



26 September 2024

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The Florida Education Association: the Annual Assembly

But first, for those of us who received letters from Archivum, and are now must spend the next two months writing a narrative explaining why we should not be fired, here is:

- **Post Tenure Review.** It's probably illegal, but litigating it will take time. So meanwhile, here are a few words on the subject. See below.

The [United Faculty of Florida](#) (UFF) represents faculty in the eleven universities and the one college within the State University System, as well as sixteen public colleges, one private college, and graduate assistants within four universities. UFF is one union "local" within the [Florida Education Association](#) (FEA), which represents PreK-20 educators across the state.

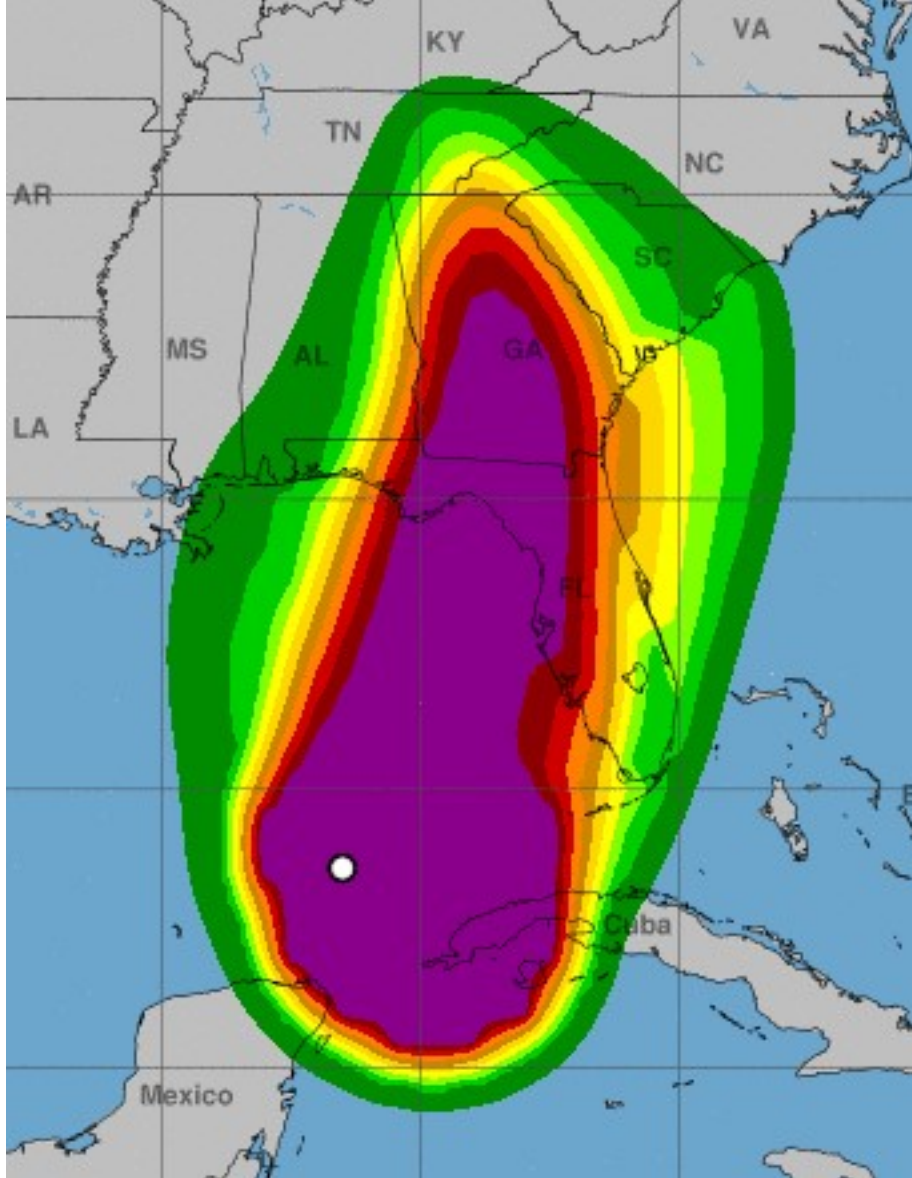
Every fall, the FEA's legislative body, the Delegate Assembly, meets to hear reports and set policy. Last week, 596 delegates from across the state met in Orlando.

