Probation and Parole (P&P) need your help!

Every day, P&P members are out in communities across Vermont, working to rehabilitate criminal offenders. Much of a P&P worker's job is performed in an offender's home or somewhere right in the community, and we want you to know that our jobs are becoming more and more dangerous. According to the latest FBI crime data, violent crime in Vermont recently spiked by 15%, and this statistic isn't lost on P&P officers, especially since more and more of us are finding ourselves in situations that are increasingly threatening, dangerous and unpredictable.

It's for this reason that VSEA's P&P members are collectively lobbying Vermont officials and lawmakers to allow us to join the 34 other states that already allow P&P Officers to be trained to carry defensive weapons on the job. We've made tremendous progress so far, and we're happy to report that our bill to allow this important change has already been supported by 30 lawmakers on both sides of the aisle at the State House.

We feel like we're in the homestretch now, which is why VSEA's P&P members need every member to join with us in solidarity to get this important language passed and implemented.

**What can you do to help? Please take 30 seconds right now to sign our digital "support card," which you can [link to on VSEA.org](https://www.vsea.org). Your signature and support will help ensure that VSEA's P&P members have the tools we need to be safe on the job. Thanks in advance for your help!"**

## **Psychiatric Care Hospital Staff Say Goodbye To Retiring Colleague**

Friends and co-workers of longtime Vermont State Hospital (now Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital) employee Peter Bartlett gathered this Tuesday to throw a farewell party for their colleague and longtime VSEA member, Steward and Council member. Bartlett is officially retiring from state service on November 25.

Peter is pictured here holding his lovely parting gift, which was presented to him at the party and is covered with well wishes from his colleagues.

VSEA joins Peter's colleagues in thanking him for his service to Vermont and especially to Vermonters who are battling severe mental illness. Peter is especially remembered for the way he stepped up to lead his co-workers both during and after Hurricane Irene. He also advocated for their rights his entire career.

## **Time Running Out For DOC Members To Complete Survey**

VSEA Organizer David Oppenheimer sent an email this week to all VSEA DOC members, urging them to complete a very important "DOC Frontline Worker" survey. In the email, he explains how VSEA DOC workers' survey answers are already being used to help Corrections Unit leadership better determine Unit members' priorities, concerns and needs.

Oppenheimer's email concludes with, "Please take some time today to complete this important survey and urge your co-workers who haven't done so to do the

same. The more frontline workers who fill out the survey, the more compelling and valid the results will be.”

Complete The Survey on [VSEA.org](http://VSEA.org)

## **Brattleboro Retreat CEO Pens Commentary, Calling For Repeal Of Federal Mandate That Limits Mental Health Facilities To 16 Beds**

*VSEA And Its Mental Health Members Shared A Plan With Lawmakers Nearly A Decade Ago To Address The Bed Limit*

The CEO of the Brattleboro Retreat [posted an opinion piece November 15 on VT Digger](#), and in it he calls for a repeal of the federal law that requires facilities caring for persons living with mental illness to have a maximum of just 16 beds. This is an issue that VSEA and its members working in mental health know all too well and one they have been actively working for years with their union to try to address—to no avail.

VSEA members and Vermont mental health advocates produced a working plan as early as 2006 to construct a stand-alone, state-of-the-art, mental-health hospital right here in central Vermont. The plan was introduced largely to address the federal government’s refusal to fund any mental health facility with more than 16 beds. The VSEA/advocate plan called for 65 beds. Critics, including State officials and legislators, argued it would have cost millions to build at the time, but VSEA and advocates countered that it would pay for itself over a short period of time--and it would have.

One legislator who was listening at the time was then Rep. John Rogers, who, after hearing VSEA members’ testimony in favor of a new, state-owned facility, openly asked his colleagues in 2010 “Is there a reason we have to depend on this federal money?”

[Visit VSEA.org for a link](#) to a 2010 *WIA* story about VSEA members’ lobbying efforts, which includes a reference to a letter the Vermont State Hospital's then-Director of Psychiatry Dr. Larry Thomson wrote to legislators about the VSEA plan. At the time, the State was proposing to allow a private entity to take over the service entirely.

