



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ May 7 – May 11, 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!

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Vermont Labor Cheers Senate Committee's "NO" Vote On O'Neill Confirmation!

Vermont workers, especially VSEA members and retirees, cheered Wednesday's news that the Senate Economic Development Committee voted 4-1 not to confirm State appointee Karen O'Neill to a "neutral" seat on the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB).

Following the vote, VSEA President Dave Bellini said in a Facebook post to VSEA's page:

"This was a really important first step in this process, and the Committee's vote today should definitely send a strong message to the rest of the Senate. Karen O'Neill is just not the right person for this neutral seat. Clearly, she's accomplished and has a very impressive resume, but her experience is all management and this is not a management seat. It's good to see the Committee members heard VSEA's and other Vermont unions' concerns and voted nearly unanimously not to confirm."

VSEA Executive Director Steve Howard reminded Vermonters about the importance of labor's campaign to stop the O'Neill confirmation, telling VT Digger, "What's at stake here is the credibility of the Vermont Labor Relation Board. And if they care about whether they are seen as a fair arbiter of labor disputes, they will take the motion to reconsider seriously."

The Committee's recommendation was soon shared with all state senators, setting up this afternoon's floor vote by the entire body on Ms. O'Neill's confirmation. VSEA requested a roll-call vote, so each senator's vote will be known.

Press on Vote:

VT Digger: [Senate Committee Votes Against Divisive Labor Board Member Seven Days](#): [In Rare Move, Senate Committee Rejects Scott's Labor Board Appointee](#)

Vermont AFSCME Pens Letter This Week, Opposing O'Neill Confirmation:

[Read Vermont AFSCME's Letter](#)

Happy Public Service Recognition Week 2018 VSEA!

Every year, a week in May is designated to honor the men and women who choose public service as a career.

VSEA appreciates each and every VSEA member and retirees' service and desire to ensure Vermont remains the great place it is to live and work--regardless of which way the political winds are blowing.

In case you missed it, VSEA President Dave Bellini sent the following message to members and retirees:

On behalf of myself and the VSEA Board of Trustees, I want to wish you a happy Public Service Recognition Week 2018 and use the opportunity to once again to thank you for your service to Vermonters, whether current or past.

Times are tough. I won't lie. All too often anymore, state employees and the valuable and essential services we provide are reduced to bargaining chips in budget fights that we know are many times a result of poor management, poor budgeting or poor decision making. I make a point when talking with the State, legislators or a reporter to remind them that if workers at the State Hospital had been listened to, especially during the recession and post-Irene, Vermont would have a 54-bed, state-of-the art, stand-alone mental health facility in central Vermont that would have paid for itself by now. If Corrections officials, the State and legislators had listened to frontline workers, we would have turned hundreds of temp positions into full-time positions by now and recruitment and retention would be less of an issue. Just a couple of examples, but there are more.

Make no mistake. VSEA is committed this week, of all weeks, to honor our members' and retirees' service by continuing to turn the heat up on our campaign to ensure Karen O'Neill is not confirmed to a "neutral" seat on the Vermont Labor Relations Board and by continuing to take whatever legal steps are possible to get a fair hearing on VSEA Bargaining Teams' last best contract offer.

While I am on the subject, I want to say special thanks this week to the members of your VSEA Bargaining Teams. These are every day state employees, like you and me, who often sacrifice a lot to attend to work on your behalf by attending countless meetings, hearings and bargaining sessions. I can tell you personally that your Bargaining Team members and their staff liaisons are some of the most upset about the process this time around and the way it played out in the end. They want to see justice prevail here, and so do I.

Finally, with an anti-public-sector-union U.S. Supreme Court June decision looming large (Janus vs. Illinois), I especially want to remind members and retirees about the importance of VSEA in our every day lives, helping provide us with fair wages and benefits, a safe workplace, a secure retirement, a process to resolve workplace conflicts, representation at the State House, media exposure, legal advice and representation, and a whole lot more. Remember, in states where some kind of union busting has already occurred, workers who thought life would be better without a union are already signing a union card again, saying hindsight is 20/20 and they now understand how important union representation is in their daily working lives.

Happy Public Service Recognition Week VSEA! Thank you for your service.

VSEA Corrections Member Loses Everything In Fire

VSEA member Matthew Jensen, a Corrections Officer at the Northwest Correctional Facility, recently lost everything he owned, including pets, in a house fire.

In a comment to a VSEA Facebook post about an online fund being set up to help, Jensen wrote:

"Thank you so much. There are no words for me to express how much 'this' all means to me. It's overwhelming at times the amount of support and help I've received from the community and my work family. I can never truly thank everyone enough but I'll sure as hell try. I also just want to say thank you to VSEA for taking time to acknowledge my situation, it's mind blowing to wake up to see something like this. Thank you so much to everyone. Every little thing is appreciated."

