

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 17, 2009

CONTACT: Christian Ulvert or Rich Templin
(850) 559-2778 (850) 566-4348

WORKING FLORIDIANS & AN ALLIANCE OF FLORIDA LABOR LEADERS BAND TOGETHER TO VOICE THEIR OPPOSITION OVER THE PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TARGETING WORKING PEOPLE

~Constitutional amendment advancing in the Florida Legislature will silence workers~

Tallahassee, Fla.—Working Floridians and an Alliance of Florida Labor Leaders rallied today to voice their opposition over a proposed constitutional amendment advancing in the Florida Legislature that targets working people. Attending the press conference were representatives and workers from the Florida AFL-CIO, Service Employees International Union of Florida, Florida Building & Construction Trades Council, Association of Federal, State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Florida Education Association, United Transportation Union, and the Florida Pipefitters. House Joint Resolution (HJR) 1013 by Rep. Hasner and Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 1908 by Sen. Richter take aim at hardworking Floridians by severely limiting the process by which they organize.

“Floridians like me should have a stronger voice in how we work with our peers to collectively organize for job security, compensation, benefits and healthcare,” said **Doug Watler, a Working Floridian with the Florida Professional Firefighters**. “State leaders should not mess with the few worker protections we have today under the Florida Employee Public Relations Act. But, allowing the proposed constitutional amendment to pass the Florida Legislature will make certain that Florida worker’s will forever lose what little rights we have. We must stop this senseless attack on Florida’s hardworking middle-class.”

“I am outraged by the legislation advancing in the legislature that will make it harder for people like me to organize for better wages, benefits and health insurance,” said **Salandra Hanna, a Working Floridian who is a member of AFSCME**. “I can’t believe that lawmakers are spending valuable time tackling legislation that hurts working Floridians. Their number one focus should be protecting school children from funding cuts, healthcare for seniors and improving our state’s economy.”

Under the proposed constitutional amendment, employers will not only continue to control the process, they will have a firmer grip on the controlled elections since voluntary recognition of majority pledged cards will disappear. This will only elevate harassment & intimidation cases because all efforts to organize will be required to go through an elections process, which is the period of time when harassment & intimidation takes place.

“The right to cast a secret ballot in federal, state and local elections is already guaranteed and protected in the Florida Constitution under Article VI,” said **Mike Williams, president of the Florida Building & Construction Trades Council**. “The proposed constitutional amendment is not about the protection of secret ballot. It’s all about political gamesmanship in an effort to launch an anti-worker campaign in Florida, a campaign being disguised as a pro-worker effort. We have too many challenges confronting our state to be squandering time on issues that do not get us on a path for immediate economic recovery and that do not provide immediate job creation.”

The ability to collectively bargain and organize should be safeguarded, especially during these troubling economic times. With unemployment rates reaching record highs, Floridians depend on the few worker protections in place in Florida. However, the proposed constitutional amendment will undo existing Florida worker protection laws, including the Public Employees Relations Act, by preempting state law that allows employees and employers to voluntarily enter contractual relationships guaranteeing better wages and benefits.

“Launching an assault on Florida’s working middle-class isn’t the solution to the state’s ailing economy,” said **Andres Trujillo, a Working Floridian with the United Transportation Union** “The proposed constitutional amendment does nothing to address worker harassment and intimidation nor does it address employee rights to willfully organize free from employer control, harassment and intimidation. The leaders in the Florida Legislature need to devote their entire attention to saving our schools, saving our jobs, and saving our economy.”

###