



Solidarity Report

“Only a fool would try to deprive men and women of their right to join a union of their choice.”
~President Dwight D. Eisenhower

The State of OUR UNION

On Thursday, May 15th, members of the instructional bargaining unit overwhelmingly voted to keep the Volusia United Educators as the exclusive bargaining agent within Volusia County Schools. The final count was 1,417 YES votes, 48 NO votes, and 14 ballots that were not counted due to being challenged.

While this is a significant victory and we've waited a long time to get to this point. It is important to remember all that we have endured to get here, and to stay informed of the challenges that continue to be put in our path.

The timeline below is a reminder of what we have accomplished and overcome.

- **July 1, 2023**- SB 256 - the union busting law takes effect, making payroll dues deductions illegal and requiring a 60% membership density for certain public sector unions (police, fire, and corrections unions are exempt).
- **October 16, 2023** - VUE submits the Employee Organization Renewal for support and instructional units using the membership density calculation method articulated by PERC Chair Rubottom on September 6, 2023.
- **December 14, 2023** - Letter sent by Volusia County School Board contracted attorney Sasha Dyson to VUE requesting the calculation methodology for dues paying members submitted on the renewal application.
- **January 22, 2024** - VCSB attorney Dyson submits a Notice of Filing to PERC regarding VUE's application for renewal to "determine what action, if any, should be taken."
- **January 31, 2024** - VUE's attorney submits a Motion to Strike VCSB's Notice regarding VUE's application for renewal stating the rationale and methodology used to calculate membership data on the renewal application.
- **February 2, 2024** - VCSB attorney Dyson alleges that VUE submitted incorrect and inaccurate data on the registration renewal.
- **February 13, 2024** - During the February 13th school board meeting, it was revealed by former VCS attorney Kevin Pendley that at the direction of the Superintendent, the members of the board were called and informed of the "ramifications of filing a Notice to PERC".

Each of the five members of the board gave their permission to move ahead with the authorization for Attorney Dyson to proceed in filing the Notification against VUE. You can view the conversation here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65aFYYP3bVw&t=19738s>. The conversation starts at approximately 5:36:54 and continues through the end of the meeting.

- **February 29, 2024**- PERC orders VCSB to declare if they are challenging VUE's registration under the statute.
- **March 11, 2024** - Attorney Dyson responds to PERC that VCS is not challenging VUE's registration application because PERC is obligated to investigate the registration application.

Ultimately, PERC did not agree that VUE submitted incorrect or inaccurate information when filing for renewal based upon the guidance provided by PERC at the time of our filing, and we were allowed to move forward with the election for support personnel. VUE was allowed to submit the original Statement of Interest (yellow cards) for the instructional unit and the process moved forward accordingly.

The election for support professionals occurred in August and we have now completed the election for instructional personnel.

As you know, since we have not yet reached our 60% density for either unit, we have collected another round of SOI cards. It has been almost a year and we needed to prepare a new application for renewal.

So where are we now?

Since the election for the instructional unit has occurred during the same period of time we are completing our renewal application for 2025, our attorney has filed a Motion to Consolidate as the two cases are before PERC simultaneously. We have done this because PERC has recently consolidated a number of recertifications petitions involving other public sector unions in the same situation. This includes approximately 25 other local unions within FEA, including Orange and Flagler County.



The State of OUR UNION, cont.

We know that the consolidation not only helps the local union and local school district, it also provides relief to the employees at PERC who are working diligently to manage the overwhelming workload created by SB 256.

However, true to form, the VCSB attorney has responded to announce that the district opposes the consolidation of the two elections for instructional personnel. We can only wonder why there is opposition, as Volusia County Schools is the only district who has opposed a consolidation among all other FEA and other public sector unions in this situation.

PERC has directed VCSB to file a response detailing the basis for the opposition to consolidating the two elections by the close of business on Wednesday, May 21, 2025.

We will wait to read the details, but for me, the only answer can be**union busting**. This is not the first time we have experienced interference and interruptions by VCSB during our proceedings with PERC. The use of legal maneuvers to stall or delay is an age old tactic used by some employers to attempt to diminish the efforts and progress of a union. It will be interesting to learn if the decision to oppose the consolidation was made with or without contacting the members of the current board.

It is clear that the district would rather work against the will of the teachers and staff rather than to acknowledge that VUE represents those who make the district run and educate the children of Volusia County.

We will continue to keep you informed on this issue, but the solution is clear. Organize, organize, organize. When we exceed the 60% membership density requirement, all of this nonsense goes away. We will no longer need to collect SOI cards and have elections. We will be free of the machinations of our employer. Workers have the right to organize: the decision to unionize should be made by employees without coercion, interference, or manipulation from management.

