



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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WE ARE ONE!

This week, hundreds of thousands of workers came together in towns and cities in every state of America to take part in We Are One rallies and events. These We Are One mobilizations brought labor, students, faith-based and community partners together to raise their voices in opposition to the dramatic assault on the rights of working people, students, immigrants, and middle class America.

These events were centered around paying respect to Dr. Martin Luther King 's legacy and his lifelong commitment to civil and labor rights. Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated forty-three years ago while supporting striking AFSCME sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. For Dr. King, participating in the strike with AFSCME was part of



a larger mission in which he was engaged called the Poor People's Campaign. As Martin Luther King III said recently, "It was, in his eyes, more than a quest for a few more dollars in a paycheck. He saw the strike as part of the great struggle of his time—a struggle for democracy, for truth, for justice and for human dignity." This campaign's strategic goal was to put pressure on political powers to address the needs of impoverished Americans by demanding good jobs, access to housing and better pay. Through non-violent civil disobedience that was taught during the civil rights movement, its goal was to put pressure on Congress to enact an economic bill of rights that would guarantee all Americans, regardless of race, class or gender, an economic system that works for everyone. The Poor People's campaign was still in its beginning stages when Dr. King joined the workers in Memphis, but its relevance remains as important today as it did in the 1960s.

Dr. King's legacy of civil and social justice remains a struggle to this day as the rich in this country continue to hoard wealth with unchecked greed. Like the AFSCME sanitation workers, in Florida and throughout the country, workers' basic rights are being symmetrically removed through the guise of budgetary woes. In Florida, We Are One events had additional meaning—questioning the actions and policies of our state government and their blatant disregard of the working men and women of this state. Like Dr. King's struggles, the attacks on working people should unite all of us, regardless of race, class or gender, in solidarity. The We Are One events did just that! We Are One events took place from Pensacola to Miami. The venues and types of events were different in each city but the message remained the same: we stand united in honoring Dr. King's legacy while questioning the legislature's attempt to destroy the fabric of the middle class that Dr. King gave his life defending. In some cities like Jacksonville, people joined together for a march downtown that ended with a rally. Other events throughout the state took different avenues, such as holding prayer vigils, sign waving, press conferences and teach-ins. Regardless of what type of event took place, what is important is that these events didn't happen in a vacuum of the labor community, instead the events were partnerships with communities and allies that have many times been absent from our mobilization efforts. These developing partnerships show that many communities throughout the state are outraged and upset with the decisions of the current Governor and the Legislature and are ready to defend their home against the tyranny of Tallahassee. The We are One events were a tremendous success and the relationships that grew will become priceless as we continue to mobilize and defend all middle class and working families of Florida.

They Don't Speak for Us!

This week, firefighters, teachers and police officers joined with state Representative Dwayne Taylor and Representative Luis Garcia in outrage over a misleading television and internet ad by the Florida Chamber of Commerce. This 30-second ad leaves the strong impression that the Florida Chamber of Commerce speaks and stands up for Florida's police officers, teachers and firefighters against their unions who are using their money without their consent. At the news conference, representatives of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), Florida Education Association (FEA) and Florida Professional Firefighters (FPF) were joined dozens of their brothers and sisters to set the record straight and speak out against the Chamber's use of their profession to further their own political agenda. Steve Clelland, a firefighter from Orlando stated that "You would think when watching the Florida Chamber of Commerce's soon-to-be released TV ad that they represent firefighters, police officers and teachers...Don't Be Fooled, they don't."

Rick Scott and corporate special interest groups like the Florida Chamber of Commerce are stooping to new lows in their campaign of misinformation. No one should speak for these men and women who risk their lives every day protecting everyone and educating students but the workers themselves. Unlike the TV ad, which used the same stock footage and actors that were used in a Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce ad to make their point, the news conference brought real teachers, firefighters and law enforcement officers together to make sure the media, and therefore the public, understands the real life implications of Senate Bill 830 and recently passed House Bill 1021. This legislation would deny workers a voice in the political process and radically change how workers are represented on the job. "Many other organizations take advantage of dues deduction systems and participate in the political process. Unfortunately, the only organizations this bill seeks to target are those that represent the interests of public employees." said Lisa Dahl a public school teacher from Pasco County. "I think we should ask ourselves the question, "How come none of the corporations the Florida Chamber represents are losing their ability to take advantage of payroll deductions in Florida?"

