



# SENTINEL

## Advocate

The Official Newsletter for the  
**STATE EMPLOYED PHYSICIANS**  
 Division of the Federation of Physicians & Dentists / AHPE

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### **Don't Let Them Fool You!**

### **What's REALLY Behind the War on Unions**

*Message from the Director, Jack Seddon*

They say their financial woes are because unions are too extravagant with their wages, pensions and benefits. But don't let them fool you!

This "we're broke" theme being used by anti-worker governors and legislatures across America is built purely on rhetoric that is being force-fed to the public to disguise the fact that what they're really trying to do is make sure that unions don't have a voice anymore. All across America, the largest assault on workers' rights is being fueled by a well-funded network of conservative front groups that you've probably never even heard of and exist for one thing alone - to derail unions.

Union busting is a dirty business, a billion-dollar industry sympathetic to corporate interests that has been around for decades, centuries even. And with politics in the United States being what it is, a game played on multiple levels, what we really have here is a renewed Republican fight to not necessarily advance the party's agenda but to actively undermine the infrastructure that allows the opposing party to even exist at all. I know, pretty scary!

But what this current anti-labor conservative movement didn't count on was the absolute resolve and tenacity we unions have. You saw rallies occur all across America, heck, still going on even. And poll after poll shows that an overwhelming majority of Americans oppose taking away some of the collective bargaining rights that public employee unions now have and almost as many oppose cutting the pay or benefits of those workers.

So you see, GOP backlash has actually boosted union support. And FPD will continue its own fight against an anti-labor legislature right here in Florida. In fact, labor won big here as efforts failed to cripple public service workers' dues deduction ability. So, know this - we will not let up on the pressure. As legislators head home for the summer, we will continue to make sure they know that we know that while they say it's our fault they're "broke," we know they're just really trying to get rid of us all together. And that just ain't happening! **[SEE related story on back page.]**

### **Governor Rick Scott makes 2 new appointments to PERC**

Governor Rick Scott has appointed 2 fellow Republicans to the *Public Employee Relations Commission* (PERC). Scott has appointed Mike Hogan, former Duval County Tax Collector who had an unsuccessful bid for Jacksonville mayor, and Donna Poole, the labor-lawyer wife of a former chairman of the Republican Party of Florida. Both do have experience managing labor relations and it is being assumed that such experience will be helpful in each of their roles on the Commission. Hogan's term with the Commission is through the end of this year, while Poole will serve until 2014.

MEMBER BENEFIT CENTER



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Planning on sending your kids to college?
Looking for a career?
Need help completing college admission forms?
Start here!

The Union Plus College Planning Center is your one-stop education website that has the information you need to find a career, choose a college, university or career school, apply and pay for post-secondary education, then move into the working world.

For easy links to your Money Saving Member Benefits' visit FPD's web page at FPD1199.org

College Scholarships for Union Families

Applications are now available for the 2012 Union Plus Scholarship Program and award amounts range from \$500 to \$4000. These one-time cash awards are for study beginning in the fall of 2012. Students may re-apply each year.

Application Deadline: January 31, 2012.

Learn more through the Money Saving Member Benefits' link on your SEAG web page at FPD1199.org.



In tough economic times, we could all use a leg up. If you're looking to increase your earning potential, or advance within your union, consider additional training or even a cost-effective degree from the National Labor College.

And union members get exclusive discounts on NLC's tuition rates.

Register now for Unions Skills Classes.

Visit Money Saving Member Benefits' at FPD1199.org for details.

Put Your Membership Dues to Work For You Right Now

Just because you may not be at the bargaining table right now doesn't mean your dues aren't hard at work. Did you know that you and your family can save up to \$3000 per year simply by using your Union Plus benefits?

Thanks to the collective buying power of millions of union members, Union Plus is able to offer valuable, discounted products and services exclusively for working families.

Start using them today and every day!



Hitting Hard Times?

Union SAFE grants provide a SAFETY NET for union families struggling in today's tough economy.

Visit Money Saving Member Benefits' at FPD1199.org

ARE YOU STRUGGLING WITH DEBT?

You're not alone! Americans are getting deeper and deeper into debt. As a dues paying member, you have resources through our website that can help you identify any problems you might have as well as provide tips and resources to help you take action.

In addition to these resources, eligible union members may apply for Union SAFE grant money (which does not need to be repaid) and access Union Plus benefits and advice to help combat the problems in today's economy.

For easy links to find out more about How to Manage Your Debt, visit the Union Plus Member Benefits page through your web page at FPD1199.org



**LOCAL NEWS & UPDATES:****Fiscal Year 2011-2012 Successor Collective Bargaining Agreement**

As you are all too painfully aware, Governor Rick Scott, in concert with the Republican controlled Legislature in their notorious attack against public employees, has once again refused to provide any pay increase. Additionally, he has legislated that all public employees pay 3% toward their FRS accounts and continue to pay a portion of their health insurance.

While this mean-spirited, anti-public employee Governor wanted to “gut” state and other public employees’ benefits even further, our lobbying efforts at the very least decreased the amount of employee contributions to the FRS at 3% in lieu of the Governor’s demand for 5%. Our efforts also held contributions to health insurance at its current level, whereas the Governor supported a cap on state contributions and that all state employee’s pay up to \$5000 a year for family coverage.

