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## Press Release

### As Summit on Florida's Energy Future Kicks Off in Orlando, Florida AFL-CIO Calls for Special Session to Ban Offshore Drilling, Increased State Commitment to Alternative Energy

Florida's labor movement unanimously adopts resolution in opposition to offshore drilling and in support of alternative, renewable energy

Tallahassee – The Florida AFL-CIO issued an official statement today in support of a Special Session this summer to place a proposed constitutional amendment on the 2010 ballot to ban offshore oil drilling in state waters. The state federation of over 550 local unions representing over 500,000 workers, retirees and their families is also calling on the Florida Legislature to use the session to create a meaningful program to develop an alternative, renewable energy infrastructure for Florida.

In late May, delegates to the 2010 Florida AFL-CIO Endorsing Convention unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the leadership of the Florida AFL-CIO to, “work within the legislative and political process to find ways to protect Florida from increased oil drilling, reduce the need for drilling off of Florida’s coast and increase efforts to build a renewable energy infrastructure that creates good, high skilled, high wage jobs.” In the weeks immediately following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill off the coast of Louisiana, there were indications that a special session to protect Florida waters from future drilling was likely. Now however, there appears that there is reluctance to pursue such a special session that focuses on the ban and alternative energy. The Florida AFL-CIO strongly believes that the ban is necessary but that it must be pursued in conjunction with a real commitment from the Legislature to quickly and aggressively pursue programs that will build a new energy infrastructure for the state that relies on the full development of clean, renewable energy sources.

Florida AFL-CIO President Mike Williams said, “The epic disaster in the Gulf has created a new sense of urgency in the minds of Floridians about the ways we produce energy. The time is now to capitalize on that urgency and take meaningful action to build a new, safer energy infrastructure for Florida. A constitutional ban on offshore drilling sends an important message to both our residents and investors that Florida is serious about building a new energy future. It must be in conjunction with a real commitment by our state leaders and we are hoping that a Special Session will yield a program that demonstrates that commitment.”

The current recession also provides the impetus to move forward aggressively in developing alternative energy. Florida’s unemployment rate of 11.7% is currently one of the highest in the country and the state budget is facing crippling deficits for the foreseeable future. A major program to develop a new energy

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infrastructure will create thousands of jobs and generate millions in economic activity. The U.S. Energy Information Administration estimates that moving to a system where 25% of our nation's power comes from renewable energy will generate 1 million manufacturing jobs, 2.5 million indirect jobs and \$400 billion in economic activity. Florida's labor movement wants Florida to be in a position to take advantage of those jobs and economic stimulus.

Mike Williams said, "The 2010 Regular Legislative Session was supposed to be about jobs and yet the actual jobs creation was minimal and relied on tax breaks and exemptions that further strain the state budget. The Florida Legislature can use this time of crisis to establish programs geared towards creating a new energy infrastructure that will create jobs and generate dollars for our economy. Florida's labor movement is ready to assist. Unions like the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and others are already preparing the workforce needed to make this happen with 11 Apprenticeship Training Centers for Green Energy production and transmission, all of which are solar powered. Labor is making a real commitment, now we need the Florida Legislature to do the same with a Special Session as soon as possible."

Labor has been working with many legislative leaders on energy issues. One who has made green energy infrastructure development a priority has been Representative Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda from the 9<sup>th</sup> District based in Tallahassee. In a statement provided to the Florida AFL-CIO she wrote, "This is a critical time in our state. We have to move quickly and decisively to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels like oil and develop an entirely new energy infrastructure that takes full advantage of Florida's vast, clean, renewable resources. I look forward to working with Labor, our utilities, manufacturers and private investors to make that happen and I think a Special Session this summer is an excellent start."

The Florida AFL-CIO will continue to reach out to legislators in the weeks ahead to make a Special Session with energy issues at the forefront, a reality.

*The Resolution Appears Below:*



## A Resolution in Opposition to Offshore Oil Drilling in Florida's Coastal Waters

**Adopted by the 2010 Florida AFL-CIO COPE Endorsing Convention  
May, 23<sup>rd</sup> 2010**

**WHEREAS**, Florida's economy depends on its multi-billion dollar tourism industry, which resulted in more than 82 million visitors coming to Florida in 2008, during which period tourism generated over \$4.0 billion in taxable sales ;and

**WHEREAS**, tourism accounts for one-third of Florida's budget revenue and 96% of those visitors cite the beaches as an influential factor in their decision to visit Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, tourism dollars help stimulate Florida's economy across all sectors and help create and maintain jobs across the state; and

**WHEREAS**, tax revenues generated from Florida's tourism industry are critical to continued funding of essential governmental services, including transportation, schools, and public safety; and

**WHEREAS**, proponents for increased offshore oil drilling in Florida's waters have not been able to offer any verifiable, objective information on the creation of jobs for Floridians through increased drilling and anecdotal information from other states indicates that new job creation for state residents is fairly low; and

**WHEREAS**, the area with the potential for the greatest risk of environmental damage is the eastern part of the Gulf of Mexico, off the western coast of Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, environmental specialists contend the major risk from drilling platforms is the wastewater they routinely discharge which contains drilling fluids and heavy metals including mercury; and

**WHEREAS**, According to Oil Industry data, an oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico can dump up to 90,000 tons of drilling fluid and metal cuttings over its lifetime. These contaminants accumulate in the marine food web and may contaminate local beaches and have a negative effect on the environment and the tourism industry; and

**WHEREAS**, the current oil drilling disaster of epic proportions in the Gulf of Mexico is expected to negatively impact Florida's economy, jobs and working families for years to come indicating the truly risky nature of offshore drilling; and

**WHEREAS**, this disaster offers clear and convincing evidence that despite technological advances in oil drilling technology, there is no positive assurance that catastrophic damage to our coastline, beaches, plant and fish life could be avoided during normal operating conditions or during storm situations; and

**WHEREAS**, a continued reliance on fossil fuels for energy slows the investment and development of new and renewable energy generation and transmission infrastructure, an economic sector that has tremendous potential for job creation and economy development in Florida; and

**WHEREAS**, a shift to renewable energy has been embraced by many sectors of the American labor movement; and

**WHEREAS**, lifting the moratorium on mineral leasing in the Gulf of Mexico poses an intolerable threat to the beaches, waterways, economy of Florida, and national security:

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Florida AFL-CIO that we strongly encourage all elected officials at the County, State and Federal levels to oppose any attempt to expand offshore oil drilling and to take immediate steps to encourage and assist in the development of clean sources of energy; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that we encourage the leadership of the Florida AFL-CIO to work within the legislative and political process to find ways to protect Florida from increased oil drilling, reduce the need for drilling off of Florida's coast and increase efforts to build a renewable energy infrastructure that creates good, high skilled, high wage jobs with opportunities for union membership.