



## **Vermont State's Attorney's Office Employees File For Representation By The VSEA**

Here's the press release VSEA issued this morning:

Employees working in Office of State's Attorney's (OSA) offices across Vermont formally filed late yesterday with the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) for an election to be represented by the Vermont State Employees' Association (VSEA). The workers' filing requests the VLRB schedule a vote for 107 Deputy State's Attorneys, Secretary IV's, Victim's Advocates, and Administrative Secretary's, working in 14 OSA offices across Vermont.

"VSEA has been talking and working with the OSA employees for a few years now, and the VSEA Board of Trustees voted at its December meeting to proceed with an election for the OSA workers," explains VSEA President Dave Bellini. "VSEA looks forward to helping these workers get the wages, benefits and working conditions they want and deserve." Bellini adds that OSA workers tell VSEA they want more of a voice in and day-to-day workplace operations, especially when it comes to issues around caseloads staffing and the allocation of resources."

"I'm excited to move forward in the upcoming months towards a union vote for prosecutors, victim advocates and support staff statewide," says Washington County Deputy State's Attorney Ashley Hill. "I wholeheartedly support our organizing effort and look forward to working with my fellow prosecutors, victim advocates and support staff across Vermont to join VSEA to begin addressing the challenges we are all facing across the state."

The VLRB has 15 days to respond to today's filing, and will then set deadlines and schedule meetings, if necessary. Once an election date is set, Bellini says VSEA will continue to work closely with the OSA employees in the interim because this is a time that is critical to the success or failure of any union election for a variety of reasons.

## State Tells Seven Days It's "Not Planning" To Introduce A Defined Contribution Plan Proposal This Session, But We're Not Buying It

The [December 19 Fair Game column in \*Seven Days\*](#) featured a piece on whether or not there could be a pension battle this year inside the State House.

Here's an excerpt from the column:

*[VSEA Executive Director Steve] Howard has evidence to support his fears. [The State] is on the record advocating for a shift to defined contribution plans for newly hired employees. [It] hasn't talked about it lately, but [it] promoted the idea after winning the governorship in 2016. "The most immediate and meaningful step to curb the state's growing liability is to offer new State employees and teachers a defined contribution plan (similar to a 401k)," wrote the [State] shortly after [winning the 2016 election].*

*[Treasurer] Pearce was, and is, a staunch opponent of defined-contribution plans. She argued that the plans don't actually save any money — and do nothing to address unfunded pension liabilities. Which, as we have seen, account for the bulk of Vermont's pension difficulties.*

*"Defined benefit plans are a better deal for the employee and the taxpayer," said Pearce. "They are professionally managed and achieve economies of scale, thanks to their large asset pools." They also provide much better financial security for retirees, she added.*

*"We are not planning to propose defined contribution," asserted Young. "We want to work with the legislature and the treasurer to keep this from getting worse."*

*That word "planning" provides plenty of wiggle room. But if defined contribution is, indeed, off the table, it may be due to sheer political reality. House Speaker Mitzi Johnson (D-South Hero) expressed confidence that her caucus would stand behind the unions.*

Note: VSEA is taking the State's declaration with a huge grain of salt and will continue to ramp up your union's "Protect Your Pension" campaign in the coming days, weeks and months. Better safe than sorry.

## **VT Business Leader Steps Up To Join Organizations & Individuals Lobbying To Increase Funding To State Colleges**

VSEA members have been actively lobbying lawmakers and State officials for years to increase funding for Vermont State Colleges, and this week, *VTDigger* reports that GW Plastics (Bethel, Vt) Human Resources VP Cathy Tempesta is joining the chorus of Vermonters pleading for more money to be allocated to the system.

*“College is becoming more and more important for every single job. It’s no longer a luxury; it’s becoming a necessity,” VTDigger reports Tempesta said at a news conference Monday on State Colleges' funding. “It is just good public policy. For companies like mine, it can make the difference between growing in Vermont — which we love—or growing in another state with a larger pool of labor candidates.” GW Plastics needs skilled workers, she added.*

Without a funding boost, VSC Chancellor Jeb Spaulding told VPR this week, Vermont's State Colleges "will continue to get smaller."

*"We have over 200 fewer employees working for the Vermont State Colleges now than we did a few years ago," Spaulding added, "and that means that we're less able to provide the supports that are necessary for students to succeed and graduate from college."*

Note: VSEA members have been conducting several campaigns over the years to try to spur an increase in VSC funding--to no avail, but the fight continues. Remember the VSEA campaign from 2014? VSEA is also participating again this session in a coalition lobbying to get a "free tuition" bill passed in Vermont.

