



# CONVENTION REPORTER

A DAILY REPORT FOR DELEGATES TO THE FLORIDA AFL-CIO BIENNIAL CONVENTION

**Wednesday, October 03, 2007**

**President Cindy Hall** called the meeting to order at 9:15 AM.

### **Credentials Committee**

**Dan Reynolds**, President, Federation of Public Employees and Co-Chair of the committee, reported that **2 pre-registered credentials** that were received prior to the September 10th on-time deadline were reviewed and found to be in good order; **3 on-site credentials** were reviewed and found to be in good order. The committee reported that **1 credential needed to be withdrawn**.

The committee moved that **5 voting delegates** be seated and **1 credential be withdrawn**. **Doug Sellars, IBEW 824** seconded the motion. The motion carried by a voice vote of the delegates. **There are currently 187 voting delegates**.

President Hall announced that Debbie Brothers was the winner of the memorial bible from United Memorial Bibles, one of the convention's exhibitors. Walt Crosson won a \$50 gift certificate from SSDC Disability Services, one of the convention's exhibitors.

### **Stewart Acuff, Director of Organizing for the AFL-CIO**

Brother Acuff thanked all of the delegates and the Florida AFL-CIO not only for the work they have done for Florida's workers but for the nation as a whole. He commented on all of the times that Florida was called on to work on major issues that have had national impact. He spoke about the 2000 Presidential Election recount and how it was Florida's Labor Movement that led the fight to stop the corrupt party loyalists who came in from around the country, as well as state elections officials, from stealing the 2000 Elections. While we were ultimately unsuccessful, he pointed out how the world really knows what happened in Florida and that it was due to our determination to fight that made this a global issue. The history books will tell of what really happened during that dark time. He spoke about the importance of organizing and building union density as the last line of defense against the growing trend of economic injustice in our nation which poses the biggest threat to our nation's future security in generations. He gave many concrete examples of the eroding middle class and how that trend must be rebuffed if our nation is to survive and live up to its incredible promise. He said, "This is the first generation since the founding of this great nation that will not be able to succeed and do as well as their parents." He lamented that

the real tragedy here was the loss of opportunity for future generations, an eroding of the basic promise of America. He pointed out that the issues surrounding this assault are the real issues on the minds of most Americans and that when we highlighted them in 2006 we won elections, and that if we continue to focus on those issues, we will win elections in the future. He gave many real-world examples of this growing assault on the working class. He said, "When the people responsible for the current corrupt corporate culture and their cronies in Washington and in the mainstream media like Faux News (not a spelling error) tell you that these problems are somehow the result of natural economic forces and a changing world, or an inevitable fact of globalization or the will of the mysterious market forces, please understand they are lying. The current downturn in the fortunes of most workers is due to a 30-year direct, strategic, intentional assault on workers, their unions and the working class as a whole!"

He spoke of the Eastern Airlines strike and the tragedy that followed as a harbinger of what was to come and an early round in a direct assault on our children's future by those who want to keep all of America's resources for themselves, getting rich off of the exploitation of working people. The key tool in that assault is the willingness to do anything to stop workers from forming unions and the corruption of government to allow big corporations to get away with breaking the law to stop unions. He shared many troubling statistics about the lengths corporations will go to crush organizing drives and the non-existing penalties when these people break the law. He spoke about international human rights groups who have repeatedly cited the US as a major violator of human rights for our government's oppression of unions. He said, "Their reports will show you that every year for the past 15 years more than 20,000 workers have been fired, have had their lives destroyed for nothing more than exercising their supposedly protected rights under the U.S. Constitution, their right to speak up and choose to associate with each other in unions. And it's getting worse. In 2006, 31,000 workers were fired. That is one worker every 17 minutes 24 hours a day, seven days a week being fired for trying to joining a union – and those who make it all too often never get a contract. That is the real reason for the decline of our unions – not the lies being spread by the corporate lackeys of this country." This, he argued, is the real reason for the loss of union bargaining power and the reason why all of our bargaining is aimed at just maintaining the gains made over the past 50 years instead of moving forward. He spoke of the loss of worker power as the biggest threat to our economic and social futures as a nation. He said that this is the fight in which we must engage with more determination than any fight we have ever waged. **He tied this directly to the fight to pass the Employee Free Choice Act by veto-proof majorities and have someone in the White House who will sign it.** He talked about how to do that. We must win more elections; to do that we must increase union density under the current system...a difficult task but one we can do...one we must do. He discussed the major components of the Act and how it will serve the labor movement. He spoke about how fighting this legislation has become the number one priority of the right-wing gurus, talking heads, and the mainstream media

