



11 January 2024

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## Building the Union

The union consists of people who are involved. And now, *because of laws passed last year, if you want a union, you are going to have to get involved.*

- **What We're Up Against**
- **Join the Movement**
- **Plan B**

Meanwhile, it is election season.

- **Electing Union Officers and Representatives**

And on the education wars front...

- **A Conversation on conflicts, challenges & culture wars in Florida's classrooms**

**The USF Chapter of the United Faculty of Florida will meet tomorrow, Friday, January 12th on Zoom at 12 pm.**



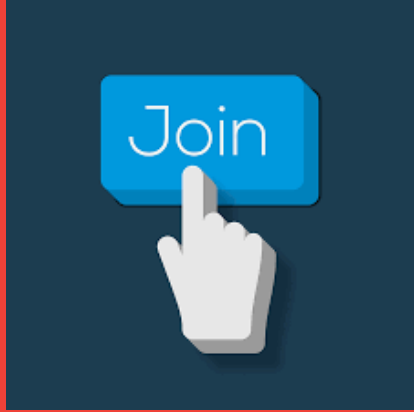
On the [agenda](#): the upcoming chapter election (here is the election proposal to be presented to the chapter tomorrow), certification (by now, all employees should have received a packet from UFF with SOI cards to sign and send in - see the Plan B article below), and more. And here are [the minutes for the previous meeting](#).

Any employee in the Bargaining Unit may attend, but to Zoom in 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.

## 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.



## What Your Union is Up Against

Florida is a [right to work state](#), which means that if you work within a "bargaining unit" that has a union (like the [UFF USF Bargaining Unit](#)), you do not have to join the union and you do not have to pay dues in order to be protected by the contract that the union bargains. If you do not join, that union still represents you in bargaining your contract (but **not** in grievances!), which makes you a [free rider](#). This is a burden on the union and its membership, who provide the labor and resources for the union.

UFF would be able to do more for USF employees - more in getting raises, more in providing job security, more in obtaining benefits, more in other subjects of bargaining - if we had more members. But UFF has still been able to function even if most employees were free riders.

No longer. Last year, the legislature passed and the governor signed [Senate Bill 256](#) / [House Bill 1445](#), which requires that **each public employee union have at least 60% of the employees it represents as dues-paying members** in order to continue as the *certified* union for those employees. This is constitutionally dubious, as free riders are now being required to pay for a right guaranteed them by the Florida state constitution: [Article 1, Section 6](#) says that *The right of employees, by and through a labor organization, to bargain collectively shall not be denied or abridged*. So we are in court, but litigation ... takes ... a ... long ... time, and anyway, judgments are not guaranteed.

The state is scheduled to check *our* membership in early March, so we are now telling everyone that the free ride is over. **If you want a union, you need to join. Now. To join, get your checking account information and [click here](#).**

## Join the Movement!

Beyond the technical certification issue...



We can accomplish more on salary and benefits, rights and privileges, job conditions and job security, and protection against administrative or governmental abuse, by standing together. That is what a union should be: all of us standing together.

The more employees that are in the union, the more that the union can do. There are more people to help out and there are more resources.

The more employees that are in the union, the better the contract that the union can bargain, and the better the union can defend members in the grievance process. The more employees that are in the union, the more clout the union has in politics – in advancing and defending employee interests.

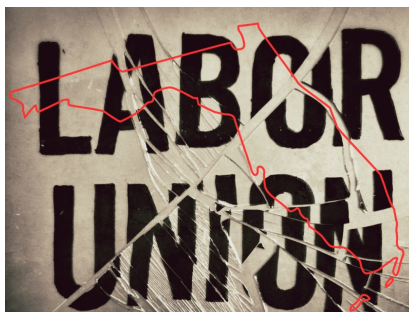
Thanks to the union, the United Faculty of Florida, we have [a contract](#) that is enforceable under the law. This contract fixes salaries and benefits, protects academic freedom and governs job security, regulates assignments and evaluations, determines tenure promotion procedures and more. The terms and conditions of employment are determined by the contract, not by the preferences and prejudices of administrators.

The greatest benefit of union membership is supporting yourself, your colleagues, and your university. But there are other material benefits, such as:

- \$1,000,000 professional liability insurance
- Special deals in insurance, mortgage & financial services
- Special deals in auto purchase, rentals, and travel
- Two free 30-minute non-employment-related legal consultations with local participating attorneys
- Access to the Union+ program for special deals for union members

(In fact, there are coupon-clipper types in the union who brag that they make a profit by being a member.)

