



Solidarity Report

"Take a stand. Be known for your courage and confidence." ~Indra Nooyi

FEA Files Lawsuit Against the State

Last week, the Florida Education Association along with parents, students, members of local school boards, and other public school stakeholders filed a lawsuit against the Florida Department of Education for their failure to uphold their constitutional obligation to ensure that every child in Florida has access to a "uniform, efficient, safe, and high-quality system of free public schools."

The lawsuit alleges that the Department of Education, the Commissioner of Education - Anastasios Kamoutsas, and the State Board of Education along with its individual members, have not upheld their duty to ensure schools receiving taxpayer dollars are held to the same standards, oversight and level of accountability. Instead, the state has created a system of educational opportunities that are all held to different standards, resulting in an inconsistent and unequal system of education for students.

The differences in standards include the following:

- Approximately \$5 billion a year of public tax dollars are now being siphoned away from public schools in order to prop up charter and voucher systems that are often managed by out of state, for profit management companies who make a profit from every child and often lack consistent basic educational standards and transparency.
- Nearly a quarter of the state's education budget goes to voucher programs that a majority of the time serve students who were already attending private school.
- Florida ranks #50 in the nation in average teacher salary, and over 60% of education staff professionals make less than \$35,000 a year
- Florida ranks #41 in the nation in per student funding, a metric that additionally has not kept up pace with inflation

We all want the best education for our children, yet when the playing field is intentionally stacked against us, it is time for action.

Sign the **PLEDGE** to tell lawmakers to stop shortchanging our students and our public schools.

Join the movement today to save our public schools, our students, and our future!



CALL TO ACTION- REFERENDUM VOTE!

If you have not yet taken action to email members of the school board to urge them to move the referendum process forward, we are asking you to do so **TODAY**.

What we do right now matters AND we must take action!

A referendum has the potential to bring millions of dollars into VCS for employee salaries and student programs. Districts across Central Florida that have passed referendums have been able to provide higher salaries, stronger employee compensation packages, and additional support for students because their communities chose to invest locally in public education. Those districts recognized that waiting on the state to solve the problem was not enough.

Other Central Florida districts with referendums:

- Brevard - provided a 9% salary enhancement in the 1st year with their referendum
- Orange - used referendum revenue to offset operational cost, thus providing more flexibility with the general fund for salaries
- Lake - moving to increase their current referendum from .75% to a full 1% for salaries in 2026
- Osceola - completed the process to put a referendum on the ballot for salaries in November 2026
- Polk - completed the process to put a referendum on the ballot for salaries in November 2026
- St. Johns - (not Central FL, but close) 1% millage to support salaries and enhance student services

Meanwhile, employees in VCS continue to struggle with rising costs for housing, groceries, insurance, and healthcare while Florida ranks 50th for the third consecutive year in average educator pay, and 60% of educational support staff earn less than \$35,000 per year. We work too hard and give too much to continue falling behind economically. The voters in Volusia County deserve to be given the choice to vote on a referendum to support our public schools.

Please take two minutes **TODAY** to help move this process forward; send an email to the members of the VCS Board: **Send Your Email Here**. The email template is already prepared for you, but you may personalize your message if you choose. Please remember to remain professional and respectful. (Continued on the next page)



CALL TO ACTION- REFERENDUM VOTE!

Most importantly, we need you at the School Board meeting on Tuesday night, May 12th. We need employees, families, and community members standing together to show the board how important this referendum is to the people who educate and support the children of Volusia County every single day.

Please arrive by 5:30 PM at DAC. Our presence matters, our voices matter, and what we do in this moment can make a lasting difference for employees, students, and the future of VCS! Solidarity.

200 Members In 20 Days UPDATE

We continue to chip away at our goal to recruit 200 new members in the 20 workdays before Memorial Day thanks to the hard work of so many of our members. Together, we have recruited 40 new members so far, and every single conversation has mattered. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to reach out, listen, answer questions, and help grow our union.

This campaign doesn't require anything complicated. If each of us commits to just one conversation a day, across this district, the growth we need will happen.

Across the three bargaining units there are thousands of potential members waiting to be asked to join.

- **Instructional Unit: 1,940 potential members**
- **Support (OS & Para) Unit: 899 potential members**
- **TSP Unit: 1,386 potential members**

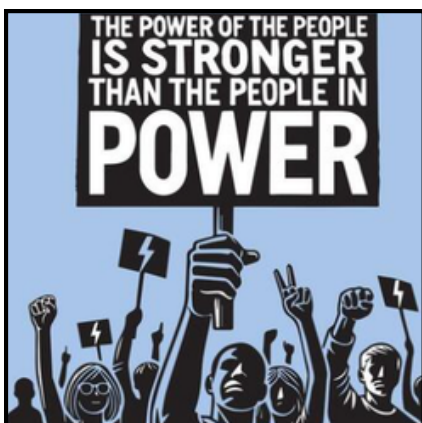
That means the opportunity for growth is all around us. We are simply asking each member to commit to having respectful, honest conversations about why this work matters, the real threats to our contract, and why saving our union is the only way to protect what we've fought so hard to earn.