- **The Theme was Power.** In our case, the collective power of the union to advance our cause. For details, see below.

Meanwhile, the Assembly offered some Professional Development workshops, and one was a particularly pertinent reality check.

- **Another Take on AI.** The FEA's two national affiliates had slightly different takes on AI in the classroom. See below.

Our lawyers would like all faculty to fill out [a survey](#) on how one of the Stop Woke laws affected your classes: if you haven't already, please fill out this survey. Thank you.



The [National Hurricane Center](#) is tracking the storm

This Friday, the Chapter Meeting is Online Only

Chapter Meeting Tomorrow Friday at 12 noon online only. On the [agenda](#): report on the FEA meeting, post tenure review, government relations (are you registered to vote?!), and more. And here are the [September 13 minutes](#). **All UFF USF employees - members and non-members alike - are invited to attend the chapter meeting.** But to Zoom in to the chapter meeting you must have an invitation: contact [the Chapter Secretary](#) to get one. Meetings and events are [posted on the Events Calendar](#) of the [UFF USF Website](#). Come and check us out.

Post Tenure Review

Last Friday, the letters went out. We understand that Archivum will be accepting uploads by October 5 and that all materials are

to be submitted by November 20.

"Post Tenure Faculty Reviews" (PTR) notifications went out a week late - they were supposed to go out by September 12 - but apparently the original November 20 deadline for submissions holds.

PTR is a contract violation and is probably illegal, but UFF was unable to litigate right away last fall because the courts require that someone be harmed. But now, as some faculty were fired last spring, wheels are turning. Yet as [Charles Dickens](#) fans know, the wheels turn slowly. Meanwhile, PTR'd faculty have to move now.

USF has posted a page on [Post-Tenure Review](#), and the [7 September 2023 Biweekly](#) outlines the history and the situation. For those people chosen in this round, here is our advice:

- Compose and submit the PTR packet; failure to do so could be taken as insubordination.
- Get a copy of your department or unit's PTR criteria and compose a narrative with those criteria in mind.
- Consult with your chair about the narrative: the chair will be the one to write the first recommendation.
- If you are a union member, you can consult with us. Contact the [Grievance Committee](#) for advice. (Definitely contact us if there is trouble).

And if you haven't joined UFF already, [do so now](#), for we cannot represent an employee on a grievance who wasn't a member at the time of the contract violation.

What is a Contract Good For?

A contract can help when you get in trouble - *if you use it*. If your contractual rights are violated, you have the right to file a grievance seeking redress, and we can help. But remember, **you have thirty days from the time you knew or should have known about the contract violation to file the grievance, so if something happens, contact us asap.** For more information, see the [Grievance Page](#).

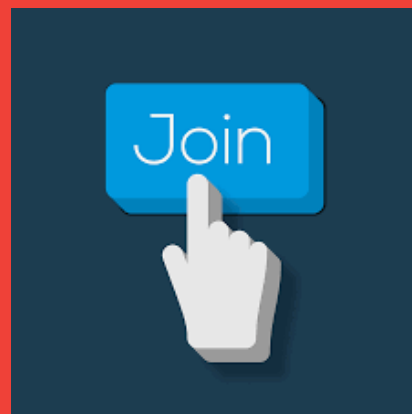


A Civics Reminder

If you have [missed two federal elections](#), you may have been purged from the voter rolls. And if voting by mail, you must [renew your vote by mail](#) request for each federal election.

