



## WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ February 19 – February 23, 2018

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 Bargaining Teams Begin Prepping For Trip Back To VLRB**

VSEA Labor Relations Director Gary Hoadley sent a brief bargaining update this morning to the home email addresses of all VSEA Non-Management, Corrections and Supervisory Unit members who have provided headquarters with a valid address. In the message, Hoadley details the current status of the 20-day fact-finding process, warning that the State's unwillingness to date to negotiate around the terms and conditions contained in the fact-finder's report means VSEA's Teams are almost certainly headed back the Vermont Labor Relations Board for a final contract determination, much like what happened in 2016.

VSEA members who did not receive this important bargaining notice in their home email can and should update your home or work email address or other information simply by clicking [here](#).

You can also reach out to a member of your Bargaining Team for a more comprehensive update. [Find a list of Team members here](#).

### **VSEA Creates Council Member & Steward Facebook Group Pages**

Responding to VSEA members' requests for new ways to engage with their fellow union members and state employees, VSEA recently created two new Facebook group pages, one for Council members and another for Stewards. The pages are being administered by VSEA, and in order to keep out trolls or non-members, the name of anyone seeking to join one or both of the groups will be checked through VSEA's membership database.

Hopefully, these pages will provide VSEA Council members and Stewards with a place to ask questions, provide information and post articles of interest to the group. In addition, Council members and Stewards can now engage with their counterparts statewide on a daily basis.

[Join VSEA Council Facebook Group](#)

[Join VSEA Steward Facebook Group](#)

### **VPCH Signs Settlement With VOSHA. Remedy Now Required.**

VSEA frontline workers at the Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital (VPCH) in Berlin confirmed with management this week that it did sign a settlement with the Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Administration (VOSHA) on Friday, February 17, which means VPCH management is now required (by set dates) to

address several serious safety and health violations identified by VOSHA inspectors early in 2017. The facility was initially fined \$14,000 by VOSHA, but it was temporarily waived in lieu of promised abatement. At the time, VSEA President Dave Bellini said in a press statement, "Hopefully these long-awaited VOSHA citations will help cut down on the high number of employee assaults at the VPCH. This situation and others across Vermont are why VSEA will never stop fighting for stronger safety and security protections for our members. VSEA members working at VPCH look forward to assisting management in any way they can to make sure these serious VOSHA citations are adequately addressed--and in a timely manner."

Here are some of the short-term fixes VOSHA is requiring:

- By February 17, VPCH management must begin to create a "Safety Council", and, according to VSEA members, it is in the works;
- By March 5, VPCH management must issue a survey "on how best to provide information and decisions discussed around EIPs and High-Risk Notes and how best to get more staff input";
- By March 5, VPCH management must staff survey on risk assessment protocol;
- By March 5, VPCH management must hold training for staff on "legal issues";
- By March 19, VPCH management must produce a first draft of a "stand-alone" written workplace prevention and crisis response policy: to include a laundry list of things;
- By April 18, VPCH management must add a document to each patient's admission packet, clearly articulating that violence or threats of violence are unacceptable; and
- By June 18, VPCH management must host a training forum with "selected" frontline staff.

In February 2019, VPCH management must meet one of the most important VOSHA requirements, which is to provide employees with a place of employment "free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or significant physical harm to employees."

VOSHA is also requiring VPCH management to provide it with a "full accounting of all fiduciary expenditures, including staff time and capital expenditures, to achieve abatement. VSEA will also be asking to see this accounting.

## **Vermont Has New England's Smallest Percentage Of Unionized Public Workers**

A website called "The 74" posted a story this week that talks the *Janus v. Illinois* lawsuit and includes a map that shows the percentage of unionized public-sector workers in every state.

Here's a look at New England states:

New York - 67.4%

Connecticut - 66.2%

Rhode Island - 63.9%

Maine - 48.7%

New Hampshire – 48.1%  
Vermont – 46.4%

## **Legislative Committee Meeting February 28**

In advance of the coming Town Meeting break, VSEA's Legislative Committee is meeting on February 28 to discuss the current status of legislation important to state employees, get updated on Unit bargaining progress and the potential to have to educate lawmakers about the process and to meet with lawmakers who are key State House players in the VSEA-member-related issue debates happening now and the ones that will be happening soon.

## **AOT Worksite Meeting On February 28!**

VSEA Organizer Carmen Scoles is holding a meeting on February 28 with AOT members who work at National Life in Montpelier. The meeting begins at 12:00 p.m. in the Fourth Floor Conference Room (N413) at National Life in Montpelier.

## **AOT Employees Remind Motorists To Respect Snow Plows**

The Agency of Transportation recently [posted a video to its Facebook page](#), featuring frontline workers reminding motorists to be careful when driving in the proximity of a Vermont snowplow. It's an important message, and VSEA members are urged to share the post with your friends, family and co-workers.