## **What To Do About Woodside?**

When lawmakers return to the State house in early January, one of the issues they will have to contend with is what to do about the future of the Woodside Juvenile Rehabilitation Center in Colchester, where VSEA represents dozens of workers.

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The facility's prison-like feel did not sit well with the federal government, which recently announced it would not be providing \$3 million in funding unless things change--which costs a lot of money.

From a December 17 WCAX story:

*"DCF is confident Vermont lawmakers will make up the lost federal funding again next year to keep Woodside going. It's also looking at what to do with the building, which might be the biggest barrier to that federal money. Should they tear it down and build anew or fix it to meet the criteria of a psychiatric care center? The price tags on either option might ultimately decide what, if anything, gets done."*

Note: VSEA appreciates its Woodside members' commitment to the Vermont youth they work with daily--regardless of the facade of the building they work in or its interior flaws. VSEA understands you just provide a service and it's up to lawmakers and leaders to ensure your facility meets federal and state standards and is safe for the youth in your care and for you.

## **Judiciary Unit Seeks Self Nominations For Two Unit Leadership Positions**

The Judiciary Unit Executive Committee is looking for members who want to self-nominate for one of two current Unit vacancies--or both.

### **Judiciary Unit Bargaining Team Vice-Chairperson**

- Two-year commitment (quarterly meetings);
- Automatic seat on the Judiciary Executive Committee;
- Automatic seat on the Judiciary Bargaining Team;
- Active participant in Unit administration; and
- Assumes Chairperson's role in their absence.

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## **Judiciary Unit Steward**

- Two-year appointment;
- First point of contact for Unit members with questions or concerns about workplace issues;
- Stays in communication with Unit members, leadership and VSEA staff, regarding contract bargaining, Unit work, and other VSEA business;
- Represents employees in workplace investigations, as needed;
- Files Step 1 grievances and represents employees in Step 1 grievance meetings, as needed; and
- Expected to periodically attend VSEA Steward trainings (Unit contract grants two days of union leave annually to attend Steward training).

If you are a Judiciary Unit member who is interested in being appointed to one or both of the positions listed, please email your self-nomination to Unit Chair Margaret Crowley ([m.crowley@hotmail.com](mailto:m.crowley@hotmail.com)) to be shared with the Unit Executive Committee.

**Please submit your self-nomination by the close of business on Thursday, January 3, 2019.**

## **Time Running Out To Enroll In VSEA Member-Only Supplemental Dental Plan!**

**Enrollment Form and Payroll Deduction Form must be submitted to VSEA no later than Wednesday, January 2, 2019.**

One key benefit of VSEA membership is access to a supplemental dental plan that has been helping VSEA families bring down the costs of expensive dental procedures for nearly a decade now. The program is so popular that VSEA is now offering a second chance in 2018 (usually just once a year, in the spring) for members to enroll in the program, which is a unique benefit for state employees represented by VSEA.

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VSEA sent an all-member email this week about the new enrollment period. If you don't recall receiving the email, [you can learn more about the plan here.](#)

The supplemental program is offered as an enhancement to state employees' State-administered dental insurance benefit.

## **VSEA 2019 Membership Recruitment Drive Begins January 1, 2019! Cash Prizes For Highest Number Of New Recruits**

After a very successful membership-recruitment initiative in 2017, VSEA is excited to announce a new drive in 2019. Never forget that ongoing recruitment is vital to the strength of your union.

Between January 1, 2019, and September 1, 2019, VSEA is calling on all members to become active recruiters—and you might be rewarded for your efforts. Here's how:

- Members who recruit **two** members will receive a Dunkin' Donuts gift card;
- Members who recruit **five** new members will receive a VSEA insulated coffee mug; and
- Members who recruit **ten** new members will receive a \$50 visa gift card.