Lawmakers in Tallahassee keep demanding more and more of our teachers, firefighters and law enforcement officers, yet they continue to slash the budget and now want 3 percent of our paychecks to make ends meet while the Chamber of Commerce and other corporate interests receive special treatment. This isn't shared sacrifice, it's a mugging. Mark Hussey a deputy sheriff and FOP member said "I find it unconscionable that the people who are attacking the law enforcement officers in this state are now using us to try and further their political agenda. We have paid a price, sometimes with our very lives, and these groups like the Chamber of Commerce have no moral compass to think that they have the right use us at the same time that they are attacking us."



Working Families Lobby Corps Reflections

For the first time in Florida AFL-CIO history we have a presence in Tallahassee that puts working families in an active role in fighting against the assault on the middle class. Each week, the Legislative Newsletter will share activists' thoughts on their time here at the capitol.

"I came to Tallahassee the last week of March knowing full well it was going to be a difficult legislative session due to the supermajorities in both chambers. But I didn't think that there would be a scorched earth policy when it came to working people. The Legislature attacked all workers with equal vigor and even stooped low enough to attack the disabled. There was no focus on jobs or economic growth as was promised by many during their campaigns. Despite this negative atmosphere I felt like thanking the overreaching legislators for waking up the citizens of Florida. Leaving Tallahassee that Friday I felt so motivated to fight back that I drove straight to the Tampa Bay Rays game to boo Rick Scott as he threw out the first pitch of the season. I'm not backing down."

-Chris Regalado IBEW 824



Messages From the Front Lines

News from the Trenches of the Florida Legislature

Public Pensions – FRS Senate Bill 2100 / House Bill 1405

The pension bills dealing with the Florida Retirement System (FRS) cleared both of their respective chambers this week and are headed to the budget conference process. Senate Bill 2100, the renumbered bill that came out of the Senate Budget Committee passed the Senate with a 26-13 vote. Republican Senators Thad Altman (R, Melbourne), Paula Dockery (R, Lakeland), Mike Fasano (R, New Port Richey) and Steve Oelrich (R, Gainesville) voted against the bill.

Senate Bill 2100 has the following major provisions:

- A tiered contribution rate scheme. Workers earning \$25,000 or less will contribute 2% of their gross salary to their pensions. Workers earning \$25,000 to \$50,000 will contribute 2% plus 4% on any amount over \$25,000. Workers earning over \$50,000 will contribute the 2% plus 6% on any amount over \$50,000. A worker earning \$55,000 would pay the 2% (500) 4% (1000) and 6% (300) for a total of \$1800 per year.
- The defined benefit plan remains open for all employees other than the elected class and senior management who will be placed in the defined contribution investment plan.
- The DROP program remains as is until 2016 and then a phase out begins. The interest rate is reduced from 6% to 2.5%
- The COLA for the defined benefit plan is eliminated.

Commitments were made on the Senate floor by the Budget Chairman to use the conference process to reduce the contribution rates for the tiers so this issue is still very fluid.

House Bill 1405 passed late Thursday evening. It includes:

- A 3% across the board contribution rate.
- The defined benefit plan remains open to all employees
- DROP is eliminated on July 1st 2011
- The COLA for the defined benefit program is retained.

