

DRIVERS *Something About Our* NIPSCO SECA *Education Support Professionals*

Paul Sanchez, Editor

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ESP Locals Represented at NEA this Summer



The 146th NEA Representative Assembly was held in Washington, DC this summer. Nine thousand delegates from around the country assembled to conduct the business of the NEA. Seminole UniServ sent 13 representatives, four of whom were Education Support Personnel. Representing SECA were Teri Mahon and Dot Webster, and the Bus Drivers sent Chicky Cartwright and Ora Lee Alexander. The ESP Member of the Year spoke to the assembly, and Barack Obama was there via interactive satellite link-up. Your delegates debated (and voted on) 83 new business items and elected Dennis Van Roekel as the new NEA President, to replace Reg Weaver who retired. All agreed that the RA, trip arrangements, and accommodations were excellent!

Negotiations Update Movement in the Right Direction

After several hours of discussions back and forth last week between the School Board and the leadership of all 4 associations, some movement was made toward achieving a contract for the 2008-09 school year. By now you are aware that we have reached agreement on the medical coverage for this year. Your benefit will be the same as last year and paid 100% by the School Board for the employee. As part of this agreement, we also agreed to delay the negotiations on salary/compensation for a few weeks in an effort to get a better handle on the financial crisis we are currently facing. It is our expectation to return to the table soon to finalize negotiations and bargain a raise for this year. It is our goal to ensure retroactive pay for any salary agreement we finally reach. Your Association Leadership (ESP and Teachers), thank you for your continued support through this year's challenging negotiations.

SECA Welcomes New President

Betty Bailey, long time SECA member, experienced advocate and former vice-president of SECA, is now serving as SECA President due to the retirement of Toni Jones this summer. Betty works in the discipline office at Milwee Middle. Betty brings a wealth of experience and is looking forward to continuing SECA's record of strong representation, experience and excellence. With Betty's advancement to president, the Board elected Teri Mahon (Hamilton) as Vice-President and Dorothy Blake (Milwee Middle) to complete Teri's term on the Board.

SECA: MAKING IT HAPPEN...TOGETHER!



Seminole UniServ Political Action Committee (PAC) Makes No Recommendation in District 4 School Board Election

After several hours of screening, which included candidate questionnaire reviews and interviews with all three candidates, Seminole UniServ PAC is making no recommendation in the District 4 School Board Election. Seminole UniServ PAC is requesting that all employees study the three candidates running for this open position and cast an informed vote. You will find comprehensive candidate information on the School District's web site. The link is on the bottom of the School District's home page. The primary election is August 26. Your vote does make a difference!



Welcome NEA Intern

Seminole UniServ is again privileged to participate in the NEA Intern Program. Joining the UniServ staff on August 25 will be **Jocelyne Jones** from Waterbury, Connecticut. Jocelyne worked there as a 2nd grade teacher and has 7 years of teaching experience. She actually spent her summer in the Intern Program at the Bolger Center in Potomac, Maryland. She worked with other interns, heard from experienced staff from across the country and learned about the day to day operation of a union office, its staff and members. She is looking forward to extending the experiences she received from the past 3 months training by NEA. She will be working with your staff and leaders; please welcome her as she visits worksites, handles calls and does other duties in the office. Welcome, Jocelyne!



Insurance Open Enrollment

Seminole UniServ is excited to announce that we have bargained and secured your medical benefits for 2008-2009 school year! Traditionally, open enrollment has been done during preplan, however, because UniServ wanted to secure the best insurance plan for you, we are starting later. SCPS will be at worksites September 3 through October 1. Also, SCPS will hopefully have their website up and running by Monday, August 25th. Please see our website for locations and times that the Benefits department will be at your worksite. Please call the office if you have any questions.

NIPSCO President	Craig Hopes
SECA President	Betty Bailey
SCSBDA President	Ora Lee Alexander

Florida's Proposed Amendments 5, 7, 9
Be a Knowledgeable Voter!!!!!!



A coalition, comprised of school administrators, teachers, parents, and other concerned citizens, has been formed to have Amendments 7 & 9 removed from the November general election ballot. The amendments are intended to invalidate a 2006 Florida Supreme Court ruling against vouchers. The case will be heard in August and argued by Ron Meyer, FEA attorney. These two amendments are important to every citizen in Florida, and particularly to every public school teacher who is concerned about the future of public education. Amendment 5 also threatens public education and is being fought by another coalition but firmly supported by FEA.

Amendment 7

Amendment 7 would strike the traditional language from the Florida Constitution that protects a separation of church and state relative to the use of taxpayer dollars to finance programs provided by religious entities. Current constitutional language forbids the use of any public funds “directly or indirectly in aid of any church, sect, or religious denomination or in aid of any sectarian institution.” In place of those words, Article 1, Section 3 would assert, “An individual or entity may not be barred from participating in any public program because of religion.” In simple terms, Amendment 7 is a barely-disguised quest for vouchers. The voucher issue was defeated in Florida’s Supreme Court in recent years, but the new language is an attempt to go through the “back door” to once again expand vouchers in Florida.

Amendment 9

In the case of Amendment 9, the ballot language is misleading. It touts a classroom funding formula, but doesn’t define what is a classroom expense and what isn’t. Most school districts already spend 65 percent or more of their funding in the classroom. The 65 percent language is a smokescreen that disguises language with the proposal that would legalize private school vouchers. The language eviscerates the constitution’s strong language requiring as a “paramount duty of the state,” the provision of a “uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools.” The amendment revisions state that, “this duty shall be fulfilled, at a minimum and not exclusively” through public schools.

The Bottom Line on 7 and 9

Voucher programs dilute already underfunded public schools and require no accountability to Florida's taxpayers. It is unwise to open the state’s coffers to unfettered vouchers at a time when Florida’s chronically under financed public schools are being forced to make destructive cuts because of economic conditions and legislative choice. If these two amendments pass, it is very reasonable to expect an avalanche of funding proposals that will benefit non-public schools and state regulation is likely to be weak or non-existent. Funding would have to be provided to over 350,000 Florida private school students.

Amendment 5

Another very broad-based coalition, comprised of farmers, health care providers, professionals, small and large businesses, has been formed to fight Amendment 5, also known as the “tax swap.” It proposes to swap a cut in property taxes for increased sales taxes. Public education needs a secure and dependable revenue source to continue to thrive. This amendment threatens the economic growth of Florida and public schools.

Membership - It's Everyone's Goal

On behalf of our Association Leadership, we thank you for your continued support by being a member - You are VALUED! Together, we do achieve more on everyone's behalf. If you work side by side with a non member, ask them to join our team today. Let them know how important their membership is to all of us. United, we can achieve a great contract and member rights for everyone. See your Association Representative for a membership form today or call the UniServ Office at 407-388-1131. Remember, membership is everyone's goal.