**So please [join today](#).**



## Plan B

But what if UFF doesn't reach 60% by the beginning of March?

Florida's state constitution gives employees the right to demand a referendum on whether they want a

union. This demand requires that at least 30% of the employees sign *Show of Interest* (SOI) cards (usually, a union wants a majority to sign). Once enough cards are signed, the [Public Employees Relations Commission](#) sets up and conducts the referendum; if a majority vote in favor of union representation, the union is then *certified* and the employer has to bargain with the union.

(Incidentally, this is also a way of getting rid of a union. If Union-Busting Inc. collects cards from at least 30% of the employees, and then persuades a majority of the employees to vote against union representation, the union is *decertified*. However, longstanding unions are rarely decertified, and a gimmick to force a certification election on longstanding unions is usually just a form of harassment.)

So if UFF doesn't reach 60% membership by the beginning of March, UFF will seek a certification election. That is why UFF is asking employees to sign SOI cards; by now, every UFF employee in the Bargaining Unit should have received a card in the mail (requiring two signatures on paper - yes, the law hasn't reached the 21st century yet).

All the units in Florida are jumping through these hoops. Many of them already have a majority of the employees in their bargaining units as members, but not 60%, so they are collecting SOI cards - just in case. Again, longstanding unions almost always win certification elections, but it is a major distraction, which is probably the idea. Anyway, to reduced the distraction, please send in your SOI cards today.

## Electing Union Officers and Representatives

"Eighty percent of life is showing up," said Woody Allen, and democracy is all about showing up. And the union is a democracy.

This spring the USF Chapter will be holding elections for its four elective officers (the president, the vice president, the secretary, and the treasurer) and for the nineteen senate seats and the nine delegate seats allocated to us. **All UFF members - and only UFF members - may participate by running for office or a seat (or both), or by voting..**

- The nineteen senators will attend the biannual UFF Senate meetings. The Senate is the primary policy-setting body of the UFF, and it meets in fall in Tampa or Orlando and virtually in spring, each time over a weekend.
- The nine delegates will attend the annual Florida Education Association Delegate Assembly. The Assembly is the primary



policy-setting body of the FEA, and it meets in fall in Tampa or Orlando.

At tomorrow's chapter meeting, the Election Committee will present [a proposal for the election](#), which will include a schedule and criteria for running and voting in the election. It will start with a Call for Nominations, and be followed by the election. The newly elected and re-elected officers and representatives will assume their positions on April 1.

We encourage all UFF members to consider running for an office or a seat.



## Conflicts, challenges & culture wars in Florida's classrooms

On Tuesday, January 30, at 5 pm, the Tampa Bay Times will host a "conversation" of parents, teachers, activists, advocates, students, and distinguished guests to discuss "what's in store for Florida Education". The guests include former St. Petersburg Police Chief Goliath Davis, [Heritage Foundation](#) Advisory Council on Education Reform, [Moms for Liberty](#) and [Classical Learning](#)

[Test](#) board member Erika Donalds, [Florida Education Association](#) President Andrew Spar (the Florida Education Association is UFF's state affiliate), and former head of the [Florida Department of Education Bureau of Exceptional Education](#) Monica Verra-Tirado. The conversation will be at the [Tampa Theatre](#) at 711 North Franklin Street and [tickets are available](#): \$10 for students and \$20 for adults. And Tampa Bay Times reporter Jeffrey S. Solochek is interested in the community's ideas as they prepare for the event.

## Reminders

### Grievances

If you have been the victim of a violation of the [Collective Bargaining Agreement](#), you have thirty days from the time you knew or should have known of the violation to file a grievance. If you are, and at the time of the violation were, a dues-paying member of the United Faculty of Florida, you have the right to union representation. To contact the UFF USF Grievance Committee, go to the [Grievances Page](#).



Don't forget: UFF can only represent an employee in a grievance if that employee was a member at the time of the contract violation. *And as of*

*the end of last month, the FEA does not want its lawyers to assist any UFF members who are not on eDues, so if you are a UFF member but did not switch eDues, that [should be fixed TODAY](#). And don't forget that if there is a contract violation, the grievance must be filed within thirty days.*

## **USF United Support Fund for Food Pantries**

Many of our students are struggling during this crisis, 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.

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

If you want to help with media matters, contact [the Communications Committee chair](#).

About this broadcast: This Newsletter was broadcast by 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).

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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