



Contact: Rich Templin
Florida AFL-CIO
Phone 850-224-6926
Cell 850-566-4348

135 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Florida AFL-CIO

Press Release

New Leadership Takes the Helm of Florida's Labor Movement

The 2009 Biennial Convention of the Florida AFL-CIO Has Unanimously Elected Mike Williams, President and Brian Dempsey, Secretary-Treasurer

On Wednesday, October 6th, over 200 delegates representing more than 500 local unions from across Florida unanimously elected new executive officers to lead the Florida AFL-CIO. Mike Williams, a licensed journeyman construction electrician and the immediate past-president of the Florida Building Trades Council, was elected as President of the Florida AFL-CIO. Brian Dempsey, who most recently served as the president of UAW Local 1821 in Ocala, was elected to serve as the Secretary-Treasurer. Each officer was elected to serve a four-year term. This leadership change, prompted by the retirement of Cindy Hall, past President and Dwayne Sealy, past Secretary-Treasurer comes in the midst of one of the most successful periods in the history of Florida's labor movement. Since 2006, the Florida AFL-CIO has increased by over 90,000 new members, has helped elect an unprecedented number of endorsed candidates to the Florida Legislature and the United States Congress and has been widely credited as a pivotal factor in securing Florida's 27 electoral votes for labor's endorsed candidate in the last presidential election, President Barack Obama.

Shortly after the election, both members of the new leadership team spoke to the convention and promised to increase the rate of the labor federation's incredible growth and to enhance what has become one of the most successful grassroots operations in Florida politics. Brian Dempsey, the new Secretary-Treasurer who has extensive experience in the field serving as the Board Chair for North Florida's grassroots operations said, "I was raised in a household where we were taught 'to whom much is given, much is expected' and today the working men and women of Florida have given me so much. I was born into that family. When I became a worker at Lockheed-Martin I became a member of the UAW family. When I realized the true scope of our movement, I became a member of the AFL-CIO family. That family has led me here. I will meet your expectations. Standing together, working Floridians can accomplish anything, I know I can do it, I know you can do it...let's get out there and do it!"

President Mike Williams, the son of two mill workers in South Georgia is a long time union activist who, in addition to serving as president of the Florida Building Trades Council, was also the Business Manager for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 177 based in Jacksonville, Florida. He acknowledged the amazing strides that have been made over the past few years, but promised that recent successes are only the beginning. He said, "I promise each and every one of you that in six months you will not recognize the face of the Florida AFL-CIO as it has existed over the past 20 years."

(more)

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He spoke at length about an aggressive plan to bring more workers into the movement, increase the power of the federation's electoral program and build an unprecedented advocacy operation in the legislature to ensure that the interests of Florida's workers are placed above those of the corporate special interests. "I promise to work tirelessly to ensure that all of Florida's workers are given the same opportunities that most of us have been given by the labor movement. Decent pay for a decent days work, jobs with dignity, access to a quality education for our children and grandchildren and the promise that if we work hard, the American dream will be there for us and future generations," he said. "We have responsibilities in the Florida Legislature...I can't wait. They don't understand accountability yet, but they will. I will ensure that all of our elected officials do what is in the best interests of ALL Florida's working families and if they don't, we will take on each and every one and they will not be returning to office!"

The unanimous vote ensures that there will be a seamless transition of responsibilities so that Florida's workers can be confident that their needs are being met and their interests are being served. The transition took place immediately and the new leadership is already at work.

The Florida AFL-CIO is the state federation of over 500 local unions collectively representing more than 500,000 workers, retirees and their families from a broad range of trades and professions.

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