

April 26, 2021

Summary of Current Events:

Key Senate Committee Improves Scope, Balance on Pension Task Force. As a result of your advocacy – and strong testimony from Vermont-NEA Executive Director Jeff Fannon – the Senate Government Operations Committee has markedly improved both the charge and composition of the legislative pension task force. And while we had expected the committee to vote out its version last week, we expect the vote to happen this week. [Here's a link to the committee draft](#), which improves on what the House approved Friday.

- The task force would have a greatly **expanded scope** without preconditioning the outcome;
- It will examine, among other things, the effects of pension changes to the underlying **economy** and to the **teacher and state employee workforce**;
- And it will have **10 members, five of whom are from labor unions (two each from Vermont-NEA and the Vermont State Employees Association and one from the Vermont Troopers Association)**.
- Importantly, the committee's version calls for an interim report on **Oct. 15**, with a final proposal on **Dec. 2**, giving the task force almost six months to complete its work.

Where H.449 goes from here:

The House gave final approval of their version of the [bill](#) Friday; in a roll-call vote during preliminary approval on Thursday, many lawmakers raised concerns about the task force's charge and composition (in the House version, labor only has six of 15 seats). Rep. Mari Cordes, D-Lincoln was [among several lawmakers](#) who explained their "no" votes. "I cannot support the bill without a true balance on the task-force of representation for employees. Let's not add to the decades long whittling away of real and democratic representation of worker voices." When the Senate officially has custody of the bill, the Senate Government Operations Committee will insert their changes. After that committee votes out the bill, it heads next to Senate Appropriations. It now appears likely that the bill will not be put in the budget but rather will remain a stand-alone measure, with a vote in the full Senate sometime next week. As with any bill where there is difference between what the House and the Senate passed, when the House gets the bill back from the Senate they can:

- agree to the language passed by the Senate,
- change the bill and send it back to the Senate, or
- refer it to a Committee of Conference where representatives of the House and Senate meet to negotiate a bill both bodies can live with.

Pension Telephone Town Hall Set for Thursday 4/29, 7pm:

Join Vermont-NEA President Don Tinney and member pension organizers for an update of how we got where we are and where we are going to go in our pension fight. As with all of our town halls, members for whom we have valid phone numbers will get a prerecorded call from Don with instructions on how to join the town hall live. We will also take your questions live.

Shape Our Pension Path on the Vermont-NEA Pension Task Force:

One of the most important next steps for us in the pension fight is to identify active teacher members to represent Vermont-NEA on the legislative pension task force. To identify those members, we have established a Vermont-NEA Pension Policy Task Force. **We want this group to be the hub of our pension policy endeavors, with three representatives from each of our seven UniServ Districts. And it is from this group that our representatives on the legislature's task force will be selected. Interested? Apply [here](#).**

Take Action:

- **Contact your Senators – Balance and Fairness in Pension Task Force** – As the conversation moves to the Senate we hope to continue to make some improvements. Find your Senators and send them a note: <https://legislature.vermont.gov/people/>
- **Get Red for Ed - Wear Red for Ed on Fridays** – Show solidarity with you fellow teachers across the state as you stand up to protect your pension. Post your photo: <https://www.facebook.com/events/809210193017023/>
- **RALLY – May Day Worker Solidarity Rally – Sat May 1, 12pm** – We are working in board coalition to build for a multi-issue Workers Solidarity Rally RSVP here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/280950793501397/>