Yes, it's an Election Year! And politicians ignore voters who don't vote - and **only 16% of all FEA members voted in the primary. Don't let this happen in November!**

The general election is on **November 5**, and the **deadline to register is October 7 - THAT'S ELEVEN DAYS FROM NOW.** This election will not only be for the president, but also for many representatives and officials who make decisions affecting you and your university. **If you are eligible to vote, we strongly encourage you to do so.** Check the [Florida Division of Elections](#) today!



Union Membership

If you are not a union member, please [join today](#) (the form

connects automatically to the eDues form, so you will want to have your banking information or checkbook information handy). We are stronger standing together in solidarity.

If you have difficulties with the eDues form, see [the instructions](#).

Membership Status

If you are going on a reduced-pay leave or sabbatical, or if you are retiring or resigning, please contact us so we can adjust your eDues accordingly: visit the [UFF Membership Policy webpage](#). In particular, if you are retiring, we encourage you to consider joining the UFF Retired chapter: here is [their webpage](#).

The Theme was Power

FEA President Andrew Spar set the tone by describing the governor's attempt to get rid of the union. [2023 Senate Bill 256](#) requires that a union have at least 60% of the employees that it represents be members - and then increases the red tape involved with membership. And apparently hoping that the FEA would simply disappear, the governor bullied an unenthusiastic legislature into passing meddlesome laws undermining tenure, complicating lessons on race relations, restricting the union's grievance process, and more.

But the FEA has not disappeared; in fact, FEA has retained over 85% of its membership. And with the help of its two national affiliates, the [American Federation of Teachers](#) and the [National Education Association](#), it is litigating against many of these laws.

The issue is power. Spar identified three kinds of power:

1. **Power that comes from money.** For example, although over 99% of the people speaking to the legislative committees opposed Senate Bill 256, the well-heeled [Freedom Foundation](#) got the bill passed.
2. **Power that comes from position.** For example, the governor can use his official authority - and his position in the Tallahassee political scene - to bully politicians into supporting dubious legislation.
3. **Power that comes from collective action.** For example, members who signed up for eDues preserved their contracts and the right to bargain and enforce contracts. (Meanwhile, union lawyers litigating these laws are paid from union dues.)

The consequences of the current political and social environment were made clear from a panel of high school and college students. All of them were high performing students who identified teachers who had inspired them, helped them achieve

their goals, and helped them through rough spots. Here are some high points.

- **The teacher shortage has affected them.** One school lacked a geometry teacher, a physics teacher, and two mathematics teachers - so the principal introduced students to the [Khan Academy](#).
- **Book bans and curriculum restrictions have affected them.** Students in AP Psychology had to stop mid-term, and there was a rising tide of racist invective and worse.
- **School shootings have affected them.** Students don't feel safe and spend time thinking about what to do if a shooter arrives. There are drills, and several students reported on guns fellow students brought to their own schools.

The Assembly also addressed sixteen New Business Items. Some items are brought to the floor by the leadership, some from caucuses (UFF has its own caucus and brought three items to the floor - two of which passed) and some by individuals who got the necessary 25 signatures. These ranged from a motion to lobby the legislature to remove standardized tests from the list of high school graduation requirements to educating the public about where money for education is actually going (both of these passed).



Bargaining the Next Contract

Your UFF-USF Bargaining Committee met with USF-BOT bargaining representatives to begin negotiations for the successor agreement to the current Collective Bargaining Agreement 2021-2024.

The Bargaining Committee wants your ideas, comments, suggestions, and desiderata from the employees that the union represents. Please send thoughts on bargaining to [the Bargaining Committee](#). And if you haven't already, please fill in this [short survey](#) from the Bargaining Committee.

A Certification Election is Coming

You may recall that every Florida public employees union (like UFF) that the governor doesn't like (like UFF) must have 60% membership in order to automatically retain "certification", i.e., the right to represent employees in bargaining and enforcing a contract. UFF - ahem - does not have 60% membership, so **in order to continue to represent YOU, we need an election in which YOU vote IN FAVOR of retaining UFF as your**

"collective bargaining agent". (This does not mean you have to join - just that you want us to continue to represent you in bargaining your contract.)