If you have not yet had a conversation with a potential member, this is a great time to start. Small actions, taken consistently by many people, build strong organizations.

Let's keep building momentum, one conversation at a time. Ask a potential member to join by scanning the QR code below or visiting the VUE website at, www.ourvue.net/membership.



Membership QR Code



School Board Elections - Candidate Forum

Submitted By Dorothy Featherston, VUE GRC Chair

I attended the Republican Club of Southwest Volusia meeting to hear from two of the three candidates running for the District 1 School Board seat: current board member Jamie Haynes and challenger Brenda Beery. Ms. Haynes has served on the Volusia County School Board for more than seven years. Ms. Beery is a retired teacher and former VCS administrator who now operates a roofing business alongside her veteran husband.

During the forum, both candidates were asked about their support for Superintendent Dr. Carmen Balgobin's performance and their opinions regarding her salary. Both candidates stated that they believe Dr. Balgobin is performing well in her role; however, they differed in their views regarding compensation.

Ms. Haynes spoke at length about the superintendent evaluation process, explaining that she pushed for revisions to Dr. Balgobin's contract, including the removal of what she described as a "golden parachute" provision and transportation allotments. She noted that she was surprised Dr. Balgobin chose to remain in the position following those changes. Ms. Haynes also referenced neighboring districts where superintendents earn significantly higher salaries.

Ms. Beery expressed the opinion that Dr. Balgobin's salary is higher than it should be and focused part of her response on concerns surrounding the School Board's purchase of land in DeBary that ultimately could not be used for a school site.

The candidates were also asked about their political affiliations and how long they had been registered Republicans. Ms. Haynes stated that she has been a registered Republican since the age of 18 and shared that she has only missed one opportunity to vote. Ms. Beery explained that she was previously registered as NPA (No Party Affiliation) and later registered as a Republican after deciding to run for School Board, stating that her values aligned more closely with the Republican Party.

Both candidates discussed their qualifications and motivations for seeking the District 1 seat. Ms. Haynes and Ms. Beery both referenced previously working together at Blue Lake Elementary School.

Ms. Haynes presented documents comparing academic and career programs available on the west side of Volusia County when she was first elected versus today. She emphasized the growth of programs such as HVAC, electrical trades, and ROTC, highlighting what she views as expanded opportunities for west side students. She also spoke extensively about her involvement in West Side schools and her contributions to the district during her tenure.

Ms. Beery discussed her experience as both a teacher and administrator within Volusia County Schools, as well as her experience helping operate Beery Roofing. She stated that she hopes to bring a fresh perspective to the School Board and work toward positive changes within the district.

The election for school board members in districts 1,3,and 5 will be held on Tuesday, August 18, 2026. To locate your polling location please click [HERE](#). If a runoff election is needed the general election will be held on Tuesday, November 3, 2026.



Checking In

As the school year begins to slowly wind down, it is not lost on me that this year has been tougher than usual. The ongoing issues with Focus, the attacks from the legislature, and the continuous fight to enforce our contractual rights have worn us down. The constant challenges have made it difficult to stay positive, and always having to fight for the basics makes us feel frustrated and angry. When the goal is to just make it to the end of the week, you know there is a problem.

But I also know that when I'm at my lowest, there always seems to be something or someone who helps me pick up my chin and continue to move forward. There are so many positive things happening in our schools and our union, that if I stop an am intentional about looking for the good, I will find it.

Students are thriving because of the work you do, we are building our membership during a time when we typically lose members to retirement and resignations, and our union leadership is expanding as members are stepping up to engage in the work of our union by sharing their voice and advocating for the changes we need. We must celebrate the good around us and continue building positive momentum without allowing those who want to see us fail to win.

Please take care of yourselves, and check in when you need to. We are here to help and we are here to provide a shoulder or listening ear. The work of educators, educational professionals, trades and service professionals, and union members is not easy, but when we support each other, we can overcome any challenge that comes our way.

Stay positive. Stay encouraged. And most of all, stay strong in **SOLIDARITY!**



0% Interest Loan for VUE Members!

Our great friends at Launch Credit Union are once again offering VUE members a 0% interest loan. This year they have made this unbelievable opportunity available before summer break.

If you have unexpected expenses or need a little boost during the summer months, please take advantage of this no interest loan. Please contact a branch near you or apply online today!

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- Apply May 1ST – August 31ST, 2026

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 \$16.67 per \$100 borrowed.) For loans funded from May 1st through August 31st, 2026. 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 A to ZVolusia

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