Motorists should also slow down when approaching AOT workers filling potholes. Just last week, a 64-year-old Colorado AOT worker was struck by a car while filling potholes, and he died a few days later. [The Gillette News Record reports](#) that the employee's co-workers are carrying the worker's remains from Denver to Pagosa Spring for burial, and the procession will include a snowplow that the worker drove during his 14 years as a state employee.

## **VSEA Members Eligible For 2018 Vermont State Colleges Staff Federation Scholarships**

If you are a VSEA member—or a member's spouse, dependent or domestic partner—you are eligible to receive a 2018 Vermont State Colleges Staff Federation (VSCSF) scholarship award!

**The fund is intended help VSEA members and their spouses, dependents or domestic partners who are seeking financial assistance to pursue post-secondary educational goals at one of the following:**

- **Castleton State College;**
- **Lyndon State College;**
- **Johnson State College (soon to be Northern VT University) or**
- **Vermont Technical College.**

The Scholarship Committee will base its decision for the scholarship eligibility on the following criteria:

- Career goals;
- Financial need:

- Abilities and initiative;
- Life experiences; and
- College attending

The scholarship application must be completed in full and one \$500 scholarship will be awarded. The deadline to apply is May 31, 2018.

[Application Here!](#)

VSCSF scholarship applications and essays should be sent to:

Samuel Read Hall Library  
c/o Monique Prive  
P.O. Box 919  
Lyndonville, VT 05851-0919

If you have any questions, please contact Scholarship Committee Chair Denise Doyon by phone at 802-626-6350 or by e-mail at <mailto:denise.doyon@northernvermont.edu>.

*Note: VSCSF scholarships are not to be confused with VSEA's annual scholarships, also being offered right now [here!](#) Eligibility does not require attendance at one of the VSCSF's four designated colleges or universities.*

## **April 2018 Is Next Opportunity To Enroll In VSEA's Popular Delta Dental Supplemental Plan Benefit**

Letters will be sent to VSEA members in April 2018, announcing a new, open-enrollment period to participate in your union's very popular Delta Dental Supplemental Plan. The enrollment period is also when members already in the program can amend their number of dependents also using the program, if this number has changed in the past year.

Once received in your mailbox, all enrollment forms will be due back on a May 2018 date to be announced.

*Note: If you are already taking advantage of this benefit, and you have no changes this year to your coverage, **you do not need to send back a new form**, as you will be automatically renewed.*

## **VSEA 2018 Scholarship Applications Now Online!**

All members should have received an email this week from the VSEA Scholarship & Awards Committee, announcing that the committee is once again accepting scholarship applications from VSEA members and their spouses, dependents and domestic partners.

[A downloadable 2018 scholarship application is now available online.](#) VSEA students seeking financial assistance this year in the pursuit of your post-secondary educational goals are especially urged to apply.

## **VSEA Legislative Team Publishing Weekly Updates**

VSEA's legislative team at the State House is now publishing a short, information-packed, weekly recap of what's happening in Montpelier that VSEA members need to know about.

You can find all future and past legislative updates at your convenience on VSEA.org. Just [log into your account](#), navigate to "[Forms, Documents & Downloads](#)" in the left-side menu, then select "VSEA Legislative Team Weekly Reports" from the menu. If you are already logged in, [you can follow this link to the 2018 report archive](#).

**Need a VSEA.org account?**

[Sign up for a free account here.](#)

**Enroll Today In VSEA Vision Insurance Program!**

February 1 was the kick-off date for VSEA members to enroll in your union's popular vision-care program.

[Learn more about the vision benefit being offered here!](#)

**2018 VSEA Bus Trip To Foxwoods Casino!**

The VSEA Membership Recruitment Committee is pleased to announce a 2018 casino trip with a two-night stay.

**Dates:**

March 23 to 25, 2018

**Bus Cost:**

\$70 per person

Bus will depart from Waterbury at 12:00 p.m. and White River Junction at 1:00 p.m.

**Lodging (Two Nights/Two Trees Inn):**

\$248/single occupancy

\$138 per person/double occupancy

\$122 per person/triple occupancy

**Included Bonuses:**

Baggage handling;

(2) \$10 food credit or full Festival Buffet;

\$5 food credit or full Breakfast Buffet;

\$20 slot play;

**20% discount at any Foxwoods gift shop with a purchase of \$25 up to \$1,000; and A Foxwoods souvenir**

**Questions?**

Please contact VSEA Union Rep Bob South ([bsouth@vsea.org](mailto:bsouth@vsea.org)) or Administrative Assistant Sue DeVoid ([sdevoid@vsea.org](mailto:sdevoid@vsea.org)). Each can be reached by phone at **802-223-5247**.

**Register For VSEA's Trip To Foxwoods Casino Here:**

## **Important Information!**

Payment must be received within one week of registering or you will lose your spot. Cash, check and **credit card** payments accepted. To pay, please contact VSEA Union Representative Bob South by email ([bsouth@vsea.org](mailto:bsouth@vsea.org)) or phone 802-223-5247. Thank You!

