



WEEK IN ACTION!

Weekly News From Your Union ~ June 4 – June 8, 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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VSEA Formally Requests Impact Bargaining With State In Advance Of Potential Government Shutdown

VSEA issued the following press release this morning:

With the Scott Administration now talking openly of using a state shutdown as leverage in budget negotiations, the Vermont State Employees' Association (VSEA) sent a letter today to Department of Human Resources (DHR) Labor Relations Director John Berard, requesting to negotiate with the State "over the impact of any potential shutdown of state government on the bargaining unit members we represent."

"State workers know what it means to have our ability to earn a living wage used as leverage, and we strongly object to this Administration threatening our livelihoods and our services in order to force its opponents to cave to its rigid budget demands," explains VSEA President Dave Bellini. "Governor Scott is using state workers--and really every Vermonter who depends on state funds for a living--as pawns in a political game. VSEA strongly believes this budget dispute must be resolved through the normal democratic process, not by economic coercion."

Here is the list of items VSEA is requesting to negotiate, prior to a shutdown:

- Compensation to be paid to employees after budgetary authority is restored, both for employees who are called to work and for those who are prevented from working;
- The designation of employees as essential, including the selection of which employees are selected to work where a worksite operates on a reduced workforce;
- Procedures for notifying employees of the commencement or conclusion of the shutdown;
- Whether any non-working time is treated as work time for benefits and other rights;
- What obligations employees may be under to be available for work during non-work days; and

- The treatment of pre-scheduled vacations, employees who are otherwise entitled to use sick leave, and compensation for the July 4 holiday.

In the letter to DHR, VSEA also requests the following to help better prepare for negotiations:

- Any and all instructions or other communications between or among the Governor or members of his administration and the various departments or agencies of state government concerning any potential shutdown of state government;
- Any contingency plans developed or being developed at the state-wide level or by the agencies and departments concerning the operations or closures of operations of state government in the event of a failure of budgetary authority; and
- Any instructions or information provided to contractors regarding the impact of any potential shut down on their operations or funding.

“As long as the threat of a shutdown remains on the table, we need to prepare for that possibility,” adds Bellini. “Our members want to know in advance how this is going to all go down, in the event there is still a budget stalemate at the end of June. We remember the chaos and indecision about services and personnel after Hurricane Irene slammed us, and there’s no way anyone wants a repeat of that, which is why we are looking for concrete answers about a shutdown weeks in advance. VSEA remains hopeful a budget deal will be reached, and Vermont can continue to claim to be one of the few states to never suffer a government shutdown.”

VSEA Hosts Two Successful Gubernatorial Forums

VSEA’s Legislative Committee hosted two successful gubernatorial candidate forums this week, inviting candidates from all parties to participate and speak directly to VSEA members and retirees about how he or she would operate state government, the changes each would make, how each would bargain, how each would treat state workers and a host of other topics.

The first forum was Monday in Burlington and the second was held in Montpelier earlier today. VSEA members and retirees who missed the forums, or who want to watch one or both again can do so [here](#).

House Speaker & Lt. Governor Host Conference Call With VSEA Members & Retirees To Talk State Budget Impasse

The clock is ticking on the number of days left for lawmakers and the State to reach agreement on a budget, and it’s anyone’s guess right now if a deal is possible or not. However, in an effort to gather as much input as possible about how a government shutdown would impact state employees and the services you provide, House Speaker Mitzi Johnson and Lt. Governor David Zuckermen spent an hour on the phone on Wednesday with a hand full of members and retirees,

listening to employee concerns and questions about a shut down and providing whatever information they could about possible outcomes.

VSEA thanks the Speaker and Lt. Governor for making time to include state employees and retirees in the budget-impasse conversation.

VSEA Creates One-Stop “Janus” Webpage To Educate Members & Retirees About The Expected Ruling & Its Potential Harm

VSEA’s Organizing Department worked this week with Communications Specialist Kris Lizzari to create a one-stop webpage where VSEA members and retirees can go to learn more about the *Janus vs. Illinois* case, which will be decided any day now by the U.S. Supreme Court. All signs point to SCOTUS delivering a bad decision to America’s public-sector workers by ruling that unions representing public-sector workers can no longer collect agency fees. Well known to most union members following this lawsuit is that it was brought forward by a right-to-work advocate and his allies, who want nothing more than to accelerate corporate Americas’ race to the bottom by dealing a massive economic blow to Vermont and all American workers and trampling all over your employment rights as well.

If you haven’t already, begin educating yourself today about what a bad *Janus* decision means—or supplement what you know already—by clicking [here](#). Please also inform your co-workers about the *Janus* page and talk with them about what you learned and remind them of the importance of a union in their every day life. You could make a difference. Every study shows that nothing is more effective than member-to-member communication.