Read Dr. Thomson's Letter on [VSEA.org](http://VSEA.org)

VSEA members are urged to contact Vermont’s federal representatives and your state representatives to voice your support for “repeal of the 16-bed federal IMD mandate” and for them to “find more, much-needed acute beds to care for every Vermonter who depends on the state’s mental health system.”

*Note: Dr. Thomson was a VSEA member and leading voice for Vermonters living with mental illness. Sadly, Larry recently passed away. His voice would have been so meaningful right now, especially given the current crisis right here in Vermont.*

Photo: Then VSEA Executive Director Annie Noonan joined the State Hospital's Dr. Larry Thomson to deliver testimony in 2006 about Vermont's mental health crisis and how VSEA members think it can be effectively addressed.

## **Have You Voted Yet In VSEA Treasurer Election? Online Ballot Link Was Emailed To Members On November 14!**

VSEA's Elections, Rules and Nominating Committee sent eligible members a link to their official online VSEA Treasurer-election ballot on November 14. If you requested a paper ballot, it was mailed to you last week.

**Very important!** Your electronic ballot was sent to the primary email address that VSEA currently has on file for you. **If you did not receive an email from [vote@simplyvoting.com](mailto:vote@simplyvoting.com) in your inbox on November 14, please look in your "Other" or "Spam" folders before contacting headquarters to request that your ballot be reissued.**

Role of the Treasurer:

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:**

(Visit [VSEA.org](http://VSEA.org) to access these PDF documents)

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

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

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

## **Only 10 Seats Remain For VSEA Boston Bruins Bus Trip!**

*VSEA's Membership Recruitment Committee had a great response to this week's email solicitation for an upcoming Bruins' bus trip, and they want VSEA members to know that **just 10 tickets now remain** for:*

Boston Bruins vs. Toronto Maple Leafs

Saturday, February 3, 2018

7:00 p.m.

TD Garden ([Section: Balcony 321](#))  
Boston

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 members want the Committee to pursue in the future. Coming up number one was a trip to Boston for a Bruins game, so the Committee has scheduled this trip.

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

To reserve a seat(s) on the bus, contact VSEA Union Representative Bob South. You can reach Bob by email at [bsouth@vsea.org](mailto: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.*

## **This Thanksgiving, Please Consider Giving Some Time 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 on [VSEA.org](http://VSEA.org).

"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."

## **In Wake Of RTW Threat, Article Advises Union Members To Mobilize And Participate En Masse In Large Public Actions**

The U.S. Supreme Court will hand down an almost assuredly anti-union ruling early in 2018 in a case named *Janus vs. Illinois*, which *WIA* has written about in past issues. The ramifications of the Court's decision are particularly bad for America's public and state workers as well as for America's teachers. In advance

of the Court's decision an article posted this week to *The Nation's* website, titled "[How the Labor Movement Can Win Under National 'Right to Work.'](#)" Here is a short excerpt from the piece:

"Union membership in this country is already at a historic low—just 10.7 percent of the workforce was unionized in 2016—and national right-to-work will be another crushing blow. Unions are understandably panicked by the onslaught of anti-worker legislation and bosses who refuse to play by the rules. But the labor movement itself bears some responsibility for the decline in worker power. As membership has plummeted, unions haven't spent time adequately preparing to meet the challenges of today by organizing that builds fighting unions. **Labor's biggest gains have been made not when the law has been on our side but when workers have been most willing to stand up and fight.**"

## **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.

## **Quote Of The Week!**

*"The price of inaction on the IMD exclusion is almost too much to calculate."*

Brattleboro Retreat CEO Louis Josephson, writing in a [November 13 commentary on VT Digger](#) about the need for repeal of a federal mandate that prevents state-run psychiatric hospitals with more than 16 beds from receiving federal funds. VSEA members working in mental health began promoting a plan to address the 16-bed limit as far back as 2006, but to no avail.

## **November 23**

Thanksgiving Day 2018  
Most State Offices & VSEA Closed

## **November 24**

Day-After-Thanksgiving Holiday  
Most State Offices & VSEA Closed