



# CONVENTION REPORTER

A DAILY REPORT FOR DELEGATES TO THE FLORIDA AFL-CIO BIENNIAL CONVENTION

## Monday, October 01, 2007

**President Cindy Hall** called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM.

**Brother Jack Gose**, APWU, Florida State Retirees Chapter, offered the Invocation.

The Colors were presented by the **Army Reserve Medical Command Honor Guard Team**

**Secretary Treasurer Dwayne Sealy** led the chamber in the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Hall introduced the four recently hired Zone Coordinators to the delegates. **Nicholas Dix, Zone 1; Justin Tzuanos, Zone 2; Joshua Anijar, Zone 3; Olga Fernandez, Zone 4.**

**Floyd Suggs**, President of the West Central Florida Federation of Labor welcomed the delegates of the 2007 Biennial Convention to St. Pete Beach. He told the delegates that as long as they obeyed all of the speeds zones while driving and stayed away from the WCFFFOL sponsored hospitality suite, they would be fine. He spoke about the new hope he had for Florida's labor movement as result of all the progress he had seen under the New Alliance restructuring program. He said, "I believe in us, we can make this (New Alliance) a great success. If you take U and I out of the word union you are left with non. We have to all be active and engaged. We will be successful in the critical work we have ahead of us. We are doing God's work and we have to pull this off." He spoke about the major challenges he saw on the horizon, including the Employee Free Choice Act, alleviating poverty in the state and defeating the proposed property tax amendment, which he argued would devastate the lives of thousands of working Floridians. He said, "We need to be like the redwoods in the Northwest. We need to tie our roots together, hold on to one another and together we can weather anything."

President Hall announced the standing convention rule that if any individual's cell phone rang during the General Session they would be asked to give a \$25 donation to the COPE Action Team fund.

Brother Dwayne Sealy conducted the roll call of the officers at 9:25 AM.

## Committee Reports

### Credentials Committee

**Dan Reynolds**, President, Federation of Public Employees and Co-Chair of the committee, reported that **79 Pre-registered credentials** that were received **prior** to the September 10th on-time deadline were reviewed and found to be in good order; **20 Pre-registered credentials** that were received **after** the September 10<sup>th</sup> deadline were reviewed and found to be in good order and **24 on-site credentials** were reviewed and found to be in good order. **1 fraternal delegate and 7 guests also registered.**

The committee moved that **123 voting delegates** and **1 fraternal delegate** be seated. **Floyd Suggs**, West-Central Florida Central Labor Council seconded the motion. The motion carried by a voice vote of the delegates.

### Rules Committee

**Doug Sellars**, **IBEW #824** and Co-Chair of the committee delivered the report. The Rules Committee met via conference call on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 to review the rules and draw up a recommendation. He reported that a copy of the committee's recommendations could be found in the convention books. He moved that the delegation accept the committee's recommendations. Floyd Suggs seconded the motion. The motion carried by a voice vote of the delegates.

### Resolutions Committee

**Floyd Suggs**, Co-chair of the committee read the report. The committee referred Resolution #13 regarding Single Payer Health Care to the Legislative Committee and Resolution #22 regarding Health Care to the Legislative Committee. The committee suggested that these two resolutions be examined for possible combination. The report also noted that the State Executive Board has already adopted a "no" position on the state property tax amendment as articulated in Resolution #19. The committee also recommended that Resolutions #5 and #20 should be examined for possible combination. No further action was required so no motion was made. The committee will meet again on Tuesday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:30 PM.

### Executive Board

Dwayne Sealy presented the minutes from the Executive Board meeting on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The minutes included several motions for adoption by the delegates. The motions were seconded by Tim Maitland, IUPAT Local #2301 and all were approved.

### State COPE Committee

Dwayne Sealy read the report from the State COPE Committee. The committee recommended an endorsement for Stephen Bacallao in the upcoming special election for Florida House District 34. The report included a motion to adopt. The motion was seconded by Ellis Canty, ILA Local #1416 and approved.