Because of the unwarranted attacks and anti-public employee legislation, numerous litigations naming the Governor and the Legislature are taking place. Privatization of 18 state prisons, the 3% retirement contribution issue, and the demand that all DOC employees be subject to Random Drug Testing, to name but a few, are all being challenged as unconstitutional.

In any event, with respect to this Fiscal Year’s Agreement, the Parties were unable to reach an agreement on any of the proposed articles offered by the Union or proposed by the State. Therefore, all of the unilateral anti-state employee changes were imposed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, including no pay raise, 3% FRS tax, contribution for health insurance (although at the same rate as last year) and privatization of DOC.

In light of the anti-employee imposed agreement, we propose that YOU VOTE NO and reject the Agreement by filling out the ballot you have recently received, or will soon be receiving, and return it to our address. These are hard times and we must all stand together through negotiations and legislation and create a strong message that we are *“mad as hell, and are not going to take it anymore.”* Let’s collectively throw the bums out. If you are not a dues paying member, now is the time to join your colleagues and support the fight we are all up against. When you receive your ballot, enclosed will also be a Membership Form – fill it out and return it to our office with your ballot. As always, feel free to call with any questions.

**Despite all the evidence to the contrary, Gov. Rick Scott and FL GOP continue to wage war on FL Medicaid**

In what appears to be efforts to create a new socioeconomic order, Gov. Rick Scott and his FL GOP are full steam ahead with plans to put Florida Medicaid through a major overhaul. Earlier this year the House passed measures that “promise” better and cheaper care to Medicaid patients by shifting 2.9 million elderly and low-income families and children to for-profit HMO-style plans. This shift is what Scott and the FL GOP say is necessary to curb the costs of the \$22 billion program that has seen a dramatic increase in recipients with the recession causing thousands of Floridians to lose health insurance along with their jobs.

If approved by the federal government, which pays close to 60% of the state’s Medicaid program, Florida’s revamped Medicaid would take effect in 2013. A public hearing was held in June where dozens of advocates for the elderly, indigent families and children, people with long-term illnesses and small businesses weighed in on the potentially devastating impact Scott’s plan would be to the entire state. A pharmacy owner explained how now most prescriptions for Medicaid recipients are filled by independent pharmacies like his, but a managed-care program would require mail-order prescriptions or purchases at major chain pharmacies, which would hurt small business. A Yellow Cab owner who operates a Medicaid transport program expressed his concern that payments for such services would surely be cut under a managed-care program to the point that no one will want to offer them anymore. Same with payments to health care providers, who already are reluctant to participate in Medicaid since payments are already the lowest of any plans they participate in.

Despite all this, in addition to multiple reports that show how devastating the impact would be on the struggling economy of Florida, Scott and his GOP are set on destroying FL Medicaid, at least the way it was designed and meant to be, and splitting a profit with the managed care companies. Meanwhile, FL Democrats have asked the feds to deny Scott’s request to turn Medicaid over to managed-care companies and HMOs are already building their provider networks (have you gotten an invite yet from *Universal Health Care?*). It’s going to be a long fight and we’re in it for the long haul.

## Florida Teachers' Union Class Action Over Pension Reforms Affects Us, Too

In case you haven't been following what's been going on in the Florida Legislature this past spring, we've been trying to keep you up to speed on the legislation that Governor Rick Scott has signed into law that is most repugnant and reckless. As you read in the *Message from the Director* on the front page, labor won big here in Florida as efforts failed to cripple public service workers' dues deduction ability. However, Governor Scott along with the leadership of the Republican Party did impose a new law that will force government workers to pay into the state pension system.

But the perception that the too-generous retirement benefits for state and local governments does not coincide with reality. There's too much documentation supporting this to include here, so relevant material will be accessible through the FPD web site at [www.FPD1199.org](http://www.FPD1199.org). Suffice it to say for now, though, pension contributions from state and local employers didn't cause the budget shortfall, nor are the funds "broke," as Scott and his cronies are so fond of saying. Sure, they became underfunded because of the Great Recession of 2007-2009, but so did the rest of the market, including the investments held in 401(k)s by the private-sector. But even underfunded, research shows that there's still enough to pay benefits for years to come. In fact, the *Florida Retirement System* is funded at 87% of its liabilities.

So while anti-government, anti-union elected officials continue to grossly exaggerate and down right lie to make the people think that the state's budget woes are all our fault, the *Florida Education Association*, the state's largest teachers' union, filed a class-action lawsuit to prevent the 3% salary "contribution," aka, 'pay cut,' from state workers. The basis of the law suit is that the new contribution requirements for all workers hired prior to July 1, 2011 violates the state Constitution.

Although the new pension reforms took effect July 1, the judge has set the case for final hearing on cross motions for Summary Judgment on October 26, 2011. And know this - we will not let up on the pressure. As legislators head home for the summer, we will continue to make sure they know that we know what's really going on here! The corporate CEOs who give them gobs of money might not like having to deal with us unions, but we're not going anywhere. That, you CAN bank on! Stay tuned as we provide updates at [www.FPD1199.org](http://www.FPD1199.org).

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