

Vermont State Employees' Association

FY25 Budget Asks

Financial Requests

- **Save Salisbury Fish Hatchery:** The Governor's Recommended budget would close the Salisbury Fish Hatchery on June 30, 2024, and would RIF four positions at the Salisbury Fish Culture Station. The Salisbury Fish Culture Station is the brood stock facility for the hatchery system; therefore Salisbury closure would significantly hinder the operations of the other fish hatcheries. This closure is the result of the Administration's decision to refuse fee increases, which fund the operation of the fish hatcheries. Maintaining the Salisbury through FY25 and future fiscal years will require a small fee increase on fishing licenses, similar to the modest increase in 2019 (FY20).
- **Maintain Commitment to the Transformation and Viability of Vermont State University:** The Governor's proposed FY25 budget deviates from the Select Committee on the Future of Higher Education in Vermont Report (2021). The Governor's proposal only funds *half* of the necessary bridge funding for the VSC for FY25, and does not fully adjust for inflation (14.6% actual vs 5.2% projected) since the report was issued. The VSEA requests that Vermont State College System be granted their request for \$10 million in FY25 bridge funding (\$5 million above Governor's recommend) and an inflationary adjustment of the Vermont State College's base funding of \$3.36 million above the Governor's FY25 budget recommend.
- **Fully Fund the Judiciary Position Request:** VSEA respectfully asks the House Appropriations Committee to fund the positions outlined in both the Judiciary budget request and the S.17 courthouse security study. Ten Judicial Assistants requested by the Judiciary were not included in the Governor's recommended budget. These Judicial Assistants are necessary to reduce the Judicial backlog and would support the two new Judges included in the Governor's budget request. Additionally, VSEA requests that the House Appropriations Committee grant five IT-related positions— two IT help Desk Analysts, two IT Centralized Service Analysts and one Database Administrator. These IT positions will support Judges and Judicial Assistants as they work to swiftly process judicial dockets and protect court documents from cyber security threats. To enhance security in Vermont's courthouses for Judiciary staff and members of the public, VSEA strongly urges the committee to grant the positions requested in S.17 including;

21 new Court Officer positions, 7 Deputy Sheriffs, and the elimination of the existing private security contract.

- **Strengthen Public Safety and reduce State Attorney Caseload:** VSEA respectfully requests that House Appropriations fully fund the Sheriffs and State's Attorneys budget. This request includes rejecting the Governor's recommended imposition of vacancy savings equivalent to nine DSA positions and one Victim Advocate (VA) position for FY25. These vacancies do not exist, and would result in layoffs, causing higher caseloads and slower adjudication of criminal and civil cases. Instead, VSEA requests the Committee adopt the Department of Sheriff's and States Attorney's position request for 25 Deputy State's Attorneys (DSAs). Twenty-five DSAs would reduce the average criminal and civil caseload to 275 cases per DSA, enhancing their ability to effectively prosecute cases and ensure public safety. Ten additional administrative staff are needed to support State's Attorneys and process 26,000 active cases.

Language Requests

- **Avoid Improper Position Limits:** VSEA requests either the extension of the Position Pilot Program beyond FY25 or the elimination of the position cap. The Position Pilot Program allows designated departments to hire budgeted positions beyond the number of classified positions explicitly authorized by the Legislature. The Position Pilot Program has demonstrated its ability to save agencies and departments money by insourcing services that are being performed by more expensive and less accountable private contractors. VSEA also seeks the elimination of the arbitrary legislative position cap. The position cap forces agencies and departments to hire contractors for services that could be more efficiently and cost-effectively performed by State employees. Departments that lack the sufficient authorized number of position to perform their statutory roles are subsequently forced to hire private contractors to meet their statutory requirements and provide the public with the services Vermonters expect.
- **Increase workforce stability and Reduce Turnover in Vermont Department of Labor:** VSEA seeks the conversion of 9 limited services positions in the Vermont Department of Labor to ensure that employees feel stable in their employment and to reduce turnover among the affected classes. This request would not cost additional funds, but would demonstrate the State's commitment to providing stable and ongoing re-employment services for unemployed Vermonters.