right-wing noise machine. He spoke at length about our successes with the Employee Free Choice Act and the major strides by many unions to put unprecedented new resources into organizing and how new organizing campaigns are happening all over the country with great success.

He spoke of the areas where collective bargaining are simply not possible, namely for many agricultural workers who have been left out of labor law. Even in these areas of the economy, workers are making incredible strides to build better lives for themselves and their families. One such example which he referred to as “the best example of building worker power without collective bargaining...I have never seen a group a group of so few accomplish so much, with so little” the Coalition of Immokolee Workers from Immokolee, Florida. He said, “They beat Taco Bell, they beat McDonalds and they are about to beat Burger King to build better lives for the farm workers in Florida.”

### **Lucas Benitez and Laura Germano – Coalition of Immokolee Workers**

Brother Benitez spoke through Laura Germano about the conditions in Immokolee where the powerful few owners have oppressed the many people and how the people are fighting back. They spoke about their success at forcing these big companies to return some of the profits back to the people who pick the food, people who exist in shameful, dangerous conditions and have had no raises for over thirty years. Brother Benitez spoke about the documented cases of slavery in Florida’s fields and how the farmers are organizing themselves to fight back and make improvements for themselves. He spoke about a major mobilization taking place in Miami on November 30<sup>th</sup> aimed at forcing Burger King to recognize the same deal made with Taco Bell, YUM! Brands and McDonalds and pass a 1 penny per pound raise for tomato pickers in Immokolee. The delegates pledged their support and joined the CIW in a chant “BK Get out of the Way!” *Information on the mobilization and march will be forthcoming through various channels.*

Brother Dan Reynolds called a meeting of the Credentials Committee to convene at 10:00 AM.

### **Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich – National Labor College**

Dr. Scruggs-Leftwich introduced herself as a member of CWA, and the Coalition of Labor Women. She spoke about many new programs and opportunities for labor union members and their families at the National Labor College. To find out more about all of the exciting new programs and opportunities for labor union members and their families in Florida visit their website online at <http://www.georgemeany.org/>

**Floyd Suggs** addressed the delegates and shared that he was a graduate of the National Labor College and praised the work of the school and the George Meany Center.

President Hall gave the information for people wishing to send donations to the striking workers at NASA. **Checks should be made out to IAM Local 2061 and can be mailed to:**

**IAM Local 2061  
P.O. Box 3592  
Cocoa Beach, FL 32924-3592**

-or-

**Murray Hill, Secretary-Treasurer  
4440 Pine St.  
Cocoa Beach, FL 32926**

**Jeanette Wynn, President of AFSCME Florida Council 79**, informed the delegates that a staff person and AFSCME member, **Alma Gonzalez**, was running for the Leon County Commission in Tallahassee, Florida and that giving to her campaign would be a major boost to our goal of getting more union members elected to public office.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Credentials Committee – FINAL REPORT**

The credentials committee met for the final time at 10:00 am. He thanked his members for their hard work. **Dan Reynolds**, President, Federation of Public Employees and Co-Chair of the committee, reported that the committee reviewed **1 Pre-registered credential** that was received **prior** to the September 10th on-time deadline were reviewed and found to be in good order.

