

May 3, 2021

**Summary on current events:**

**Key Senate Committee Sends Pension Bill to Full Senate.** The Senate Government Operations Committee late afternoon Monday May 3<sup>rd</sup> voted out [its version of H.449](#), the bill establishing a legislative pension task force. Despite some vigorous back-and-forth last week, the committee vastly approved upon the approach taken by the House. The task force will have until December to complete its work; will be balanced between labor unions (Vermont-NEA has three seats, the Vermont State Employees Association has two, and the Vermont Troopers Association has one seat) and non-beneficiaries. The committee also made other improvements:

- The charge allows the task force more latitude and creativity
- The task force will explore the impact any pension changes have on the education workforce
- The task force will also be able to evaluate the impact any changes will have on the state and local economies

**The bill will not be going to the Senate Appropriations Committee and we expect the Senate will suspend normal process so that the bill may be in front of the entire Senate on Wednesday May 5th.** Once it passes the Senate, the bill will go back to the House. Once there, the House can either vote to accept the Senate version or to put the competing versions to a conference committee.

**Senate Budget Bill Addresses Pension Money.** One of the key objectives of both the House and Senate is to essentially book \$150 million in one-time funding for the teachers' and state employees' pension obligations as part of any approach to addressing the systems' funding issues. Both version of the budget hold this money until June 2022 pending the outcome of the pension Task Force work and any legislative action to address the pensions' funding issues in the 2022 legislative session. Last week, Sen. Chris Pearson, P/D-Chittenden successfully struck the word "structural" in front of "reform" from the Senate's version of the [budget](#) language. This language is more flexible than the House's version, and doesn't imply or pre-determine an outcome.

**Shape Our Pension Path on the Vermont-NEA Pension Task Force. Apply by May 12th:**

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. Application Deadline May 12<sup>th</sup>. Interested? Apply [here](#).**

**Thank you for attending our pension telephone town hall last week.**

Hundreds of members tuned in for at least part of our pension conversation, where Vermont-NEA President Don Tinney and Local Association Pension Organizer Molly Stoner (Windham Southeast Education Association) took questions. "Let me be clear: without your hard work, and your dedication to your students, your profession, your communities and your fellow members, the legislature would be barreling along a path that would weaken your pension," Tinney said in opening remarks.

**Members Marked International Workers' Day on Saturday.**

As part of a broader coalition of unions, public advocates, environmental groups, migrant justice fighters and others, Vermont-NEA turned out to talk about how our pension fight is bigger than just us. As Vermont-NEA President Don Tinney told the crowd of nearly 200, "As we fight to protect our pension, we are also fighting for retirement security for all Vermonters. As we fight to protect our pension, we are also fighting for universal healthcare. And as we fight to protect our pension, we are fighting for Vermont's children and families." See coverage [here](#).