Thanks in advance for visiting VSEA’s *Janus* webpage to ensure you are an informed union member.

State Employees Adapt (Again) After Being Displaced By Fire At National Life

Seven years after Hurricane Irene caused hundreds of state employees in Waterbury to have to uproot and settle into new digs at National Life, a fire this week at the complex in Montpelier is forcing them to pack up their belongings and move again--but this time it's just temporary. As [VTDigger reports on June 6](#), state employees are dedicated to the ensuring their services to Vermonters continue uninterrupted, so, as the article says, they are "making do."

VSEA applauds these employees for their resilience and thanks them for their adaptability.

Brattleboro Chapter Elects New Officers

Members attending the Brattleboro Chapter’s most recent meeting elected new slate of officers, and they are:

Robin Rieske – President

Department of Health

Jeff Trowt – Vice President
Department of Motor Vehicles

Katie Knaeble – Clerk
Department of Labor

John Connelly – Treasurer
Department for Children and Families

Central Vermont Chapter Elects New Officers

Members attending this week's Central Vermont Chapter meeting in Montpelier elected new slate of officers, and they are:

Dawn Carillo – President
Agency of Digital Services

Marion Allen – Vice President
Department of Labor

Cassandra Edson – Clerk
Department of Labor

Erica Mongeon – Treasurer
Department of Financial Regulation

More Photos From Successful VSEA Chapter Food Drives

VSEA is applauding the Chapter Presidents' Committee for sponsoring a recent successful food drive, asking state employees across all Chapters to donate food and necessities. True to form, VSEA members donated generously to the drive, which culminated at the end of May.

Last week, *WIA* shared photos of the donations made to the Brattleboro and Bennington Chapters' food drives, and this week *WIA* is pleased to share photos submitted this week from the Central Vermont and Lamoille Valley Chapters.

Thanks again to every VSEA member who donated and to every Chapter President for spearheading the drive.

Just A Few Weeks Remain To Donate To Your Unit Sick Leave Bank

Donation Period Ends June 30!

VSEA member Dawn Carrillo is reminding Non-Management Unit members that your Unit's Sick Leave Bank is currently accepting time donations to the bank and that the deadline to do so is June 30, 2018. Carillo 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.”

Next Rutland Chapter Meeting Is June 13

VSEA’s Rutland Chapter will hold its next Chapter meeting on Wednesday, June 13, at 12:00 p.m. at the Asa Bloomer Building’s fourth-floor conference room, located at 88 Merchant’s Row in Rutland. **Important Chapter elections being conducted!** Food and beverages available.

Please direct any questions or comments to VSEA Rutland Chapter President Matt Jakubowski via email at firebeevt@yahoo.com.

Upcoming Steward Training

The next Steward training is:

- September 18: VSEA HQ, Montpelier.

Training begins at 8:30 a.m.

To register, please email Gretchen Naylor gnaylor@vsea.org

New Benefits Available Only To VSEA Members And Your Families

VSEA is pleased to announce that the following new benefits are available to members and your families:

- Guaranteed Acceptance Life Insurance up to \$150,000*;
- Guaranteed Tax-Deferred Interest of 4.00%;
- Fund Value Accumulations can be taken in a lump sum or lifetime retirement income;
- Accelerated Death Benefit for Long Term Care allows the withdrawal of 100% death benefits;

- Accelerated Death Benefit for Terminal Illness allows the withdrawal of 75% of death benefits;
- Portable if you change jobs or retire, you can take these valuable benefits with you;
- Loans available at low interest rates; and
- Convenient Premiums through payroll deduction or bank draft.

*Available to family members with limited underwriting

Benefit Counselors will be available next week in the following locations. To schedule an appointment, please call Paul McNally at (732) 687-1859.

Monday, June 11
Burlington Area Locations
9:30am-5:00pm

Tuesday, June 12
Johnson State University, Hyde Park, & Waterbury Area Locations
9:30am-5:00pm

Wednesday, June 13
Montpellier, Barre & West Berlin Area Locations
9:30am-4:00pm

Thursday, June 14
Williston, Essex Junction, & Colchester Area Locations
9:30am-5:00pm

Friday, June 15
Burlington Area Locations
9:30am-12:00pm

VSEA Insurance Representative Joanne Woodcock Launching Remote Sign-Up Option For Bennington Members

Longtime VSEA Insurance Representative Joanne Woodcock sent an email to VSEA members in Bennington this week, announcing that she is beginning an area-by-area, remote sign-up service, where you meet and enroll with Joanne by computer and phone.

From Joanne's email:

"We've been working hard to make it easier for VSEA members to sign up for our insurance benefits. You can now enroll anytime just by making an appointment. The sign up is done remotely using your computer and speaking to me over the phone.

For more information email Joanne Woodcock at joanne@vseainsurance.com"

Note: Keep checking *WIA* to see when Joanne will be signing up members in your area.

