



# AFT Vermont Legislative Priorities 2019-2020

## Provide Free Tuition at VSC & UVM for all Vermonters

- We need to attract and keep young people in Vermont. Students that attend college in Vermont tend to stay here to live after they graduate.
- Vermont has one of the highest high school graduation rates, but one of the lowest rates of students going on to college. One of the barriers for Vermont students is the cost of higher education due to a lack of state support. Free tuition would allow more Vermonters to go on to college and would contribute to a robust state economy and workforce.



## Improve Healthcare for All Vermonters

**Healthcare is a Human Right.** Fulfill the mandate of Act 48, which would make publicly-financed, universal healthcare a reality in Vermont. Act 48 commits Vermont to providing healthcare as a public good so that everyone can get the healthcare they need.

*When safe patient handling laws are passed and the programs are actually implemented in health care settings, the results are impressive.... These significant drops in both the number and the severity of injuries yield significant financial savings, too. AMA Journal of Ethics. April 2016, Volume 18, Number 4: 416-421.*

**Safe Patient Handling.** Technology and OSHA mandated lifting standards have decreased the number of injuries to patients and healthcare professionals. The VA inpatient system and California have banned all manual lifting, and Vermont needs to do the same.

**Transparency of the Cost of Medical & Surgical Procedures.** Patients have a right to know the cost of their procedures in a fair and transparent way, prior to the surgery.

**Green Mountain Care Board (GMCB).** Currently the GMCB has no medical professionals. There should be a requirement to have medical professional representation on the Board.

**Cap Compensation for Hospital Administrators.** Vermont's hospital administrators are paid exorbitant salaries, often based on national comparisons, while those same administrators will say that nurses, support staff and other medical professionals should only be compensated based on local comparisons.



**Safe Patient Ratios for all Vermont Hospitals.** California stipulates in law and regulations that a required minimum nurse to patient ratio be maintained at all times (ratio by unit.)

## Increase State Funding for Public Higher Education

- Vermont has not always neglected higher education, but state support has consistently been reduced since 1980. In 1980, state appropriations covered 51% of the costs of the VSC. Currently the state funds pay for only 13% of the costs.
- The burden of higher education costs has been transferred to Vermont families in the form of increasing tuition. This is creating a generation of adults saddled with overwhelming debt.
- We support increasing Vermont State Colleges funding, with an automatic inflator every year.

*There is hereby created as a part of the educational system of the state of Vermont a public corporation to be known as "Vermont State Colleges," which shall plan, supervise, administer, and operate facilities for education above the high school level supported in whole or in substantial part with state funds ....*  
-16 V.S.A §2171(a)

## Increase Vermont's minimum wage



Moving to a \$15/hour minimum wage by 2020 will contribute to the overall well-being of our families, communities, businesses and state. It will help boost our economy by attracting young and talented people to the state and by encouraging young families to stay in Vermont.

## Increase higher education funding to address the nursing and allied health shortage

- Nursing students in Vermont are being turned away due to nursing faculty shortages.
- We are already seeing the negative impacts of the nursing shortage in places like the newly opened Vermont Psychiatric Care Hospital in Berlin that has closed patient beds because of an inability to fully staff the facility.
- Vermont needs to attract qualified nursing faculty to meet the demand for nursing education.



## Ensure rights for public sector workers

Remove barriers to organizing in the public sector to make it easier to sign up members and harder to use public money for union busting.

## Institute a statewide family and medical leave insurance program for Vermont workers

A statewide family and medical leave insurance program, **paid by employers**, would give every Vermont worker paid time off to care for a new child or loved one, or to recover from illness. Family and medical leave insurance would promote economic security for women and families, level the playing field for small business and help address the shortage of regulated child care for infants.

