



# UFF Biweekly

United Faculty of Florida -- USF System Chapter

24 October 2024

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## Thriving Against All Odds

The UFF Senate is the primary legislative body of the (statewide) United Faculty of Florida, and it met last weekend to hear reports, exchange information, and set policy. In response to the attacks on unions recently, the theme was *Thriving Against All Odds*. In this issue:

- **The Senate Meeting.** If politicians had hoped that faculty and professionals would abandon their union, they were disappointed. For more on the Senate meeting, see below.

Much of the Senate meeting concerned the effects of Tallahassee politics, both direct (e.g., screening general education courses for controversial content) and indirect (e.g., use of post tenure review to settle old scores). Speaking of Tallahassee politics...

- **A Certification Election is Coming and Another Round of SOI Cards.** The Commission that is supposed to conduct the election may want more, maybe, but they don't know.

The central role played by Tallahassee in all this reminds us that...

- **The Election is Twelve Days Away.** While the national media focuses on the top of the ticket, next year's Tallahassee cadre will be determined by lower down on the ballot.

After years of abuse from Tallahassee politicians, one might wonder, why us? But it's not just Florida.

- **The Storm is Everywhere.** It's not just nationwide, it's all over.

And while we might hope that it will blow over, these things don't just blow over. They are overcome by ordinary people organizing to stop it. If you haven't already, come [join the movement](#).

Finally, there is another Bargaining Session tentatively scheduled for November 15. See [the recent Letter from the Bargaining Committee](#), and stay tuned.

## A Normal Chapter Meeting Tomorrow!

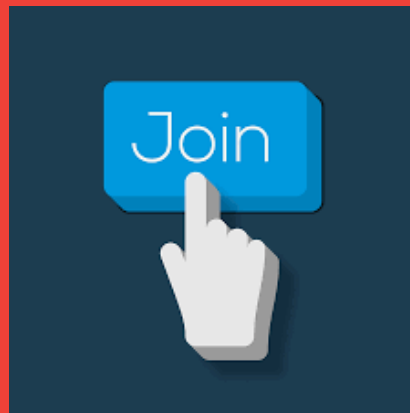
**Chapter Meeting Tomorrow Friday at 12 noon in EDU 161 and on Zoom.** On [the agenda](#): the UFF Senate, bargaining, and more. And here are the [September 27 minutes](#). All UFF USF employees - members and non-members alike - are invited to attend the chapter meeting (we will have lunch). But to Zoom 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.

## Social on November 15

In addition to political storms, we made it through two hurricanes. Come celebrate with us. **All UFF USF employees - members and non-members, faculty and graduate students - are invited to a Survivors' Social on November 15 from 5 pm to 7 pm at the [New World Brewery on 810 E. Skagway Ave.](#), in Tampa.**

## Holiday Season Toy Drive

The West Central Florida Federation of Labor will be conducting its annual Toy Drive this season. The toys will be given to children in need of ages 0 - 17. You can bring new toys to the USF Department of Mathematics office in CMC342. Thank you.



### 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

## The Senate Meeting

**The USF Chapter is one chapter of the statewide United Faculty of Florida**, which represents faculty and professionals in all eleven Florida public universities as well as fifteen Florida public colleges and graduate assistants at four public universities (including USF). Its legislative body is the Senate, which meets twice a year to hear reports, exchange ideas, and set policy.

139 senators from across the state met last weekend, and the theme was *Thriving Against All Odds*. UFF (statewide) President Teresa Hodge told the Senate that we are under attack but we are rising to the challenge. Part of that rising is a sequence of legal actions before the Public Employees Relations Commission (which oversees public employee unions in Florida), and before state and federal courts.

Meanwhile, the Legislature might not be in session (the next session starts in March), but more damaging legislation appears to be in the works. The UFF Government Relations Committee will be visiting legislators to educate them about the effects of recent legislation and the consequences of proposed legislation; many legislators are not aware of how higher education works.

UFF also joined a broader effort to organize higher education employees of all levels. [Higher Education Labor United](#) (HELU) was founded in 2021 and its member unions (including UFF!) collectively represent 225,000 employees, from professors to adjuncts, post docs to staff. Political power arises from organization - i.e., standing together - and in today's political environment, we cannot rely on someone else to do something.

We also heard reports on what is happening at other chapters. For example, bargaining at the University of Florida is at impasse over post tenure review. This means that a Special Magistrate will hear from both sides - the UF Chapter of the UFF (representing UF faculty and professionals) and the UF Administration (representing their Board of Trustees) and make a recommendation ... to the Board, which will then impose language of their choosing. Meanwhile, in their first post tenure review cycle - in which the UF Administration ignored its own criteria - all the terminated faculty were from STEM fields.