Public Works (Project Labor Agreements) Senate Bill 1352/House Bill 923

This is a tired old issue that has been filed almost annually for the past 10 years. This bill would outlaw Project Labor Agreements (PLA) thus barring cities and counties from negotiating these agreements for public works projects. A Project Labor Agreement (PLA) is a pre-hire, and usually a pre-bid, agreement between labor and employers, owners or users of the construction industry. The agreement sets the terms and conditions of employment and establishes a process to resolve disputes between labor and management. In most cases, PLA's are specific to a single, large-scale construction projects. If this legislation is passed, municipalities will be banned from negotiating with employers on wages, hours, health care, etc. Unscrupulous contractors would be able to get away with employing workers and providing them with no health care, safety or other critical protections. The measure passed the Senate Community Affairs Committee this week with a 7-2 vote. Republican Senator Paula Dockery (R, Lakeland) joined longtime friend Senator Tony Hill (D, Jacksonville) in opposition to the bill. Democratic Senator Jeremy Ring (D, Margate) joined the Republican majority in supporting the bill. The bill's next stop is the Senate Government Oversight and Accountability Committee and is expected to be on the April 14th Meeting agenda. The House version, HB 293 has not been heard in any House committees.

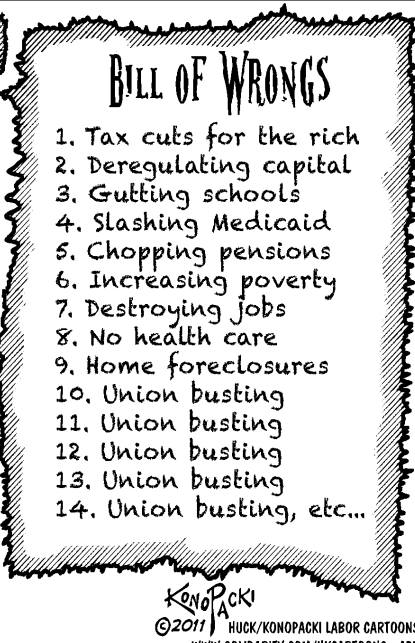
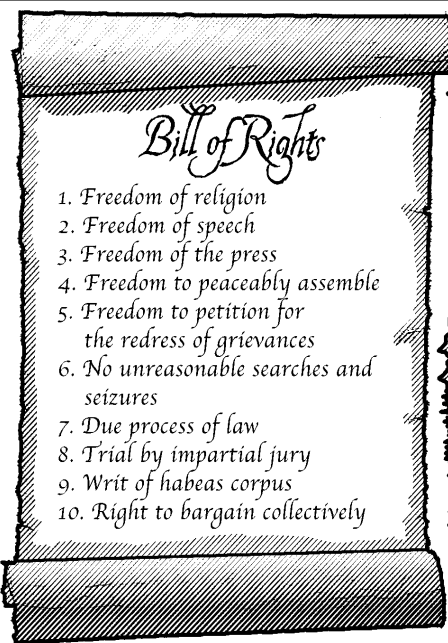


Have you visited FightforFlorida.com?
 If the answer is "No" then what are you waiting for?
 If you said "Of course I have" then have you shared it with others?



Fight For Florida is an online action hub for working Floridians fighting back against the assault on Florida's middle class by Gov. Scott and Tallahassee politicians. We work to organize people from all backgrounds and walks of life to take action in meaningful, effective ways that make a difference in the lives of all Floridians. Through online petitions, letter writing, call in campaigns, and other actions, we make the voices and interests of working people heard in the halls of power in Tallahassee and throughout the state. We are fighting for Florida's middle class, and we will be heard.

The website URL is FightForFlorida.com or find us on Facebook by searching "Fight For Florida"



WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON?

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Working Families Lobby Corps is in full swing.
Are you ready to be a freedom fighter for working families?

The WFLC program is being hailed as a success by those who are participating every week. After four weeks of in your face opposition to the majorities' agenda the Representatives and Senators of the Florida Legislature know we are here to stay. This program puts you, the activist, at the forefront of all legislative issues: the broad issues that are affecting all Floridians and the issues that are specific to the individual unions. Slots are still available every week for you to come up and join the WFLC. Talk to your Union and CLC leadership or contact Phyllis Garrett at 850-224-6926 or pgarrett@flafclcio.org for more information.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The WFLC program is **cancelled** for the week of April 18-22. The Senate has announced they will be out the entire week and the House may be here for one day only, if at all. If you are scheduled for that week please make sure and change your plans.



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Legislative Update

