



Vermont Police Association

Representing Vermont's Finest

Post Office Box 83
Northfield, Vermont 05663
www.vtvp.org

February 28, 2025

To: Chairman Brian Collamore and Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations

Re: S.58, An act relating to requirements for the pay plans of certain law enforcement officers and firefighters employed by the State

Chair, members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, I thank you all for this opportunity to sit before you today and discuss a very important chronic issue affecting the men and women, I have the privilege to work with.

As a 23 year veteran of the Vermont Warden Service, I have dedicated myself to public service both within my agency and out. I currently hold positions in:

- Vermont Police Association (VPA) 2nd Vice President
- Governor appointed VPA member to the State Animal Cruelty Advisory Board
- Vermont Criminal Justice Council member
- Law Enforcement Advisory Board member
- VSEA bargaining team for over 10 years
- VSEA Board of Trustee's member
- VEAS Legislative Committee
- VSEA Council member

I am sure I missed a few but as you can see, I have dedicated myself to trying to make a difference for the people I work with and the people of Vermont.

However, my condensed resume is not why I am here today. As many of you are all aware I have been fighting my entire career for equality and parity for the Law Enforcement personnel within the group C retirement system. These men and women have been unfairly subsidizing the group C system for decades. These professionals have been left in a 30-year step pay structure but yet are part of a 20-year retirement system. We were promised parity decades ago and it never came. The can just got kicked further and further down the road. To help shore up the funding of the group C retirement system, our perspective unions recently agreed to increase our contributions to the group C system to over 10% of our salaries. Once again that increase is a windfall subsidy at the expense of all other non VSP LE within the group C system. We do not have a step plan that has been adjusted for the 20 year system as VSP currently has. This translates into 100's of thousands of extra dollars out of the pockets of non VSP group C members and into the group C system with no additional benefit to them.

Executive Committee Members

Vice-Presidents: 1st Tom Chenette Burl. PD, 2nd Kelly Price VT F&W

President Emeritus: Ben Herrick RCD **Secretary:** Diane Shortsleeve SBPD (Ret.) **Treasurer:** Dan Boyer SBPD



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For over a decade I have tried in vain to offer concessions and held numerous discussions while bargaining with the state. Each and every time our LE members were told no by the state, or it was used as a carrot and stick during bargaining.

I work with the most highly trained, highly skilled and most diverse group of men and women within the warden service. Currently almost 1/3 of our force consists of strong, talented women and that is going to increase in time. We pride ourselves on a diverse and equitable workforce and we feel we deserve equity and fairness in our retirement and step systems.

There is no perfect answer to this issue of equity in our retirement/step structure. I have heard some suggest extending the retirement age. That will not fix the inequity and is not the issue. Non VSP group C members already must work over 10 years longer to achieve what VSP (in the same system) completes in 15 years. We are not asking for the same step system as VSP. In contrast we offered to have an 18 year step system, forgo COLA for 2 years and forgo any reclass for two years but it was all rejected.

This issue is also not about retention or recruitment. It has nothing to do with that, as much as it has been expressed as a reason. It is a slap in the face to ALL of the group C women and men, outside of VSP, who have worked so hard for equity and parity in the work force and yet are left hamstrung with nowhere else to go but ask for relief and a solution from this legislative body.

It should also be noted that the Warden Service works hand in hand with VSP on the regular basis. They have recently taken over a number of job duties once handled by VSP. These include animal cruelty investigations, forest and parks calls and calls requesting assistance when patrols are running thin. DMV enforcement has also taken on extra duties and responsibilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Price
2nd Vice President
Vermont Police Association

Notes:

I do have a possible alternative solution. If we had our own bargaining unit within VSEA which was recently granted by the State Legislature to the State Paid Sheriff's Deputies. What is the thing that VSP and Corrections have in common? They have their own bargaining units, and they are both state law enforcement related bodies whose duties revolve around public safety. Other State law enforcement within VSEA is not able to bargain our own needs successfully because the needs of the remaining 6,000 other members have no community of interest with our needs or jobs. This is an inevitable and completely understandable truth and the reason why we cannot find a fix in the current structure. We deserve to have our own bargain unit within VSEA.

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