Brattleboro Reformer Editorial Nails It: "Vermont's Prison Road Trip Needs To End"

The [Brattleboro Reformer has an excellent editorial today](#) that takes the State and lawmakers to task for continuing to send Vermont inmates to private, for-profit, out-of-state prisons, even after the latest disturbing news out of Pennsylvania. Now the State and lawmakers are reviewing plans to ship Vermont's soon-to-be-displaced Pennsylvania inmates to either Mississippi (yikes!) or Rhode Island.

The Reformer editorial says enough is enough, and VSEA agrees, evidenced by the editorial's ending, which is:

"Steve Howard is the executive director of the Vermont State Employees' Association, the union that represents state workers including corrections officers. He had this to say to [VTDigger.org](#), and it reflects our view: "We should be bringing prisoners close to home," he said, "in facilities that are run according to our values."

Note: Now, about that empty Windsor facility...

UVM Nurses Conducting Strike Vote This Weekend

Frustrated by the University of Vermont (UVM) Medical Center's management team's "our-way-or-the-highway" bargaining stance at the negotiating table, nurses at the facility are conducting a strike vote this weekend. The nurses' contract expires July 9., 2018.

From a June 7 post to the Vermont Federation of Nurses & Health Professionals Facebook page about why a strike vote is needed:

"After a series of Unfair Labor Practices during more than two months of bargaining, including intimidation, polling, interfering with bargaining reps, surveilling union activity, removing union flyers, prohibiting union discussions, and generally not bargaining in good faith.

Note: *WIA* will continue to follow this story as it develops. Solidarity.

Poll Finds Americans View Long-Term Decline In Union Membership Negatively

This week, the Pew Research Center published the findings of a recent poll it conducted, asking Americans how they view unions and how they view the steady decline of union membership nationwide.

From [the Center's online summary](#):

About half of Americans (51%) say the large reduction in union representation has been mostly bad for working people in the U.S., while 35% say it has been mostly good, according to the Center's survey, which was conducted in April and May.

&

A majority of the public (55%) now holds a favorable view of labor unions, while 33% hold an unfavorable view. The share with a favorable view is down slightly from last year (60%), but much higher [than in 2011](#), when just 41% viewed unions favorably.

Forget 10K... Site Ranks Vermont In Top 10 States For College Grads To Find Work

Vermonters might have heard about the State's recent offer to Americans of 10K to help defray moving costs, etc. to come to Vermont to live. It could help, but highlighting lists like the one just published on a website called "College Candy," might help as well--and it's free. The site lists Vermont in its "Top 10 Best States To Find A Job."

Vermont's Summary On Site:

Median annual income (adjusted for the cost of living): \$46,482

Unemployment rate: 3.0%

Share of workers living under the poverty line: 5.69%

Employment outlook score: 22

"The scenery in Vermont is absolutely beautiful, from fall foliage to glassy lakes to tall mountains to the starry nighttime sky. If fresh fruit and fresh air sound appealing, you love nature and you aren't bothered by the cold, check out this state."

[See Full List](#)

Teamsters Vote To Strike UPS

[The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports on June 5](#) that 260,000 UPS workers represented by the Teamsters have voted to strike the delivery giant if a fair contract cannot be reached by July 31.

"This vote by our UPS and UPS Freight members gives the negotiating committees bargaining leverage this week and during subsequent negotiations for the national contract and the supplements," Teamsters national UPS negotiating committee co-chairman Denis Taylor tells the paper in a written statement.

The Teamsters say its members authorized a strike if necessary by a 93 percent margin. The vote at UPS Freight was by a 91 percent margin, according to the union. The voting was through an electronic ballot.

UPS officials tell the paper they are "confident" an agreement can be reached.

Quote Of The Week!

"We remember the chaos and indecision about services and personnel after Hurricane Irene slammed us, and there's no way anyone wants a repeat of that, which is why we are looking for concrete answers about a shutdown weeks in advance."

VSEA President Dave Bellini, in a June 8 VSEA press release, announcing that the union is requesting impact bargaining with the State, prior to a shutdown.

Upcoming Meetings/Events/Holidays:

June 11

Windham County Candidate Forum
PanAsian Restaurant
766 Putney Road, #6
Brattleboro
4:45 p.m.

June 12

VSEA Council Meeting
Northern Vermont University
337 College Hill
Johnson
9:00 a.m.

June 13

Personnel Committee Meeting
VSEA HQ
155 State Street
Montpelier
9:30 a.m.

June 13

Employee Appreciation Day Event
National Life Complex
Davis Lobby
Montpelier
11:00 a.m.

June 13

Rutland Chapter Meeting
Asa Bloomer State Office Building
Fourth-Floor Conference Room
88 Merchant's Row
Rutland
12:00 p.m.