

Our Union

Collective bargaining

Collective bargaining is the back and forth exchange of ideas intended to reach a contractual agreement between an employer and the organization that represents their employees — a union. Federal and state laws, regulations, and court decisions govern the process. Collective bargaining developed as a preferred method for employers and employees to resolve differences and reach agreements in an orderly and peaceful way. It is also viewed as a method to limit employment-related lawsuits, while at the same time protecting employees from discrimination.

Collective bargaining has achieved greater equity for teachers, education staff professionals, and faculty — and it hasn't come at the expense of educational quality, claims to the contrary notwithstanding.

Recently debated legislation might have weakened, or possibly even eliminated, collective bargaining rights for educators and other public employees. Legislators who press for this kind of crippling legislation say that limits their ability to address the economic downturn and resolve the government's budget crisis.

But these bills were not about saving money, nor cutting costs, nor resolving the budget crisis. These bills were about one thing and one thing only: silencing the voices of working men and women who don't always agree with the people in power. Such misguided legislative proposals were aimed misusing the government to silence political dissent. These bills strip public sector unions of the right to have a voice in government.

- Unions provide a voice to middle class workers performing critical jobs for our community — teachers and education support personnel, firefighters, police, and nurses.
- Unions stand up for all middle class workers on the job and in the political arena — providing a needed balance to the voices of corporations and the super wealthy.

Decertification

Our state constitution sets forth that Florida is a right to work state - where every employee enjoys the right to join or not join a union.

Florida is one of 22 right-to-work states, where union membership or payment of union dues cannot be made a condition of employment. The same provision of the state constitution that enshrines that right also protects the right of employees to collectively bargain.

Florida law permits public employees to obtain an election to decertify an exclusive bargaining representative. "Any employee or group of employees which no longer desires to be represented by the certified bargaining agent may file with the commission a petition to revoke certification. FEA believes legislative proposals that target unions representing public employees by requiring recertification of unions based on arbitrary membership percentages is unconstitutional. These measures are "simply to make life more difficult in as many ways as they can so in the end member unions go away."

- FEA strongly opposes legislative measures to decertify employee bargaining agents.
- FEA believes attempts by legislative leaders to undercut public employee rights to belong to their union is not in line with our state's constitution that grants that right.