The committee moved that **1 voting delegate** be seated. **Lynn Webb, AFT 3600** seconded the motion. The motion carried by a voice vote of the delegates. **The final total is 188 voting delegates.**

#### **Elections Committee**

**Walt Crosson, IBEW 759**, co-chair of the committee delivered the report. He spoke of the importance of the Coalition of Imokolee Workers' efforts and encouraged all unions and CLC's work with them. He reported that the committee met on Tuesday, October 2, 2007 at 1:30 with the following members present: Joanne Adams, Susan Clancy, Cheryl Comeau, Karen Koehnien, Saul Lucio, Patrick Russell and Joe Brennan. He delivered the following report.

Nominations were held the morning of Tuesday, October 2, 2007 by President Cindy Hall. The committee reviewed the nominees for the following positions to verify eligibility;

#### **District Vice Presidents**

- South Florida AFL-CIO – Vivienne Dixon-Shim, Ellis Canty, Mike Nagle, Luis Meurice

- West Central Florida AFL-CIO – Floyd Suggs, Doug Sellars, Lynne Webb
- Central Florida AFL-CIO – Debra Booth, Jennifer Kenny, Chris Stewart
- Broward County AFL-CIO – Walter Crosson, Patrick Santeramo
- North Florida CLC – Andy Bell, Karen Hazlett
- Northwest Florida Federation of Labor – Robert Wood, William Pitts
- Palm Beach/Treasure Coast CLC – Pat Emmert, William Sauers
- North Central Florida CLC – Jean Robinson
- Space Coast AFL-CIO – Claudie Pouncey

### **Union Vice Presidents**

- AFT (13) Andy Ford, Clara Cook, Theo Harris, Joanne McCall, Andrew Spar, Sheryl Daniels, Ken Carter, Terrie Brady, Roy Weatherford, Victoria Rodriguez, David Pittman, Luis Perez, Fedrick Ingram
- AFSCME – Jeanette Wynn & Janice Coakley
- IBEW – J B Clark & Steve Williams
- IAMAW – Frank Ortis
- **\*AFGE – Mathew Marsh & Lorraine Tuliano**
- CWA – Gail Marie Perry
- NEBA/FOPE – Dan Reynolds
- APWU- Martha Shunn King

### **Constituency Group Vice Presidents**

- APRI – Charles Spencer
- **\*CBTU – Jakelin Chapman & Mike Payne**
- FLARA – Tony Fransetta
- LCLAA – Gerardo Becerra

### **Vice Presidents-at-Large**

Mike Williams, Kimberly Bowles, Tim Maitland, Martha Stevens, Kenneth Moore

The local unions and groups that each nominee are members of were found to be in good standing and thus qualified to hold office in the Florida AFL-CIO per Article VII of the Florida AFL-CIO Constitution.

All officer positions that are unchallenged, the committee recommends that the delegates be elected by acclamation by casting one unanimous vote of the delegates of the 2007 Biennial Convention. The two contested races highlighted above will be decided by secret ballot. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM. After questioning from the floor the report was clarified to mean “paper” ballot rather than “secret” ballot since the ballots are signed.

The motion to concur was seconded by Doug Sellars and approved by a voice vote. **All non-contested seats were elected by acclamation.**

### **Communications and Outreach Committee**

Debra Booth, Co-chair of the committee delivered the following report after thanking her Co-chair Kenneth Moore. The meeting was called to order at 1:35 pm on October 2, 2007. Roll call was taken and the list is attached to this report. The resolution assigned to this committee, Resolution #15 – Media Reform and Alternative Media was read. Motion was made and seconded to adopt as written. Motion passed. Rich Templin, Florida AFL-CIO Communications Director, gave a presentation on working and communicating with the media. Much information was shared and members were energized by the presentation. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 pm. This report carries with it a motion to adopt.

Kimberly Bowles, IATSE 631 seconded the report. The motion carried with a voice vote.