Every member you recruit a new member during the designated period, your name is entered into a drawing to be conducted VSEA's 2019 Annual Meeting. Four names will be pulled at random and winners will receive a check for **\$300!**

**Need a quick reference to help with your recruiting?** [You can view an informational webpage with some recruitment tips and advice here:](#)

<http://bit.ly/WURecIsEsntl>

If you have any questions, or want a list of non-members in your area, please contact VSEA Director of Operations and Organizing Ray Stout by email: [rstout@vsea.org](mailto:rstout@vsea.org)

## **Register Today For First 2019 VSEA Steward Training In January!**

VSEA's Field Services Division is urging all current Stewards to register today for a 2019 training. The first Steward training of the year is:

**Saturday, January 12, 2019**

8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Double Tree by Hilton Hotel

870 Williston Road

South Burlington

**More training dates available on [VSEA.org](http://VSEA.org)**

**For more information please email VSEA Director of Field Services, Gretchen Naylor here: [gnaylor@vsea.org](mailto:gnaylor@vsea.org) or call 802-223-5247.**

## **VSEA Launches One-Stop Hub For All The Latest 2019 Legislative & State House News**

VSEA Communications Specialist Kris Lizzari recently took the Council on a tour of a new, one-stop, online hub for VSEA members and retirees to keep up to date with all the latest State House news and happenings throughout the 2019 legislative session.

Clicking on [the hub's main link](#) (Available by visiting [VSEA.org](http://VSEA.org)), members and retirees are taken to a page that lists a number of options to click on, including:

- [View 2018-2019 Legislative Session Reports;](#)
- [2018-2019 Legislative Session Priorities;](#)

***Continued...***

- [State House Day 2019!](#);
- [Find/Contact Your Legislator](#);
- [Virtual Vermont State House Tour](#);
- [Become A VTPAC Member](#); and
- [VSEA Legislative Committee](#).

There's also a blank field, where members and retirees can submit questions or request information (legislative please, not general), both during and after the session.

The hub will be updated with new information as it becomes available, such as the just-approved [VSEA legislative priorities](#).

Please bookmark or add this page to your favorites for quick reference.

## **Getting Ready To Retire? Retired Already? Join The VSEA Retired Members' Chapter!**

At Tuesday's VSEA Council meeting, long-time VSEA activist and leader Terry Lefebvre asked Council members getting ready to retire to join the VSEA Retirees' Chapter to continue to be an active and engaged union member, even in retirement. Lefebvre also appealed to Council members to talk up the Chapter to co-workers they know who might be preparing to retire.

With a possible fight looming on retirement security, Lefebvre stressed the importance to build the Chapter to be able mobilize large numbers of past state workers to protect and defend the benefits they bargained to win over decades.

If you already belong to the Retired Members' Chapter, a big thanks you.

[Learn More Here About The VSEA Retired Members' Chapter](#) by calling 802-223-5247



## Quote Of The Week!

*"And today here we are once again."*

Northern Vermont University Professor Tyrone Shaw, commenting in *VTDigger* at a December 17 press conference about the need to increase funding for the Vermont State Colleges and lamenting having to come back again to the State House in 2019 to lobby again as a part of a coalition, including VSEA, that's been fighting for years to get more money for the system.

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## Help A Fellow State Employee By Donating Some Time To Your Unit's Sick Leave Bank!

### Donation Period Ends December 31!

VSEA member Dawn Carrillo is reminding Non-Management Unit members that your Unit's Sick Leave Bank is currently accepting annual and personal leave time donations to the bank and that the deadline to do so is December 31, 2018. Carrillo 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 on VSEA.org.](#)

"Big thanks to 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."

## **Bolton Valley Again Offering "Industry Rate" To VSEA Members On 2018-19 All-Access Season Passes**

All VSEA members in good standing are eligible to purchase a pass or passes. You can purchase yours today by first contacting VSEA by email at [vsea@vsea.org](mailto:vsea@vsea.org). VSEA will verify your membership status and provide you with VSEA's code, which you will need to complete your online purchase.

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### ***VSEA Meetings/ Trainings/ Events:***

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## **Upcoming VSEA Organizer Worksite Meeting**

### **Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital**

**Thursday, December 27**

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

VPCH

Special Events Room

350 Fisher Road

Berlin

**Questions:** Contact VSEA Organizer Danielle Warner:  
[dwarner@vsea.org](mailto:dwarner@vsea.org)

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## **Points of Interest:**

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### **Vermont Public Assets Publishes State of Working Vermont 2018**

Vermont economic think tank Public Assets (PA) published its annual "State of Working Vermont" this week, and the data is worth reviewing and sharing.