We believe that President Dwight D. Eisenhower (see quote above) understood the fundamental rights of workers to have a voice in the decisions that ensure fair, safe, and equitable treatment of individuals in the workplace. SOLIDARITY!



ORGANIZE!

Organizing Update (Former AFSCME unit)

It is time to provide an update on the work to bring the former AFSCME eligible employees into our VUE family.

We began this process more than a year ago, and we have just now reached the point where we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

In December, VUE submitted the necessary paperwork to PERC to begin the process of organizing the former AFSCME eligible employees into the VUE support unit.

On January 30, 2025, the Volusia County School Board objected to the petition on multiple grounds. One was that the Commission had previously defined a separate bargaining unit which included many of the classifications VUE sought to add to the current VUE support unit. Due to the recent decertification of the AFSCME unit, there were questions about the appropriateness of including these job classifications under the same certificate as VUE support.

After consideration of these issues, it was determined that the employees in certain non-instructional job roles should be classified under a separate certification within the Volusia United Educators. This means, that the former AFSCME eligible employees, will have their own negotiated contract should the employees within these positions choose to vote yes to allow the Volusia United Educators to represent them as their exclusive bargaining agent. They will not be included in the current VUE Support contract.

Where are we now?

On May 9th, the Hearing Officer assigned our petition to bring the former AFSCME eligible employees into the Volusia United Educators by issuing an order directing an election for the following job classifications:

All regular full-time and regular part-time employees, regardless of source of funding, employed by the School Board of Volusia County in the following job classifications:

- Bus Attendant
- Bus Dispatcher
- Bus Operator
- Campus Advisor
- Clinic Assistant
- School Based Custodian
- Delivery Person/Warehouse
- Dining Room Aide
- Employment Advisor
- Licensed Practical Nurse
- School Based Mechanic
- Mechanic's Helper
- School Guardian
- School Safety Monitor
- School Way Café, Assistant
- School Way Café, Intern
- School Way Café, Manager
- Technician
- Warehouse Person



Organizing Update (Former AFSCME unit) cont.

We are now in line with other public sector unions at PERC to be assigned a date for this election. This will be the final step in the process to bring back bargaining rights and a contract to the employees who have gone without representation for over a year.

We believe that all employees deserve the right to join a union and to stand in unity to advocate for fair wages, safe and equitable working conditions, representation against allegations, and a voice in the decisions that drive their work.

We all want to live a better life, be able to take care of our families, and to have dignity and respect in the workplace. This is what joining our union provides.

Please share this informational update with your colleagues in the job classifications listed above. This process has taken a long time, but we are so close to providing a brighter future for our friends and coworkers.

As the song says, "We shall overcome, We shall overcome, some day. Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, We shall overcome, some day!" Solidarity.

Retiring or Resigning from VCS?

If you are planning to retire, resign or otherwise separate from VCS at the end of this year, we need to know. We need to update our membership files to reflect this change.

Our VUE policy states that it is the member's responsibility to inform the VUE office of any change in membership status.

If you are leaving, please contact Beth at beth.friedl@floridaea.org or call the office at 386-238-1605.

FEA Retired Innovation Grants!



The **deadline** for educators to submit Innovative Grant applications is fast approaching. The due date for applications is **September 25, 2024 at Midnight**; these applications should be sent to the District Director in your area or to the retired president of the local in your area, **CJ Allen** in our case (who then sends the application to the District Director).

Here is CJ Allen's address: cj-english@msn.com

After the applications are received, the Director selects the winner(s); each district can present two \$150 grants in their area

Good luck! I hope we have lots of winners this year.

Curative Insurance

We continue to receive questions about the move to Curative.

The district has released a FAQ, Curative Welcome Packet, and Rates Sheet that were intended to provide additional information to employees. However, we know that there are still more questions than answers.

Here is what we know.

Employees who currently use the FHCP offered group medical insurance should review each of the plans offered by Curative to determine which plan will best meet your medical needs. The FHCP and Curative plans are very different, and because VCS has been with FHCP for decades, the shift to a new approach to health care is a bit cumbersome. However, remaining with an insurance carrier just because it is familiar and comfortable is not always the best answer.

The move to Curative provides an opportunity for each of us to reflect upon our needs and how we use our plans. We should ask ourselves if we can be more efficient and participate in a more affordable plan. I believe that each of us should consider all options available before enrolling in any benefit provided by VCS. For example, if you are currently enrolled on the FHCP Triple Option plan, it is likely that with the expanded network provided by Curative that the EPO Value or EPO plan will meet your needs and save you money.

