



## **VLRB Sides With VSEA On Case Concerning Parental Leave Rights For State Employee Foster Parents**

VSEA's legal team learned Wednesday that the Vermont Labor Relations Board (VLRB) has sided with VSEA and affirmed that an employee who is a foster parent and ultimately adopts a child can take parental leave once the placement is for the purpose of adoption. The State denied parental leave because the child had been placed with the employee for more than a year in foster care, even though that placement was for the purpose of reunification with the biological parents. VSEA lawyers challenged the state's interpretation, and the VLRB agreed with the union.

"The issue was whether a foster parent who ultimately adopts the child can take parental leave if the child was placed in foster care more than a year earlier," explains VSEA General Counsel Tim Belcher. "It's a good ruling, and it will help VSEA members who foster abused or neglected kids and then later adopt them if the biological parents give up parental rights."

From the VLRB ruling: "The State interpretation of Article 35 of the Contract - that it clearly and unambiguously provides that the one year requirement to take parental leave is triggered simply when a child is initially placed with an employee - is not reasonable."

## **Thoughtful VPR Commentary On State's Infants-At-Work Policy & VSEA's Position**

VPR published a thoughtful commentary this week by Karen Titterton, titled "Babies In The Workplace," which describes how the writer feels about the State's new infants-at-work policy and what she thinks about VSEA's decision to file an unfair labor practice to get the policy suspended until it can be negotiated with the union.

Here's an excerpt:

*And when I first learned the [State] was implementing a bring-your-baby-to-work policy for infants under six months, I was heartened by this attempt to make the state workplace more family friendly.*

*But after a closer look and talking with some state employees, I think these good intentions miss the mark – never mind that the Vermont State Employees Association says the administration has changed the terms and conditions of state employment without negotiation.*

*Most people love babies, but some prefer them in small doses or not at all. And let's be clear that babies in the workplace means diapers and tears in the workplace – which will be sure to challenge the productivity of some parents as they try to care for their kids, respect their co-workers, and do their jobs. And besides, an environment of cubicles and screens has never been characterized as warm and stimulating for anyone, let alone babies.*

*The VSEA claims that had they been consulted, they could have helped craft an outcome that was better for both families and workers.*



## Local TV Segment “Celebrating Women” Features Four Female State Troopers

Fox44’s “Celebrating Women” segment recently featured four female Vermont state troopers, two of whom are current VSEA members, one a former VSEA activist before she was promoted, and the fourth a new trooper recruit.

Featured in the piece are:

Lt. Teresa Randall (VSEA)  
Lt. Julie Scribner (VSEA)  
Maj. Ingrid Jonas (former VSEA activist)  
Trooper Katrina Ducharme (VTA)

The women talk about what led them to become troopers and why women are an important part of any state or local police force, even though the profession is primarily male dominated.

From the piece:

*“There was some times where I had to struggle a little bit, work a little bit harder. I felt at times that maybe I had to prove myself because there was some doubt in some people,” said Lt. Teresa Randall. “I remember a delivery guy coming to my house one day, seeing my cruiser out there and saying ‘wow, is your husband a state trooper?’ ‘No, I’m a state trooper!’”*

*Eventually, they grew into their identity, shed the instinct to hide and embraced their femininity.*

*“It took me a long time, I’d say about 15 years before I realized that I am a trooper but I’m a female and men and women are different and it’s ok to stand up and say ‘I’m a female trooper and I can do the job too’,” said Lt. Randall.*

Note: VSEA appreciates your service!

## Need To Contact A VSEA Staff Person Directly But Need The Number?

VSEA is reminding members and retirees of each staff person’s direct phone number, in the event you know who you need to talk with but you don’t know their direct phone number.

Here’s the staff direct line list:

Steve Howard, Executive Director  
802-262-1332

### Directors

Tim Belcher, General Counsel -  
802-262-1319

Doug Gibson, Communications Director -  
802-262-1331

Gary Hoadley, Labor Relations Director -  
802-262-1317

Amy Kinsell, Operations & Organizing Director,  
Financial Coordinator -  
802-262-1314

Gretchen Naylor, Field Services Director -  
802-262-1318

### Staff

Thomas Abdelnour, Legislative Specialist -  
802-262-1327

Susan DeVoid, Administrative Assistant -  
802-262-1328

Kelly Everhart, Legal Counsel -  
802-262-1320

Rachael Fields, Union Rep -  
802-262-1329

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Jennifer Larsen, Organizer -  
802-262-1352

Kris Lizzari, Communications Specialist -  
802-262-1313

Brian Morse, Union Rep -  
802-262-1316

Adam Norton, Strategic Analyst -  
802-262-1326

Vinnie O'Connor, Union Rep -  
802-262-1334

Mike O'Day, Union Rep -  
802-262-1337

David Oppenheimer, Organizer -  
802-262-1324

Carmen Scoles, Organizer -  
802-262-1339

Bob South, Union Rep -  
802-262-1321

Nikolas Stein, Union Rep -  
802-262-1310

Danielle Warner, Organizer -  
802-262-1323

## **VSEA Mourns Passing Of Past President Bob Mumley**

VSEA is mourning the death this week of Robert (Bob) Mumley, who served as VSEA president from 1979 to 1981.