### **Resolutions Committee**

Floyd Suggs, Co-Chair of the committee thanked his co-chair Jeanette Wynn and presented the following report. The Resolutions Committee met at 1:30 pm on October 2 in the Spotted Curlew room. Present were the 2 co-chairs and members John Gregory Kasper, IATSE 477, Daryll Payne, ILA 1526, Theodore Pye, AFSCME 2201 and Gerry Showers, IUPAT 88. Resolutions 23 and 24 were referred to the committee.

**Resolution 23** – Discussion on amending the early endorsement list because members did not want to endorse Janet Long, HD 51, as she would not sign the statement of support for the Employee Free Choice Act. She also has not been available for members of the West Central Florida CLC COPE Directors. After further discussion, the committee agreed that candidates must agree to support the EFCA in order to get our endorsement. A motion was made and seconded to delete Janet Long from the list. In discussion, a motion was made to amend the motion for early endorsement of the House District members listed on Resolution 23 if they have signed on to the EFCA. The amendment was seconded and carried. The committee amended the resolution as follows: NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED if the candidates have signed the Resolution of Support for the Employee Free Choice Act, that the Florida AFL-CIO grants these candidates early endorsements in the 2008 elections and makes defending these legislative allies a priority for our political program.

The motion to adopt Resolution 23 as amended was seconded by **Mary Bouffard, IBEW 824** as was adopted by a voice vote.

**Resolution 24:** - Introduced by Greg Kasper, who discussed and clarified the resolution. Motion was made to approve as written. Motion was seconded and passed.

The motion to adopt Resolution 24 was seconded by **Luis Meurice, ILA 1922**. The motion carried with a voice vote.

### **Union Label Committee**

Ellis Canty, co-chair of the committee delivered the following report. The meeting was called to order by Brother Canty, at 1:35 pm. Roll was called and 33 members were present. The member list is attached to this report. The minutes of the 2005 committee were read by Sister Hazlett. Brother Canty gave a quiz on where to look for union labels in garments. He stated persons not wearing a union label will be fined \$5.00 at the door of the convention hall today, Wednesday. The money collected will go into the COPE fund. A film, "Hidden Faces of Globalization" was shown and a handout, "Wake up Walmart", was distributed. It highlighted the struggles of garment workers and exposed Walmart and Disney for allowing poor working conditions and paying wages as low as 7 cents per hour. Michelle Lynn of Michelle Solutions presented a program on the importance of supporting union label and union bugs. She gave an overview on the rules on the use of the union bug by printers. Adrienne Barker of Barker Specialty Company echoed Ms. Lynn in her support. She stressed she only uses union printers and spoke on the history of her company's union sales. She gave her web address as unionsales.com. Union Label checkers for Wednesday were named. They are: Martha Stevens, Carla Jackson, Yvonne Perkins, Lanny Mathis, James Ingle, Luella McQueen, Minerva Faire, Dave Bernstein and Jack Gose. **Karen Hazlett reported that \$326 had been collected at today's meeting.** She also requested that the collected funds be distributed to the ILA 3601 strike fund rather than the COPE fund. This amendment to the report was carried with a voice vote.

The amended report was seconded by **Darryl Paine, ILA 1526** and carried with a voice vote.

### **VOTING**

**Walt Crosson**, Co-chair of the elections committee called for the public inspection and sealing of the ballot boxes. Non-voting delegates were asked to leave the room, voting delegates were invited into the room from outside and the doors were sealed. He clarified the rules for the casting of ballots. Ballots were distributed to voting delegates and placed in the appropriate ballot boxes. The elections committee was excused to count the ballots.

### **Political Action Committee**

**Ken Carter, AFT 7409** delivered the following report. The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairs Bill Sauers, OPEIU Local 277 and Ken Carter, AFT Local 7409 at 1:30 PM.

