



Tony Gentile, Editor

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SECA - NIPSCO - SCSBDA Our Education Support Professionals

Florida Legislature Readies for 2012 Session – Are YOU ready?

The next session for the Florida Legislature begins in January 2012. The reason for the early start this year is to redraw the lines for legislative districts, which was approved by voters in November 2010. While this task probably will take much of our elected officials' time, we can not sit back and expect them to leave public education untouched. Many harmful changes were made in the last session, like forcing public employees to make 3% contributions into the FRS and decreasing education funding, and we are getting indications from FEA that more unwelcome legislation is coming. While legislators were successful in passing these harmful changes, some of their unfinished business, like weakening the voice of educators through union-busting bills, is sure to come back – maybe in the same form or maybe changed to increase the chances for successful passage. We must realize that we are the only group standing up to save public education, and because of that we are a target.

Education is the single largest portion of the State budget, and the coming budget shortfall will entice legislators to seek even more reductions to a system which is cut to the bone already. It's very important – now more than ever – to stand together for public education. We will be posting updates to the UniServ website (www.seminole-educators.org) regularly about the session, so please stay informed. Also, activities that are planned in response to happenings during the session, such as rallies, demonstrations, campaigns, etc., can take shape quickly, so be prepared to answer the call if we ask for help. We can not fight this never-ending battle alone...we are counting on each and every member to stand up and fight for what is right! Please join us, as we are more powerful when we stand together.

Becoming stronger also involves building our membership. More members means more power – in Tallahassee, at the bargaining table, and at your worksite! Please invite non-members to join today! Membership forms can be found on the UniServ website for employees to print out, sign, and return to the office.

Happy Holidays! We hope the season brings you rest, relaxation, and happy times with your families and friends. Until next year,

Rosie Guerrero, SECA President

Bruce Washington, NIPSCO President

Randy Saunders, Bus Drivers President



Happy Holidays!



NIPSCO CORNER

At its November meeting, the NIPSCO Board voted to fill the two remaining vacancies on the NIPSCO Board for the 2011-13 term. Congratulations to Bruce Washington in Distribution Services, as he will be serving as the NIPSCO President. Bruce is not new to NIPSCO, as he has served as President before, as well as a representative on the UniServ Council, the District Insurance Selection Committee, the NIPSCO Bargaining team, and the UniServ Political Action Committee. Filling the NIPSCO Treasurer position is Amanda Washington, Custodian at Indian Trails Middle School. Amanda has already attended the Basic Member Advocacy workshop on October 26 and is excited about her new position in NIPSCO. Welcome Bruce and Amanda!

SECA CORNER

Extra Special People Day 2011

A hearty "Thank You" went out to SECA members on November 16, ESP Day, when each member received a jump drive and a lanyard. Each jump drive was downloaded with information about SECA and of course had enough space for any other items the member wanted to download.

ESP Day closed with a mini-conference at Winter Springs High School. Workshops included a session on Marzano/new teacher evaluation system and its impact on paras, classroom assistants, and others, delivered by Boyd Karns and Tony Gentile; also included were sessions on Dealing with Difficult People, which was delivered by Brian Phillips from FEA, and Coping with Change, delivered by Rosa Pickett. Thanks, too, to our Special Benefits Providers for door prizes, other special goodies, lots of information, and financial support for our spaghetti supper!

ESP Day is a nationally recognized celebration that occurs during American Education Week. AEW was first observed in 1921 to bring recognition and acknowledgment to the work that educators do. SECA is proud to recognize the work of our members and our fellow organizations: NIPSCO, Bus Drivers, and SEA.

DRIVER CORNER



The Annual Holiday Bus Driver party on December 12 was a complete success! A great time was had by all who danced the night away to the sounds of our very own wonderful DJ, Luis Ramos! Everyone at the Amory in Sanford enjoyed great food and experienced the spirit of the season with great cheer! A special thanks goes to Rolinda Daniels, the Social Committee, and all volunteers who donated their time to help make it so much fun! We hope that everyone has a restful, happy Holiday and a joyous New Year!

IMPORTANT DATES



SECA

January 18, Board Meeting

NIPSCO

January 11, Board Meeting

SCSBDA

January 23, Board Meeting

January 24, General Membership

Meeting

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The 2012 Legislative Session begins in January even as our state affiliate, FEA, fights to undo damage done during last year's session. With assistance from our national affiliates, FEA filed several lawsuits and is awaiting judicial rulings. The lawsuit regarding the 3% retirement contributions was tried October 26th; FEA is awaiting Judge's decision. The suit filed on Amendment 7 was tried October 27th and we are awaiting a decision in that case also. Finally, for SB 736, it probably will be February before the latest round in that case is heard. So, while our organization is taking action, most rulings are in the hands of judges and we must await their decisions.

So, where does that leave you? As a union member, as a citizen of this state, and as an education employee, your voice is important. Jeff Wright, Director of Public Policy Advocacy for FEA, recently led a Legislative Workshop for UniServ members and encouraged each member to 1) set the record straight (communicate your experiences to state government leaders); 2) engage the Governor and legislative leaders (know the issues; express your belief/concerns); and 3) educate co-workers, friends and family (know and discuss the issues, don't allow misconceptions and misinformation to exist). Join with FEA to help defeat all legislation seeking to harm public education employees and the quality of our public schools. Know the issues, stay current on the developments, and be willing to contact our state leaders. Remember to check the UniServ website: www.seminole-educators.org for the latest information. *Now is the time...*



BARGAINING UPDATE

Negotiators for SECA, NIPSCO, and SCSBDA met early in the year to hear a presentation from the District regarding the 2011-12 budget. Further bargaining has not occurred to date, but the process likely will resume early on in the new year. As the teams do every year, the District budget is being reviewed and the teams will be looking for money that could be used for raises, but it is important to understand that there are many challenges to adequate funding this year and the next, as the State is providing less money, property tax values are down, and a very large shortfall (over \$20 million) awaits SCPS for 2012-13.

The School Board is voting on December 13th to suspend operations at Hopper and has already resolved to close 2 more schools for next year. While there will be other cost-saving measures considered by the School Board, it is also considering the proposal of a property tax increase in order to generate more money for schools. Naturally, passing a revenue increase would create a much better chance of negotiating increases, so it is important to support such measures and tell people what we stand to lose if we suffer more cuts.

In addition to the economic pressures, SEA bargaining is taking an extraordinarily long time as teachers must bargain over many changes to their evaluation system being forced by new laws. Despite all of these challenges, however, your ESP teams will be ready in the new year to take on the task of negotiating a settlement which is fair and beneficial to all members. Please stay tuned for more updates as they develop.