In general, how a university was doing in post tenure review, grievances, and salary correlated with how many faculty and professionals at that institution were union members. For example, two chapters with about twenty outstanding grievances

*each* had *half* the membership density as a chapter with *no* outstanding grievances (well, they recently got one). Chapters with greater membership density also tended to bargain higher raises. The squeaky wheel, says Aesop, gets the grease.

## 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](#).

## A Certification Election is Coming and Another Round of SOI Cards

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.

**Another problem has surfaced: will the Commission need new Showing of Interest (SOI) cards?** You may recall filling them out last academic year: they were a petition for the certification election that the Commission is only now getting around to conduct. If the Commission doesn't get the election going by the end of the year (which is quite possible, considering their snail's pace), will they want new SOI cards? *The Commission doesn't know (!)*. And what about the next certification election, for which we are supposed to submit another petition - SOI cards - *next March*?

**We are mailing out a request for more SOI cards to all UFF USF employees.** Again, this is not a commitment to join UFF, and it is not a commitment to vote in favor of retaining UFF as your union. It is just a petition that the certification election be held. And if you find all this rigamortale ridiculous, remember that on Election Day.

## 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](#).



*Civil rights activists saw the franchise as critical to winning their rights.*

## The Election is Twelve Days Away

The general election is on **November 5**. 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.**

**Only 16% of all FEA members voted in the primary. Don't let this happen in November!** Politicians don't know *how* you voted, but they do know *if* you voted. And they realized long ago that people who don't vote can be safely ignored. **So if you want the politicians to pay attention to you, you have to vote.**

Here are some critical dates:

- **The deadline to request a ballot by mail is TODAY.** The request must be made to your county supervisor of elections, and here are [the links to all of the supervisors' offices](#)
- **All counties have early voting from October 26 to November 2** but some counties have extended periods.

- **Election Day is November 5.**

Because of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, election supervisors badgered the Governor into giving them additional flexibility. Check your county supervisor of elections for information on voting in the aftermath:

- [Hillsborough County](#)
- [Manatee County](#)
- [Pasco County](#)
- [Pinellas County](#)
- [Sarasota County](#).

**We strongly recommend that you research the candidates and issues and vote in this election.** Here are some resources you can check:

- [Ballotpedia](#) is a nonprofit "encyclopedia" of American politics.
- The [Florida Democratic Party](#) believes in Foundational Principles.
- The [Florida GOP](#) would like to Keep Florida Free.
- The [League of Women Voters](#) empowers voters.
- The Tampa Bay Times has a [Voter's Guide](#).
- The West Central Florida Federation of Labor posted some [recommendations](#).

And almost every candidate and every referendum (and opposition to that referendum) has its own website.

**Don't forget: politicians know who votes, and if you don't vote, then they know that they can ignore you.**



### **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.

## **The Storm is Everywhere**

Florida must be a charismatic state, for we generate a lot of buzz. Just Tuesday, the U.K. Guardian reported that [a surge in flesh-eating bacteria cases followed the hurricanes](#). Of course, the international press is also fascinated by our [political invasions of higher ed](#) - especially attacks on academic freedom - and all this attention might make us think that it's just happening in Florida.

Actually, it's happening everywhere. In the United States, there are [five growing threats to academic freedom](#), reports Isaac Kamola of Trinity College in The Conversation.

- From 2021 to 2023, ten bills were passed restricting what could be taught in college classrooms.
- Activist boards of trustees are creating academic centers without consulting faculty, and they revoked tenure without due process.
- Donors are increasingly pressuring boards on policy and executive decisions (such as whether to fire a president).
- Fewer and fewer faculty have tenure, making them more vulnerable to political pressure.
- Higher Education is increasingly targeted by political activists calling for restrictions or elimination of academic freedom.

And defining a "gag order" as legislation or policies consisting of "direct restrictions on educational speech in the classroom," PEN America [reported](#) that, "47 educational gag orders and 10 other higher ed restrictions were enacted in 23 states between January 1, 2021, and October 1, 2024."

Internationally, Scholars at Risk [reports](#) that between 23 October 2023 and 22 October 2024, of those scholars that they are tracking, 90 were killed, disappeared, or subject to violence; 77 were imprisoned, 20 were prosecuted, 63 lost their positions, and 88 had other problems. At its recent [Global Congress](#), an attendee said, "We often think of academic freedom as a problem unique to Southeast Asia, to Eastern Europe, or to Latin America. But ... these local problems are all interconnected, and are now having a big impact on campuses in Western Europe and the US..."

If going somewhere else is not a solution, that leaves standing up to fight.



**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](#).**

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## 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](mailto: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](mailto:mccolm@usf.edu).

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