From PA's report:

*This year again, because the fruits of economic growth have not shown up in the pockets of a lot of Vermonters, the indicators point to mixed results. More Vermonters were working, yet at the end of 2017 their numbers were still below the all-time high of 344,135, reached in 2006.*

*Poverty fell a bit last year, but for young Vermonters, Vermonters of color, and single parents the rates remained high. Fewer families were relying on the Reach Up program for assistance in 2017, but still nearly 70,000 Vermonters lived in poverty, and over 75,000 depended on 3SquaresVT to get enough to eat. In the large majority of families with children, all parents in the household worked, but affordable, high-quality child care was out of reach for many of them.*

*Newly released data from 2015 show upper-income families continued to make greater gains than everyone else. Vermont's low, low unemployment rate has not pushed up wages as would be expected in a tight labor market. Low- and middle-wage workers have seen little change in their paychecks in more than a decade. Vermont was among 10 states where median household income decreased in 2017.*

Report's Executive Summary:

State of Working Vermont 2018 includes indicators to answer three questions:

1. Did the overall Vermont economy grow, and who benefited?

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- Vermont's economy has been growing, but not in every county and not as fast as the rest of the country.
- Economic growth disproportionately benefited those at the top.
- Vermont was one of 10 states where median household income fell in 2017.
- Wages have been stagnant for most Vermont workers.

2. Were Vermonters able to make ends meet?

- Vermont's prices were average nationally, but wages were low.
- The cost of essentials grew faster than wages.
- 17 percent of Vermont's young adults lived in poverty.
- 5,000 fewer Vermonters had health insurance in 2017 than in 2016.

3. How was the job market for Vermonters, and who was working?

- The number of private sector jobs continued to grow, but not everywhere in Vermont.
- New jobs were concentrated in service-providing industries.
- Labor force participation was down for all education levels.

## **A Big Reason Millennials Are Rediscovering Labor Unions**

*The Motley Fool posted a story this week, reporting on a steep drop in income for young male workers in the past 40 years.*

*From the story:*

*Most people grapple with low salaries when they first kick off their careers. But a new study from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors reveals that millennial men now are earning \$6,600 less, on average, than similarly aged men were earning 40 years back.*

*Young adult males earned a mean income of \$56,100 in 1978, but that figure dropped to \$49,500 by 2014. And while younger women saw an increase in wages -- \$39,100, on average, in 2014 versus \$35,400 in 1978 -- it's not enough to make up for the major decline among younger male workers.*

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*Why the downward shift? It seems like millennials are suffering the aftereffects of the Great Recession, says the aforementioned study. Unfortunately, that's hardly a consolation for the many young workers who are struggling to keep up with ever-growing housing costs, student loans, and the various bills adults of all ages are forced to contend with.*

*Note: Not a piece about millennials and unions, per se, but the drop in income does speak to a need to unionize. Still a very troubling gap between men and women's annual wages as well. Unions can help with that as well.*

## **New Retirement Study Confirms That Workers Do Not Invest As They Should In 401k Pension Plans -- Two-Thirds Citing A Lack Of Knowledge About Savings & Investing**

*One of VSEA's major points when talking with members and retirees about the dangers of hybrid pension plans (some combination of defined benefit and defined contribution plans)--or the danger of forcing new hires to state government into a defined contribution plan, or 401k--is that many individuals lack the savings and investment knowledge to administer their pension plan, as required. A defined benefit plan, however, which state employees and retirees currently have, takes the investing onus off the individual worker and provides a promised benefit which is not dependent on Wall Street's status when you retire.*

*Now comes the latest of many recent studies showing Americans do not invest as they should in a defined contribution pension plan, or 401k.*

*From [a PlanAdvisor story](#) this week about a Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies retirement analysis:*

*A survey of 2,043 retirees by the Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies (TCRS) shows two-thirds (66%) say their most recent employers did "nothing" to help pre-retirees transition into retirement, and 16% are "not sure" what their employers did.*

*Among the 18% of retirees whose employers helped pre-retirees, the most*

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*frequently cited offerings are financial counseling about retirement (6%), seminars and education about transitioning into retirement (5%), the ability to reduce work hours and shift from full- to part-time (5%), and accommodating flexible work schedules and arrangements (5%).*

*When looking back on their retirement preparations, almost three in four retirees (73%) agree they wish they would have saved more and on a consistent basis. About two-thirds (67%) say they did as much as they could to prepare for retirement, but almost as many (64%) wish they had been more knowledgeable about retirement saving and investing. Three in ten used a financial adviser before retiring to help them manage their retirement savings or investments.*

*Note: Please share this information with your co-workers to educate them in advance of a potential fight about your retirement--or future hires' retirement--in the upcoming legislative session.*

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