As a VSEA member, Mumley was employed as a game warden and later worked for the Department of Corrections. He was also a 30+-year Navy veteran.

Condolences to Brother Mumley's family and friends.

## **VSEA NEK / St. Johnsbury Chapter Conducting Food Drive**

Throughout the month of March and early April, VSEA's NEK / St Johnsbury Chapter of VSEA will be reaching out to area members and retirees to solicit donations to local food shelves in Lyndonville and St. Johnsbury.

If you will be collecting at your office and want to arrange a donation(s) pickup, or if you have questions, please contact Ellen Hinman (Chapter President 751-0123), Dianne Rivers (Chapter Vice President 626-6497) or Monique Prive (Chapter Secretary/Treasurer 626-6364 )

**Donations are being accepted until April 12, 2019.**

**Thank you in advance for donating to this worthy cause!**

## **"Basket Raffle" To Help Family Of Employee Who Died In Ice-Fishing Accident**

Castleton University employees are hosting a basket raffle to help the Wiktorski family with some unforeseen expenses. Our own Lee Wiktorski lost his life in an unfortunate ice-fishing accident. We are asking for any donation that you can give, no donation is too small. Here is what we need:

- BASKETS!! Themed baskets in a plastic wrapping. We are shooting for 100 baskets. (Gift certificates count as a basket and do not need a "basket")
- Gift certificates
- Large raffle donations; such as furniture, electronics, large gift certificate

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- Refreshments - baked goods, soups, sandwiches, chips, drinks, paper goods

Donations can be dropped off at the Castleton University library.

The Basket Party begins at 11:00 a.m. on April 6 and the raffle starts at 1:00 p.m. VSEA members, retirees or Chapters can send a donation / basket to Billie Langlois, Castleton University, 178 Alumni Drive, Castleton, Vt., 05735.

## New Life For Salisbury Fish Hatchery?

*Seven Days* reports on March 21 that a proposal is being introduced at the State House to raise fees for anglers and hunters to generate the additional funds needed to keep the Salisbury Fish Hatchery, where four VSEA members work, open and operating.

From the story:

*If approved by the legislature, the deal would provide an additional \$310,000 to keep the Salisbury Fish Culture Station open for another year while the state explores ways to prolong its life or move the hatchery operations elsewhere.*

*“I feel like people have come together in good faith to try to keep the hatchery operating, and they’re working toward that goal,” Fish & Wildlife Commissioner Louis Porter said Wednesday.*

## 2019 VSEA Scholarship Application Available Now!

The VSEA Awards/ Scholarship Committee is currently soliciting applications from students seeking financial assistance in the pursuit of post-secondary educational goals.

The Committee will announce the recipients of the scholarships at the June Council Meeting.

Deadline: Completed applications and all accompanying data must be received at VSEA Headquarters no later than 4:30 p.m. on May 8. Download an application on VSEA.org.

## NH Governor Continues To Push His Own Family Leave Bill, Even Though NH & VT State Employee Unions Reject His Proposal Outright

Several media outlets reported yesterday on NH lawmakers in both houses voting Wednesday to advance a family leave bill that Governor Sununu says he will veto. The plan NH lawmakers approved is similar to one currently working its way through the Vermont legislature. It calls for a payroll tax on employers and rejects Sununu and Scott’s joint proposal and its “voluntary” component.

From a *NH Business Review* story (<https://bit.ly/2TZ978e>):

*“Sununu, who favors a voluntary program, has said he will veto the measure, and neither the House nor Senate has yet to muster enough votes to override one.*

*Meanwhile, Sununu is pushing ahead with a voluntary program with Vermont for state employees of both states, with the option of local businesses and individuals signing on at a higher*

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*cost. But that plan requires legislative approval as well as buy-in from the state employee unions, neither of which seems likely.”*

Note: VSEA is already on record opposing Governor Sununu’s joint NH and VT “voluntary” proposal. While NH does not have the votes to override a veto, Vermont does.



## QUOTE OF THE WEEK!

*"...this worry [that wealthy Vermonters will flee the state] is unfounded, and the result is that low- and moderate-income Vermonters pay higher taxes than they should and the state's revenues are inadequate to meet the state's needs."*

Line from a recent Vermont Public Assets Institute posting, trying hard, once again, to dispel the tired myth floated every year that nominally taxing Vermont's wealthiest at a higher rate will lead to them fleeing the state.