VSEA members and retirees who want to donate something to help Matthew get back on his feet, can do so here:

<https://bit.ly/2I6hISX>

Thanks in advance for helping!

VSEA General Counsel Talks Labor Issues On Retiree's Public Access Show

VSEA Retired Members' Chapter President Bob Hooper hosts a show on a Chittenden County-based, public-access television station, and his guest this week was VSEA General Counsel Tim Belcher, who talks with Hooper about how VSEA is legally addressing the flawed process that led to the State's last best contract offer recently being imposed on VSEA members and retirees. Belcher also discusses other important issues confronting VSEA members and all working Vermonters, offering a legal perspective on the fights ahead.

[View Show Here](#) on VSEA.org

Vermont Life To Cease Publication, Costing State Jobs

Just a few months after the State decided to disregard nine bids from private vendors who wanted to try to save the financially troubled *Vermont Life* magazine, [Seven Days reports on May 10](#) that the State will now cease publication of the magazine next week, costing six workers their jobs (two classified). The magazine began publishing 72 years ago.

From the story:

Sen. Jane Kitchel (D-Caledonia) said she was sad that the administration chose to close the magazine just a few months after nine outside organizations made bids to purchase it.

Those bids were a response to legislation last year that came out of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which Kitchel chairs. It required Schirling's agency to

explore the possibility of selling Vermont Life to avoid ceasing publication. The state created the magazine more than 70 years ago.

Kitchel said she values Vermont Life and last year's legislation was designed to put the magazine in the best financial situation possible.

"On the surface, it appeared that if an entity was able to successfully publish other magazines, that perhaps they had greater expertise and understanding of the market," Kitchel said Thursday.

"We were basically saying, 'Should the State of Vermont be in the publishing business?' and [the administration's] determination was, 'Yes, it should,' and then where are we?" Kitchel said. "Less than a year later, they're saying the magazine's got to be discontinued. That was not how we had hoped things would evolve."

State's Surplus Vehicle & Equipment Auction Is Tomorrow!

BGS issued a press release on May 4, announcing that the State's annual vehicle and equipment auction is being held Saturday, May 12, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the AOT Central Garage in Berlin (across from the Wayside Restaurant).

A major collection of state vehicles and equipment including, dump trucks, plow trucks, pick-up trucks, police cruisers, fleet passenger vehicles, cargo vans, box trucks, boats, four wheelers, snow mobiles, kayaks, riding mowers, tools, tires, generators, miscellaneous parts and more will be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

Auction registration and vehicle previews will be held on Friday, May 11, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and again on Auction Day, May 12 from 8:00 a.m. until conclusion.

[More Information](#) on VSEA.org

VSEA Creates Timeline Of Bargaining-Related Webpage Posts Since November 2017

VSEA's Communications Department has created a special webpage that includes all bargaining-related posts made to the union's homepage since November 2017. It's another handy tool for members and retirees to reference to brush up on VSEA's 2018 contract fight. VSEA members can also steer your co-workers to the page, especially those who may not be following VSEA's contract and confirmation campaigns closely, and who are looking for some historical perspective.

[VSEA 2018 Bargaining Fight Posts' Timeline](#)

Upcoming Steward Training Dates

VSEA Field Services Director Gretchen Naylor asked WIA to announce a revised series of Steward training dates in the coming months. The dates are:

- June 8: Holiday Inn, Rutland; and
- September 18: VSEA HQ, Montpelier.

Trainings begin at 8:30 a.m.

[Register](#) on VSEA.org

Organizer's Worksite Meeting On May 16 In Barre!

VSEA Organizer Carmen Scoles is holding a meeting on May 16 with VSEA members working at the McFarland State Office Building in Barre. The meeting begins at 12:00 p.m. in the McFarland Building's Economic Services Suite 150 Conference Room. There will be pizza and beverages for members attending. A contract update will be provided, and there will be a discussion about the O'Neill confirmation, the VLRB decision and lots more.

Members with questions can contact Carmen by email (cscoles@vsea.org) or by phone at 802-223-5247.

Organizer's Worksite Meeting On May 18 In Colchester!

VSEA Organizer Carmen Scoles is holding a meeting on May 18 with VSEA members working at the Health Lab in Colchester. The meeting begins at 12:00 p.m. in the Health Lab's Conference Room 202, located at 359 South Park Drive.. There will be pizza and beverages for members attending. A contract update will be provided, and there will be a discussion about the O'Neill confirmation, the VLRB decision and lots more.

Members with questions can contact Carmen by email (cscoles@vsea.org) or by phone at 802-223-5247.

Time Running Out For VSEA Members To Apply For A 2018 Vermont State Colleges Staff Federation Scholarship

Note: This is not affiliated with VSEA's Scholarship Program!

