

SEIU Florida Public Services Union Political ACTION

We've had some time to think about the 2010 elections. Results for our endorsed candidates are posted on our website for your detailed review. We've had our ear to the ground and are looking at what legislation, policies and budgets are coming down the line for our members in the coming year, locally, statewide and nationally. We are planning for the future.

Your political team wants to let you know what we are planning. We want to get your input and then ask for your participation to make it work.

What have we accomplished?

During this past election season, Florida Public Services Union (FPSU) established a Political Strength Committee and filled the political director's position in September. We screened candidates in each of our local areas for endorsement. Through the joint efforts of FPSU and all of our affiliates at the state council, we ran a coordinated "Get Out the Vote" (GOTV) campaign. We trained Member Political Organizers (MPO's) who made over 2,700 calls, knocked on nearly 4,500 doors and made over 2,300 contacts with voters in 55 targeted precincts.

What is our action plan?

We want to build on the basic infrastructure we began this year. SEIU FPSU is developing a 2-year, Strategic Political Action Plan. Here are some highlights:

- Continue building our statewide Political Strength Committee with leadership from each of our local units throughout the state
- Leaders on the Political Strength Committee will establish 2-5 rapid response members in each local unit to coordinate communication to members in their units within 24 hours of an issue requiring action coming to our attention.
- Educate and inform members in each of our units about pending legislation concerning labor and work-related issues affecting workers and their families
- Train Leadership and Rapid Response Team Members providing them with the tools to generate necessary changes in the legislative process and to have a strong voice and an active part in the legislative activities that affect their daily lives
- Expand the COPE program to cover more members and increase contributions to fund FPSU's political education work

What are some of the issues that we anticipate dealing with in the coming year?

"Taxpayer Bill of Rights" (TABOR), Center on Budget and Policy Priorities...

Senate President Haridopolos introduced a Taxpayer Bill of Rights type bill during the past legislative session and plans to reintroduce TABOR during the upcoming session. Look at the harmful effects that the 1992 constitutional amendment, referred to as TABOR, had in Colorado. It has affected schools, universities, health care, roads, and the economy along with PUBLIC SECTOR JOBS. TABOR guaranteed Colorado taxpayers the right to vote on any and all tax increases, but what they weren't told was that they would have the strictest tax and spending limitation of any state in the country and that in the

- PENSION AND RESERVE FUNDS have been raided just to keep basic public services running.
- TABOR made it impossible to keep up with the cost of EDUCATION... public schools suffered.
- TABOR made it impossible to keep up with the cost of PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE PREPARATION ...
- TABOR FROZE JOBS in PUBLIC SAFETY – more and more services with less money

long term, TABOR would hobble Colorado economically. A rigid, population growth plus inflation formula was used. The consumer price index did not compare well to what the state purchases every day. This formula prevented Colorado from keeping up with the cost of vital services. This formula got locked into the state's constitution, leaving no flexibility to meet the state's needs. Restricting a state's budget in this way prevents the state from keeping up with the rising cost of vital services.

- Department of Agriculture has no money to help farmers.
- In HEALTH CARE, child immunizations were affected. Colorado was forced to opt out of certain Medicaid programs. Since TABOR, three quarters of Colorado pediatricians won't treat Medicaid patients.
- Colorado now has the biggest shortfall... a 40-60 million dollar deficit in ROADS AND INTRASTRUCTURE.

People, education and workforce needs are not being met. Is this what we want for Florida?

PENSION REFORM – Florida Retirement System:

At the 2010 Florida League of Cities annual conference, Governor-elect Scott laid out his plans for the coming year. They include a property tax rollback and require all city, county, fire fighters and other public employees and teachers in the Florida Retirement System to make a contribution to the pension fund. The Governor elect stated that he will be seeking 1.4 billion dollars from employees' salaries. That equates to a 5-6% contribution rate, and an equivalent reduction from our take home pay.

"Haridopolos takes on ObamaCare", St Petersburg Times...

State Senate President Mike Haridopolos has announced he filed a proposed amendment to the state constitution that could stop President Obama's health care plan. It requires people to buy health insurance or face penalties. The amendment is likely to pass the legislature but whether it can meet the 60 percent voter-approval threshold for constitutional amendments is a far tougher call.

Extension of Florida's Unemployment Benefits (Naples News)...

Current Governor Crist signed an extension order in July 2010 for Florida's unemployment compensation that expired December 4th. There has been no suggestion that he is preparing to sign another extension.

"Fund Florida Schools, don't fine them!" Pensacola News Journal & Progress Florida...

Voters have spoken with Amendment 8. They want smaller classes. Legislators should deliver them. The legislature should NOT impose fines on beleaguered school districts working hard to reduce class size. Instead, the legislature needs to provide the funding our schools need to do right by our kids!

"Florida's failed tax policies have our economy in the tank", Orlando Sentinel...

Governor Elect Rick Scott plans to cut corporate income tax in Florida, which is already one of the lowest in America (5.5%, rank 40th, according to Tax Foundation). As of October, 11.9% of Floridians were unemployed – more than double the rate of some states with higher tax rates, and, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 47th overall.

Social Security:

Discussions about 1) Raising the full retirement age to 69 which would amount to a 13 percent cut, a loss the average retiree would be hard-pressed to absorb- 2) The Simpson-Bowles plan is a scheme to begin the process of privatizing Social Security and Medicare – a goal already outlined by key Congressional Republicans such as Wisconsin Congressman Paul Ryan, incoming chair of the House Budget Committee.

"Birth Control...illegal in Florida", Progress Florida...

The assault on women and their health care decisions is about to reach new heights in Florida. Governor-elect Rick Scott will attempt to put a constitutional amendment on Florida's 2012 ballot that would give a fertilized egg the legal rights of a living person. This would outlaw commonly used forms of birth control, including the pill. It would prohibit women from seeking medical care if the treatment might endanger a fertilized egg.

DREAM Act...

No action is expected on the DREAM Act prior to the end of 2010. The DREAM Act would bring thousands of undocumented students out of the shadows and allow them to give back to the only country they call home – the USA.

How can members help? Call to action.

Let's get educated and take action to protect members' quality of life. Please contact, VP for Political Strength Theo Webster (407 310-1174), or Political Director Sheila Dogan (407 405-7972), if you are interested in becoming part of our Political Strength Committee or the Rapid Response Team. Stewards are part of our infrastructure and we will need their participation on our Team.