**Keith Maddox, Director of the AFL-CIO Field Services Department**

Brother Maddox spoke about the appropriateness of the theme for this year's convention, "Fighting for Florida's Future" because we have many fights on the horizon. He pointed out that Florida has been home to some of the most significant political and issue fights and that Florida's labor movement has a history of rising to meet those challenges. He said, "You know about fights. Remember 2000, when the rest of the country counted out Florida for Al Gore but you never stopped, you never quit and at the end of the day you won. They had to steal it from you and once again you kept on fighting in Miami, Palm Beach and Tallahassee, leading the charge against the stolen election making them steal it twice." He spoke about our experiences with storms, pointing out that we had a new devastating storm on the horizon called "Hurricane Grover." (A reference to Grover Norquist and his allies who are behind TABOR battles in other states and who are expected to be in Florida pushing the Property Tax Amendment) He pointed out that this fight will be one of our most difficult, but that we are now ready to take it on thanks to the New Alliance restructuring and rising affiliations. He spoke about the need to new affiliated members to be engaged and for union leaders to be out in the field working with them at all levels. He spoke about the benefits for New Alliance programs in other states and the incredible things that the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO has been able to accomplish after their restructuring. He spoke about the challenges that lay ahead, both here in Florida and around the nation and that we will be able to meet these challenges if we begin to re-frame the "family values" issue. He said that we should be talking with the people about family values like health care for all, economic security so that people don't have to hold three jobs to survive, protecting pensions and people's retirement and fair trade policies. He spoke about the need to remember our history and our role in building the middle class and why we must be the ones who protect the middle class. He said that we need to have courage if we are to stop the trend where the super-rich are getting richer while the middle class is eroding and the poor are getting poorer. He spoke about beating the property tax amendment, electing labor friendly candidates in Labor 2008, the Employee Free Choice Act and holding our allies in Congress accountable for the people. He said, "This is not a sprinting race but a marathon and we have a long way to go. We need to start as soon as we leave this convention."

**The Honorable Alex Sink, Florida's Chief Financial Officer**

CFO Alex Sink is currently the only labor endorsed candidate on the Florida Cabinet and the first to win a statewide election in several years. She began her remarks by proclaiming, "We won one!" She spoke about where she was and what she was doing on the campaign trail this time last year. She said, "Last

year as I traveled all across this great state, there was not one place I went where I did not have labor standing with me.” She spoke about the critical role that labor’s grassroots movement played in her campaign and in her statewide victory. She spoke about one of her first appointments as CFO. When the taskforce was being created for My Safe Florida Homes, she saw that builders and insurers were represented, but no one represented working people, so she appointed Brother Ed Dees to serve on that important task force. She pledged to always work to ensure that Florida’s labor movement would be represented in all levels of state government. She commented that others remarked that Brother Dees was the best member of the task force. She spoke about three areas where she has been working for the people of Florida. First, she talked about her role as the principal person for managing the business of our state and primary fiscal watchdog. She spoke about her efforts to change the way that the state does business, especially in the areas of privatization and contracting. She has worked to implement a new process where all proposed privatization projects will be carefully evaluated by the Council for Efficient Government. Second, she talked about her work involving education, outreach and advocacy for the people of Florida. She discussed the Personal Injury Protection (PIP) system of car insurance and the major problems that could be created if the current system is allowed to expire without a new system being enacted. She said, “Right now, everybody up there working on the issue represents the insurers, the doctors, the hospitals and the lawyers, but nobody is up there talking about the drivers...the people and how they will be adversely affected.” **She encouraged all of the delegates to educate themselves on the issues surrounding PIP Insurance by visiting [www.myfloridacfo.com](http://www.myfloridacfo.com).** She also spoke about the My Safe Florida Homes program which provides free home inspections to Floridians. These inspections could provide substantial savings for homeowners on their insurance premiums. She also spoke about the fact that state funds are available to help people make the changes needed to protect their homes against hurricanes and lower their insurance premiums. **Information is available at [www.mysafefloridahomes.com](http://www.mysafefloridahomes.com).** She said, “We expect 400,000 people to take advantage of this program. So far, 100,000 have done so. I would not object if the next 300,000 are union members.” Third, she spoke about the importance of the current fight in Washington over the SCHIP (State Children’s Health Insurance Program) and how the outcome will impact Florida’s own KidCare program. She encouraged all of the delegates to contact their Congresspersons who may have voted against the SCHIP reauthorization and make sure they know about their displeasure in the strongest possible way. She concluded her remarks by reminding the delegates about the devastating nature of the upcoming property tax amendment. She stated that she supported the Legislature’s statutory change on property taxes, which led to the first round of local budget cuts. She stated that sometimes in business, difficult decisions must be made and the first round of cuts were hard but necessary. She then took questions and comments from the floor. Several delegates spoke about their property insurance problems and how that issue is more pressing than the property tax problem. Some members commented that the difficult but

