**Vermont Federal Executive Association**

**Quarterly Meeting**

**July 8, 2014 @ 4:00 PM**

Meeting was called to order by Lisa Rees, President, @ 4:00 PM.

**Participants (if we did not list you, please let us know):**

Phone:

* Padraic Paffen, ICE
* Elizabeth Carter, CBP
* Tom Hart, Bankruptcy Court
* Frank Pachone, DHS
* Connie, USCIS
* Andy Nash, NOAA
* Danielle, USCIS
* Fred Divigard, ICE

In Person:

* Lisa Rees, President VTFEA, USCIS
* Sean McVey, Vice President VTFEA, USBP
* James Rapley, Treasurer VTFEA, USCIS
* Bill Swaney, Secretary, VTFEA, DOS
* Mike Heston, Member-at-large, VTNG
* Sandra Bushey, USCIS – Vermont Service Center
* Patrick Knowles, USCIS
* Frank Piccione, DHS, HIS
* Leslie Fleury, DOD, DCMA
* Susan Eastman, USCIS
* Jeff Murphy, USCIS

**Introduction:**

President Rees welcomed the attendees and requested they provide an “elevator pitch” on their job/agency before moving to the agenda.

**Locality Pay:**

Bruce McDonald from TSA briefed the group about ongoing efforts to obtain locality pay and VP Sean McVey and President Rees added their perspective from having recently spoken before the board. The delegation reiterated the purpose of locality pay as a means to combat the challenges agencies face with regard to recruiting and retaining talented staff. The delegation felt that the personal accounts from agencies was persuasive and the implications of high turnover on border security was fully understood. Members were reminded and encouraged to send the locality pay committee information about how pay issues impact their operations. The graphic display of how Vermont is encircled by areas with dramatically higher wages, and argumentation that our surprisingly large federal workforce has unique skills not readily compared with the private sector were also effective and well received. Council members appeared to be supportive of the Vermont proposal despite the need for some additional data, some of which may come from a planned study by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The Council was candid in describing the principal challenge as being how to muster the political will to have the current set of 12 approved adjustments be sent forward for the President to endorse. This is a necessary precondition for a potential approval of the Vermont approval in the 2015 review cycle, which would then also need Presidential approval, hypothetically resulting in a locality pay adjustment in January 2017 in the best-case scenario.

**Vermont Federal Womens Network:**

President Susan Eastman reviewed recent and upcoming VFWN events, noting that membership continues to expand, and is open to men. The group publicizes their activities via Facebook, and will be focusing on how to reach potential members. The group is finalizing arrangements to host a presentation on health care benefits and is expecting an excellent turnout.

**VTFEA Website/Social Media:**

Secretary Swaney reviewed the VTFEA website ([www.VTFEA.org](http://www.VTFEA.org)), and the utilization of our Facebook presence ([www.facebook.com/VTFEA](http://www.facebook.com/VTFEA)), noting that the communication platform is well-established and offers ANY VTFEA member a means to publicize and share information. Our ongoing challenge is reaching Federal employees with this information and senior managers play a key role in raising awareness of the organization and our website and Facebook presence. President Rees has created an excellent handout on the VTFEA that can assist in this effort – for example by being included in a welcome packet for new employees.

**Promoting and Facilitating Federal Service:**

Patrick Knowles of USCIS discussed the topic of outreach and the potential role the VTFEA could play in being a force multiplier for agencies seeking to recruit quality local talent. He noted that FEA members represent an incredibly diverse set of opportunities for job-seekers, but that it can be difficult for the agencies to attend recruitment events, or for job-seekers to find information on federal careers that might suit their skills and interests. A potential role for the VTFEA would be to serve as a point-of-contact for both federal agencies and job seekers, with a VTFEA representative acting on behalf of members (as desired), providing job information, advising agencies of upcoming career fairs, helping job seekers understand the USA Jobs website and/or how special hiring authorities (e.g. VRA, Pathways) can work in their favor.

Members were enthusiastic about the possibility of having a federal representative and advocate at recruitment events helping raise aware about the broad spectrum of exciting federal careers available in Vermont. Members also noted that there are significant HR resources present in Vermont and VTFEA could play a coordinating or convening role in helping executives navigate and leverage special hiring authorities or other recruitment tools.

**Outreach Campaign:**

President Rees discussed her intention to do additional outreach to engage and educate not only executives but mid-level managers and front line employees about the VTFEA. She shared an informational brochure that could be passed out to employees as they come to work or during informational sessions and is a springboard for a “What’s In It For Me” (WIIFM) presentation on VTFEA activities.