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Press Release

Firefighters, Teachers and Police Officers Stand United Against the Florida Chamber of Commerce Ad that Misuses Their Profession for the Chamber's political agenda.

TALLAHASSEE – Firefighters, teachers and police officers joined with state Rep. Dwayne Taylor in outrage over a misleading television ad aired by the Florida Chamber of Commerce. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9Tz69BfW48>. This 30-second ad leaves the strong impression that the Florida Chamber of Commerce speaks for Florida's police officers, teachers and firefighters. At a news conference today, representatives of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), Florida Education Association (FEA) and Florida Professional Firefighters (FPF) set the record straight and spoke out against the Chamber's use of their profession to further their own political agenda.

"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," said Steve Clelland, a firefighter from Orlando. "They don't."

Rick Scott and corporate special interests groups like the Florida Chamber of Commerce don't speak for the middle class and they're 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 and educating Florida's students but the workers themselves.

Unlike the TV ad, which used stock footage and actors 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 the recently passed HB 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 in 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?'"

"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." said Mark Hussey a deputy sheriff and FOP member.

"As a former firefighter, I knew who had my back when I needed help -- my union," said Taylor, D-Daytona Beach. "When I was saving lives, they were making sure that my family's future and rights were protected. This disingenuous ad does not move the dialogue of how to get Floridians back to work."

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.

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