

Dear Committee Members,

Hello. I am writing to inform you that the current bill S.218 as proposed is very frightening to me as a seasonal employee of the State of Vermont. I understand that one could view the bill as helpful for seasonal employees but I do not see it that way. I do not feel that reducing the amount of hours a seasonal can work in a year before becoming permanent will magically create permanent jobs. The current ceiling of 1,520 surely has not done that. What will happen to me, and many other seasonals, is that we will no longer be able to continue in our path towards a permanent position. I will be forced to leave my job after 1,280 hours. For this year, I will hit that mark on September 6th. The park that I manage, Branbury State Park on Lake Dunmore, will be open for another five and a half weeks after I am laid off. It is consistently one of the busiest parks in Vermont.

Once I am laid off I will be forced to look for a job outside of my field, with likely an unsuitable pay and no future. My other option would be to leave Vermont and work for another park system but I love Vermont. Because I live on site at Branbury State Park, my position is also tied to my home. During my off season (normally just a few months) I rent the house at Branbury from the State. If I am laid off early, my rental costs will increase while my pay decreases which compounds this problem.

Here is a little background about me: This year marks my 9th season with VT State Parks, 8 of which as an FPR employee because my first was with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. I have a BS in Parks and Recreation Management and numerous certifications and training from my career as a Park Ranger. I had been hoping that my current position was building towards a permanent position with VT State Parks. Competition is tough when permanent positions come open, and I am very aware that they do not come open often. The position I have my sights on is a Regional Ranger Supervisor in one of the four regions with VT State Parks. The last time one of these positions was available was 2007. I applied and interviewed for it but was (rightfully) beaten out for the position by someone who was already a permanent employee in the department. I have hopes that a position will be available in the next few years so I am currently happy with my situation as a seasonal. I can work approximately 10 months per year as a seasonal and this time is not only giving me the experience I need to land a permanent position, but time towards my full State retirement pension if and when I ever do get a permanent position. In the shoulder seasons of my current Ranger position, I have been lucky enough to work in the regional office gaining direct experience for the position I want for the rest of my career.

Your help would be very much appreciated. An ideal situation would be making sure that the State creates more permanent positions to allow dedicated seasonals a chance to become permanent employees, instead of being forced out of the workforce. Thanks for listening.

Lesley Porter