## VSEA Membership Drive 2019 Now Underway!

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

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

## POINTS OF INTEREST:

### Maine AFL-CIO Unveils Its "2019 Working Class Legislative Agenda"

Maine's labor unions (led by the state AFL-CIO) recently unveiled their 2019 Working Class Legislative Agenda at a press conference at the State House, outlining a range of priority bills that they said would ensure safe and healthy workplaces, protection for injured workers, corporate accountability and collective bargaining rights.

Bills spoken about by members of a variety of unions at the news conference were:

LD 369, which would create the right to earned paid sick leave for the 200,000 Mainers who don't have the benefit.

LD 600, which would treat mental health injuries similarly to physical injuries when considering workers' compensation claims.

LD 601, which would restore cost of living adjustments to workers' compensation benefits for injured workers.

LR 225, which would create an exemption to antitrust laws to allow forest products workers to bargain collectively over rates, benefits and working conditions.

LD 201, which would protect Maine jobs by making companies that outsource call centers ineligible for state grants, loans or tax breaks. It would also prohibit state agencies from outsourcing call center work.

LD 900, which would give public sector workers the right to strike.

LD 1177, which would make arbitration binding on economic issues in the public sector.



## **Chicago Symphony Musicians Strike To Protect Defined Benefit Plan**

The Reader posted a story this week about Chicago Symphony Orchestra (CSO) musicians walking a picket line to defend their defined benefit pension plan.

From the story:

*“...musicians at the nation’s half-dozen top orchestras, including the CSO—musicians who excel as much in their field as, say, the prized players on Major League Baseball teams—have been able to hang on to the old arrangement (a defined benefit pension plan), which they say is a crucial recruiting tool in a highly competitive market for new talent. Until now.*

*Which brings us to the picket line. In contract negotiations that have dragged on for nearly a year, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, which manages the CSO and employs the musicians, has made it clear that it intends to dump the defined benefit pension.*

## **10,000 NYC Nurses Threaten Strike To Improve Safety**

The website *gothamist* posted a story on March 20, titled “NY Nurses Say A Strike Is Needed To Keep Patients Safe.”

*“The threat of as many as 10,000 New York City nurses going on strike intensified Monday as members of the New York State Nurses Association rallied outside the Mount Sinai Hospital in East Harlem. The union announced that nurses at Montefiore Health System, Mount Sinai Health System, and New York-Presbyterian would strike starting at 6 a.m. on April 2 if those hospital systems do not agree to hire enough staff to maintain minimum nurse-to-patient ratios that the union says are needed to ensure patient safety.*

*“Most of the staffing really isn’t safe on most of*

*the units at the Children’s Hospital at Montefiore,” said Naomi Cordova, who has been working as a nurse there for nearly 30 years.*

*Cordova said she is usually responsible for five patients during her shifts, caring primarily for infants and small children with cardiological or gastrointestinal problems. Nurses say staffing needs vary from unit to unit; Cordova said she believes a safe staffing ratio on her unit would be three to one. She said being understaffed can prevent nurses from reporting children’s respiratory issues to doctors in a timely manner, among other dangers.*

*“You tend to prioritize when you have four to five patients,” said Cordova. “You say, ‘I’m going to concentrate on one kid, perhaps the sickest kid,’ and you tend to neglect the other patients. I feel horrible having to do something like that.”*

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

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 to 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 to you. Learn More Here About The VSEA Retired Members’ Chapter: [vsea.org/retirees](http://vsea.org/retirees)



# NEXT MEETINGS/ TRAININGS/ EVENTS:

## UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETING:

**Waterbury Chapter**  
**Wednesday, March 27**  
**12:00 p.m.**

State Office Complex AHS Building A  
Cherry C Conference Room  
45 State Drive, Waterbury  
Questions: Contact Waterbury Chapter  
President Brett Pierce:  
brett.pierce@vermont.gov

**Chittenden Chapter**  
**Wednesday, March 27**  
**12:00 p.m.**

State Office Building Conference Room 3B 108  
Cherry Street, Burlington  
Questions: Contact Chittenden Chapter  
President John Davy: davy.john.m@gmail.com

## UPCOMING WORKSITE MEETING:

**Barre - AOE**  
**Thursday, March 28**  
**12:00 p.m.**

Barre City Place  
Third Floor Conference Room (#304)  
219 N. Main Street, Barre  
Questions: Contact VSEA Organizer  
Danielle Warner: dwarner@vsea.org

# VSEA HQ CALENDAR:

## March 26

Union Rep. Meetings  
Northwest State Correctional Facility  
3649 Lower Newton Rd.  
Swanton  
Prior to 1400 and 2200 shift changes

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