Note: Always remember that you can contact a member of your Unit Bargaining Team at any time with questions about the current negotiations. [Find Unit Bargaining Team Contact Information Here](#)

## **Economic Policy Institute Releases Report That Exposes The Organizations That Are Funding The *Janus v. Illinois* Hearing**

The Economic Policy Institute (EPI) released a report this week that shines a light on “the organizations financing the attack on unions’ ability to represent workers.”

The EPI report begins:

Over the last decade, a number of cases attacking the rights of public-sector union members have been quietly working their way through the courts and, finally, up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

*The most recent of these challenges is Janus v. AFSCME Council 31, which the U.S. Supreme Court will hear on February 26. If the court rules for Janus, it will likely have the most significant impact on workers’ freedom to organize and bargain collectively in 70 years.*

*Janus is the third case to come before the Supreme Court in five years involving public-sector unions’ ability to collect “fair share” (or “agency”) fees. As this report will show, Janus, and the two fair share cases that preceded it, did not grow from an organic, grassroots challenge to union representation. Rather, the fair share cases are being financed by a small group of foundations with ties to the largest and most powerful corporate lobbies. These organizations and the policymakers they support have succeeded in advancing a policy agenda that weakens the bargaining power of workers. In Janus, these interests have focused their attack on public-sector workers—the workforce with the highest union density.*

*We examine the core group of organizations financing this litigation. By tracing the origins of these legal challenges, and explaining how the challenges target unions, we show that challenging fair share fees in the courts appears to be part of a broader billionaire-financed agenda to weaken unions and shift power away from ordinary workers.*

[Full EPI Report](#)

## **Catholic Church Pens Strong Condemnation Of Janus Lawsuit's Potential Harm To Workers**

From February 21 Post To National Catholic Reporter:

*"The strength of individuals, bonded together for better wages and working conditions, is not only a Catholic teaching, it is reflected in the National Labor*

*Relations Act. Employees have 'the right to self-organization,' to join or form 'labor organizations' and 'to bargain collectively.' Congress enacted the National Labor Relations Act, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed it precisely for the purpose of equalizing bargaining power.*

*In the whole history of the United States, there are few clearer examples of the convergence of Catholic social thought and American public policy than the National Labor Relations Act. The two systems of thought converge precisely on the importance of solidarity. Solidarity is a Christian virtue that aims to promote social justice; it is also the foundation of American labor organizations and a precept of federal law.*

*And while the National Labor Relations Act does not apply directly to Janus v. AFSCME, the spirit of Catholic social thought, and the original intent of the National Labor Relations Act can both be productively accessed for interpretive guidance."*

Full Post Here: <http://bit.ly/2sQOFdx>

## **In Wake Of Horrific Parkland School Shooting, Florida Teachers' Unions Launch Assistance Fund**

From the Florida teachers' unions' fundraising page:

*"Our hearts are broken. It is impossible to make sense of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Broward County, Florida. But in moments of tragedy, our union family comes together to support one another—and we ask you to join us.*

*Your contribution through the AFT Disaster Relief Fund will go directly to providing resources and supports for the students, families, educators and staff at Stoneman and the surrounding school community.*

*Thank you for standing with our union brothers and sisters and the communities they serve."*

Contribute here: <http://bit.ly/2BGG2oj>

## **West Virginia Teachers Walk Out Across State!**

Chanting to lawmakers "Do your job so I can do mine," West Virginia teachers converged on the state capital today after walking off the job en masse yesterday across 55 counties. It is the first statewide teacher's strike since 1990. Teachers are frustrated with the Governor's proposed pay increase and health care raid and are demanding help from lawmakers.

The walkout is only scheduled to last two days, but according to [an Associated Press story this week](#), many teachers are telling their union they are prepared to stay out an additional week(s), if that is what it takes.

"If our people tell us to, then that's what we'll do," says one teacher.

## **Quote Of The Week!**

*"So the folks from Vermont are treated like they're from Pennsylvania."*

Vermont AHS Secretary Al Gobeille, commenting in [a February 22 Seven Days story](#) about State officials and lawmakers now rethinking a decision that essentially signed away Vermont inmates' rights as part of a contract agreement the DOC inked with a Pennsylvania prison. VSEA openly questioned the potential adverse ramifications of this contract provision when it was announced.

## **Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:**

### **February 28**

Legislative Committee  
VSEA HQ  
155 State Street  
Montpelier  
8:30 a.m.

### **February 28**

Organizer's Meeting: AOT  
National Life  
Fourth Floor Conference Room (N413)  
Montpelier  
8:30 a.m.

### **March 1**

Judiciary Unit Labor / Management Committee Meeting  
VSEA HQ  
155 State St.  
Montpelier  
9:00 a.m.