Janet Conner, AFL-CIO National Staff, gave a presentation of the TABOR (Tax Payer Bill of Rights) draft action plan. She discussed the upcoming actions by the Legislature, Governor and other groups to include the constitutional amendment on the January 29th ballot and the legislation that was enacted in the

last session. President Cindy Hall spoke of the actions of the State AFL-CIO and the National AFL-CIO and the importance of local leaders to identify Local Union Coordinators to attend the National Political Training offer on November 14 thru 17 in Maitland. Both President Hall and Sister Conner reminded everyone that the time to prepare was now.

**Resolution # 9 - Brother Steve, IUPAT 10101** moved approval, seconded by Frank Ortis (IAM). After much discussion and debate, the question was called and the motion was defeated. A motion that the Florida AFL-CIO not take a position on this issue was made by **Sister Marion Cannon, AFT 7448** and seconded by Brother Steve Hall, motion passed.

**Resolution # 11-** Brother Frank Ortis moved to approve as written. Sister Gonzalez seconded and motion passed.

**Resolution #17 -** Brother Frank Ortis moved to approve as written. Sister Gonzalez seconded and motion passed.

**Resolution #19 -** Brother Frank Ortis moved to approve as written. Sister Gonzalez seconded and motion passed.

**There was discussion of Resolution #23** but it was ruled out of order since it has not been given to this committee for review.

The report carried with it a motion to adopt. The motion was seconded and carried by a voice vote.

### **Organizing Committee**

**Tim Maitland, IUPAT District Council 78** and **Andrew Spar, AFT 1605** co-chairs of the committee delivered the following report. The committee was called to order at 1:35pm on October 2, 2007.

**Resolution 14 –** Employee Free Choice Act: Motion made, seconded and passed to approve as written.

**Resolution 16 –** Verizon Wireless: Motion made and seconded to approve as written. Under discussion, it was noted that union members can get 20% discount at AT&T wireless.

The State Executive Organizing Committee was discussed. It was reported that a strategic plan has been developed that will be sent to CLCs and Zones. The plan is designed to help locals who are organizing in the CLC/Zone areas. The Executive Committee plans to continue to develop the program and expand efforts throughout the state.

The report carried a motion to adopt and was seconded by **Theo Harris NEA local 7451**. The motion carried with a voice vote.

**Floyd Suggs** announced that his CLC had been “ahead of the curve” in hiring professional staff with **Cheryl Schroeder, Executive Director, West Central Florida Federation of Labor** who has helped the CLC greatly in its programming. He announced that Cheryl had been honored as being one of four in the United States chosen by the national AFL-CIO to journey to the Ukraine as a participant in an international outreach project. Cindy Hall announced that **Theo Harris** was also selected to receive the honor.

President Hall announced that **Ceretha Robinette, AFSCME; Jerry Winters, ATU 1464** and **Fred Morgan, IBEW 222** had all been awarded gift certificates from Union Plus, one of the exhibitors at the convention. **Carol Westman UAW 1821** was awarded a special red, white and blue hard hat from Union Plus.

Janet Conner shared information about a fast breaking campaign to contact Florida’s Congressional delegation members Tom Feeney and Rick Keller and ask them to vote to override President Bush’s veto of the State Children’s Health Insurance Program. Congressman Gus Bilirakis and Congresswoman Brown-Waite were added to the target list for phone calls.

President Cindy Hall then asked that the Florida AFL CIO Tallahassee staff come forward and be recognized by the delegates for their hard work. Alvin Davis, Dub Fowler, Phyllis Garrett, Kimberly Johnson, Rich Templin and Hazel Ziegler were all recognized.

Walt Crosson reported on the results of the two contested elections.

#### **AFGE Union Vice – President**

Mathew Marsh – 29110

Lorraine Tuliano – 55,893

#### **Coalition of Black Trade Unionists – Constituency Group Vice-President**

Jakelin Chapman – 35,892

Darryl Paine – 48,634

**The newly elected Executive Board came forward and was sworn into office by Selwyn Carter, Southeast Region Political Desk of the AFL-CIO.**

President Cindy Hall called the 2007 Biennial Convention of the Florida AFL CIO adjourned.