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 University;**
- **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](#) On VSEA.org

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. Eligibility does not require attendance at one of the VSCSF's four designated colleges or universities.

It's Time! Please Donate Today To Your Unit Sick Leave Bank

Donations Being Accepted April 1 To June 30

VSEA member Dawn Carrillo staffs the Non-Management Unit Sick Leave Bank, and she is once again asking *WIA* to help her solicit time donations to the bank from VSEA members. Carrillo is also announcing that the donation period is April 1 to June 30, 2018, and she reminds that **donations to the Corrections and Supervisory Unit Banks are also needed.**

"Just donating an hour of your time can mean the world to a fellow employee," reads a DHR flyer. It also informs state employees that they can **donate any amount of annual- or personal-leave time** to their respective Unit 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."

Senator Sanders Floats Pro-Labor, Pro-Worker Legislation

[VTDigger reports on May 9](#) about new legislation rolled out this week by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, which, according to the story "would make a series of changes to labor laws that would make it easier for workers to organize and would establish protections for unions."

More from the story:

The bill would change the requirements for unions to be recognized, so that the union could be certified if the majority of eligible workers sign on — a provision that would make it easier for workers to form collective bargaining units.

It would eliminate measures some states have adopted which have hampered unions' ability to collect dues.

It also puts in place requirements for companies to negotiate with unions, and calls for a crackdown on some practices, like classifying workers as contractors rather than full-time employees.

"This is nothing radical," said Sanders this week. "This simply says that when working people want to come together to form a union for decent wages and decent benefits, we will no longer tolerate corporate America denying them that right."

Vermont Found To Be Best State For Working Moms

The online publication [CheatSheet](#) posted an article on [May 9](#) titled, "Working Moms Have the Best Life in These States" and Vermont came in first place nationwide.

From the posting about Vermont:

You'll find the lowest gender pay gap in the country here.

If working moms want to beat pay inequality, access excellent childcare, and have a life outside of work, Vermont is America's best state for it.

Start here: State employees can take a total of six months of paid and unpaid maternity leave. With that sort of protection, moms can get the best of both worlds in The Green Mountain State.

Government Workers Voted In Large Numbers In 2016

[Newsmax](#) reports on [May 8](#), 2018, that 74 percent of the nation's 21 million government workers voted in the 2016 election. Private-sector worker turnout was 61 percent and self-employed worker turnout was 69 percent.

From the story:

Overall, government employees represent 9 percent of the U.S. population but cast 11 percent of the votes in 2016. Government employees are generally more supportive of higher taxes and activist government than other Americans. As a result, the higher levels of turnout among those paid by taxpayers could have significant policy implications.

If private sector employees turned out at the same rate as government employees, an additional 22 million private sector workers would have voted. That's more than the total number of votes cast by all government employees.

If all those retired or otherwise not in the workforce had voted at the same 74 percent rate as government employees, they would have cast an additional 16 million votes. Again, that's more than the total number of 15 million votes cast by those on the public payroll.

Waves Of Workers Hitting Picket Lines In 2018

[CBS' MoneyWatch reports on May 8](#) that almost as many workers have gone on strike through March 2018 as went on strike in all of 2017.

From the story:

*The recent spike [in strikes] follows a relatively placid period on the labor front. The U.S. Department of Labor counted seven stoppages of 1,000 or more workers and lasting at least one shift in 2017, making it the second-lowest number recorded in a year, and fewest since 2009, when the department **counted** five such strikes.*

*Strikes idled 25,000 workers last year, the second-lowest annual count since 1947. Among those were walkouts of 15,000 information industry workers, including a long-running labor dispute between Charter Communications (**CHTR**) and 1,800 union members and another strike lasting one day by 13,200 AT&T (**T**) employees.*

But the first three months of 2018 have seen revived activity on the labor front, and the second quarter is suiting up to be active as well, as workers strike over issues including pay, benefits -- and in the case of some educators -- distress over lack of funds for equipment and supplies.

Nearly 37,000 workers were involved in two large strikes in February, while January had the 1,800 Charter employees idle. In all, seven large work stoppages occurred in the first quarter.

Quote Of The Week!

"What we are here to say loudly and proudly is that workers in America have the constitutional right to come together in unions and bargain collectively."

VT Senator Bernie Sanders, quoted in a [May 9 VTDigger story](#) about his roll out this week of pro-labor, pro-worker legislation.

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

May 12

BGS State Surplus Auction
AOT Central Garage
Berlin
10:00 a.m.

May 16

Organizer's Worksite Meeting: Barre
McFarland State Office Building
5 Perry Street
Barre
12:00 p.m.

May 16

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

May 18

Organizer's Worksite Meeting: Colchester
Health Lab
359 South Park Drive
Colchester
11:30 a.m.

May 18

Chapter Presidents' Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
155 State Street
Montpelier
9:00 a.m.