necessary local budget cuts she talked about as being necessary actually represented union jobs.

**President Cindy Hall** introduced a short film about Colorado's experience with TABOR (Tax Payer Bill of Rights) and how the measure crippled the state. **The film was produced by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities and can be downloaded from their website at [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org).**

**Shahra Anderson, Senator Bill Nelson's Office** – Shahra Anderson, district staff for Senator Bill Nelson addressed the delegates with a message of greetings and support from the Senator. She spoke about his efforts in Washington to create the National Catastrophic Fund to help protect Florida Homeowners. She notified the delegates that information on the fund would be available in the exhibit hall.

**Ken Johnson, Director Southern Region, AFL-CIO** – Brother Ken Johnson commended the delegates on the excellent work that Florida has done under the New Alliance restructuring. He spoke about the importance of completing this difficult work to build a labor movement that is unified at the state, regional and local levels. He spoke about the numerous challenges that were overcome by the people of Florida to get as far as we had under New Alliance. He highlighted three reasons for our success. First, the people at all levels of Florida's labor movement did not allow early difficulties to dissuade them and stayed committed to the process. Second, the people had a clear vision of what they wanted a new labor movement to look like and never deviated from that vision. Finally, the national Executive Council set standards and benchmarks to guide our efforts and make our movement more accountable. He said that the most important aspect of our success is the fact that this was a true bottom-up effort, one that rejected traditional top-down hierarchies in favor of a more empowered grass-roots. He praised the delegates for development a coordinated field program with full-time zone staff adding that the Florida process would be much further along if the National AFL-CIO had not slowed it down with the decision last year to use national staff in Florida for Labor 2006. He thanked the Florida Education Association (the largest affiliate) for its moves towards full affiliation under a unified per-capita program. He offered one cautionary statement. He said, "This process is far from complete – it may never be complete – as our movement is one of constant growth and change – but our success here in Florida as in other states shows that a truly unified labor movement can exist and work, accomplishing truly great things."

**Karen Houston, IAM Local #2061** – Sister Karen spoke about the struggle taking place at NASA between the brothers and sisters of IAM #2061 and management at the space center. Local 2061 members have been on strike since June 14<sup>th</sup> and she shared about the ways in which the company is making these workers suffer. Some of the issues in the strike include: the elimination of pensions all new hires, lack of critical training programs, elimination of seniority

rights, lunch breaks changed at the whim of management and other issues. She spoke about the harsh conditions facing strikers at the Cape including oppressive heat, dangerous thunderstorms and a serious mosquito problem. She proudly reported that 90% of the people are still on the line.

**Ernie Hartless IAM Local #731** – Spoke about efforts from Jacksonville to deliver food and relief supplies to the line and how appreciative the brothers and Sisters at the cape were for the assistance. He encouraged all unions to try to find ways to show their support for the strikers.

**Cheryl Comeau, CWA Local #3101** – Reminded the delegates that recent newspaper reports indicated that management at the Cape was threatening to lock-out the workers and hire permanent replacements.

**President Hall called the meeting to recess at 12:10.** A collection was taken at the door for the striking Space Center workers as the delegates left the floor.