I know that we are all busy, but the move to Curative will not take place for several months. We have time to ask our questions and obtain answers.

The individuals at Curative are very interested in reaching out to doctors in the Volusia County and surrounding areas to bring them into their network. Employees can nominate doctors and Curative will work to create the relationship.

If you have questions, you can reach out to the district Employee Benefits Department at insuranceandemployeebenefits@volusia.k12.fl.us, or you can also contact Curative Member Services at 855-428-7284 or health@curative.com.

You can also reach out to your VUE member representative at 386-238-1605. We are here to help.



VUE Dues 2025-26

Due to dues increases occurring at the National level, and based upon the need to make adjustments locally, we are announcing a dues increase for 2025-26 and the option to move to an alternative dues payment schedule for our members currently on a 24 dues payment schedule.

Dues for instructional members will be \$766.50 annually, which will result in a per paycheck increase of \$0.44 for members receiving 24 checks.

Dues for support members earning less than \$30,000 per year will be \$341.24 annually, which will result in a per paycheck increase of \$0.30 for members receiving 21 checks.

Dues for support members earning more than \$30,000 per year will be \$467.22 annually, which will result in a per paycheck increase of \$0.20 for members receiving 24 checks.

As we move into the new school year, we will offer current members on a 24 payment schedule the option to move to a 21 dues payment schedule. Members currently on the 22 payment schedule will be moved to the 21 payment schedule.

We are offering this for multiple reasons, but most importantly because we know that our members need flexibility. We know that the first paycheck of the contractual year is very important and so are the checks received at the end of the contractual year. Moving to a 21 dues payment schedule will provide larger checks when you need the money the most.

This payment schedule will be optional for members on the 24 payment schedule, but all newly recruited members into our VUE family for 2025-26 and beyond will be placed on the 21 dues schedule.

Converting to the 21 dues cycle will result in the following dues payments:

Instructional staff - 21 dues payments of \$36.50, 3 paychecks with \$0 dues, \$5 additional for 21 deductions.

Support staff earning less than \$30,000 per year - 21 dues payments of \$16.21, 1-3 paychecks with \$0 dues (depending on your contractual work year), \$1-\$2 additional for 21 deductions.

Support staff earning more than \$30,000 per year - 21 dues payments of \$22.25, 3 paychecks with \$0 dues, \$3 additional for 21 deductions.

If you are interested in converting to a 21 dues payment schedule for the 2025-26 year, please contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.albert@floridaea.org. The first dues payment for the 25-26 year will occur on September 15, 2025 for 10 month instructional members who convert to this schedule prior to the beginning of preplanning.

Launch 0% Interest Loan!

Once again our friends at Launch Credit Union are offering their 0% Educators Loan to VUE members.

Eligible employees can borrow up to \$750 to be paid over a 6-month period. Apply between July 1st - August 31st. For more information, call 800-662-5257 or visit, www.launchcu.com.

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CREDIT UNION

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EXCLUSIVELY FOR VOLUSIA COUNTY SCHOOLS EMPLOYEES

JULY AND AUGUST 2025 ONLY

0% Interest Educator's Loan!

- Borrow up to \$750
- 6 Month Maximum Term
- Apply July 1ST – August 31ST, 2025

The Volusia County School Board is not affiliated with these events/programs in any manner, nor does it endorse or assume any responsibility for any activities which may occur in connection with them.

Apply online at launchcu.com, at a branch, or call us at 800-662-5257, option 5

*APR = Annual Percentage Rate. Loan requires credit approval and credit report. Savings account required for loan. Term of loan limited to a maximum of 6 months, maximum loan amount \$750. (Payment example: payments on a loan with a term of 6 months at 0.00% APR would be approximately \$18.61 per \$100 borrowed.) For loans funded from July 1st through August 31st, 2025. Must show proof of employment with Volusia County Schools when applying, and must be a current employee. Only a \$5 minimum deposit required to open account and become a Launch CU member. You can open an account if you live, work, worship, or attend school in the counties we serve.

Please use Purpose Code Ato2Volusia

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Memorial Day is a day to pause and remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our nation. The VUE staff is proud to honor the men and women who gave their lives to our country and its citizens. Their courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication to the ideals of freedom and justice will never be forgotten.

It is with the deepest respect for our brothers and sisters that we honor their memory, and we look forward to carrying on the good work of fighting for justice and liberty for ALL citizens of our great nation.