We have been informed that the Commission will set up the election ... soon. We don't know what soon means, but be advised, it's coming, and UFF must win the election in order to continue bargaining and enforcing our contract.



The American Federation of Teachers looks at Generative AI

The [Florida Education Association](#) has two national affiliates, the [National Education Association](#) (NEA) and the [American Federation of Teachers](#) (AFT). The [11 July 2024 Biweekly](#), reported on the report of the NEA's Artificial Intelligence Task Force, and the NEA's leading concerns were probably equity and bias. The AFT's leading concern was safety. At the FEA meeting last week, a Professional Development Training outlined high points of the AFT's take on the subject.

Welcome to the New AI Wild West, began the presenter, featuring a lack of regulation, threats to personal data, disruptive (and unpredictable) innovation, AI everywhere - and shifting the economy. In response to one common concern - that AI will take our jobs - the presenter said that AI will be transforming jobs. People with AI skills will be able to adjust - so faculty should become familiar with AI and students need to learn how to use AI.

Safely.

The AFT produced a a booklet on [Commonsense Guardrails for Using Advanced Technology in Schools](#), featuring six **Core Values**:

1. **Maximize Safety and Privacy.** AI typically does not have privacy protections built in, so faculty should be cautious and should teach students to be careful to not let AI use and manipulate them.
2. **Promote Human Interaction and Individuality.** While AI can provide individual attention and adjust to students' individual learning styles, AI should not become a substitute for human interaction.
3. **Empower Educators to Make Educational Decisions.** Educators are the ones who possess the expertise. In addition, administrators have been known to fall for the patter of corporate salescreatures, so educators need to be in the loop in decisions involving AI acquisition and use.
4. **Advance Equity and Fairness.** Students (and faculty) need equitable access to AI - and AI should not be used to homogenize or surveil students and faculty.
5. **Advance Democracy.** Schools should guard against misinformation and disinformation and teach students to be on their guard.
6. **Teach Digital Citizenship and Balance.** Students should learn how to use AI without impinging on others - and to protect themselves against mental problems AI can cause.

Both the AFT and the NEA stressed the importance of educators being involved in decisions involving AI.



**Follow us on Social Media
&&&
*Join us on Social Media***

We have a Facebook group: see [United Faculty of Florida at USF](#). This page is a place where UFF members can exchange thoughts and ideas. **The page is "public", but only dues-paying UFF members are eligible to post items on the page. If you are a UFF member, ask to join on the page, and the moderator will invite every UFF member that asks to join.** Non-members are welcome to look (but you need a Facebook account to do that). So check us out ... join the conversation.

- We have a blog: see [The USF Faculty Blog](#). This has news items as they come up.
- We are on Twitter (aka X), so follow us on Twitter / X via [@UffUsf](#).
- We are on Instagram, so check us out at Instagram [@usf_uff](#).
- We even have a You-Tube channel: [check out our videos](#).

We are revamping our publicity machine, and if you are interested in social media, in membership, or in conversations with you colleagues across campus, *come join the campaign*. Contact [the Communications Committee chair](#).

USF United Support Fund for Food Pantries

Many of our students are struggling during with food insecurity, and the USF Foundation is supporting the [USF Food Pantries](#) to help out. They are accepting non-perishable donations, but one can also make monetary donations for the pantries at all three campuses.

Details, Details

The USF-UFF Chapter website is <http://www.uff.ourusf.org>, and our e-mail address is uff@ourusf.org. About this broadcast: This Newsletter was broadcast from Constant Contact, and is intended for all members of the UFF USF Bargaining unit (USF faculty and professionals at most departments). A (usually identical) version will be broadcast to USF-News and USF-Talk from mccolm@usf.edu.

If you do not want to receive the UFF Biweekly, you can unsubscribe below or contacting [the Chapter Secretary](#). If you do not receive the Biweekly, but want to, contact [the Chapter Secretary](#).

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