



# Florida Continues to Lead the Nation on Labor Reform and Worker Freedom

Tony Daunt

**U**nder the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis and the State Legislature, Florida continues to lead the nation in protecting and enhancing worker freedom. Over the past few years, Florida has enacted several labor reform measures that have put workers first. It has given them more control over their own paychecks and safeguarded their freedom – especially regarding union membership and corresponding dues.

In 2023, Gov. DeSantis led the effort on a transparency bill (SB 256), otherwise known as the Teachers' Bill of Rights. Our organization, Workers for Opportunity, was proud to help support this legislation through testimony before the Florida Legislature, newspaper essays helping explain the legislation and other advocacy efforts. We also utilized educational materials provided by The James Madison Institute. Thankfully the legislation passed and was signed

into law. Our organization was proud to be at the bill signing with Gov. DeSantis and many other policymakers.

This landmark law improves how public employers collect union dues. It also gives workers more freedom to join or leave a union, increases union transparency and strengthens requirements for recertification elections.

The Teachers' Bill of Rights ended automatic payroll deductions for union dues. Union members now will pay their dues directly, just like they would do for a Costco or Netflix membership. The law also requires unions to notify members annually of the cost of membership. Additionally, it allows for public employees to join or leave a union at any time. This gives teachers flexibility and empowers them to make decisions on their own timelines about union membership. Greater transparency lets teachers know the full cost of union membership each year and informs them of their rights regarding whether or not they want to join and pay a union. In doing so, it gives teachers more control over their hard-earned paycheck.

The law increased the threshold for triggering union rectification elections from 50% to 60% for teachers and expanded this right to most other Florida public employees. Our organization strongly supports improved union democracy where Florida teachers are empowered to chart their own path. Requiring more transparency from the unions that have the privilege of representing teachers and other public employees helps hold them more accountable to those they are representing. It makes it more likely they will stay in touch with the values of workers.

The Florida Public Employee Relations Commission (PERC) implemented this new law well, and it should be applauded for implementing the law as it was intended. All public workers in Florida now have a say regarding their union representation. PERC clarified this year that the membership ratios for the 60% threshold would be calculated with a snapshot so no games can be played. This ensures that PERC will have a true representation of union membership that will protect workers' right to a fair union election. If union membership falls below 60% – whenever recertification is up for renewal – there is a snapshot review so there is an accurate counting of union membership.

We are grateful to our partners, including The James Madison Institute, and were happy to see that the Workers for Opportunity's model reforms were implemented in Florida. Together, we have helped give public employees more control over their paychecks and union representation. We stand ready to help in the future as Florida seeks to continue being one of the freest and worker-friendly states in the nation. In today's economy, states are competing, and Florida's good work means that other states will soon implement similar reforms to stay competitive.

Workers having greater say over their pay and greater freedom with their union membership – brought about by enhanced union democracy — is great and something to be celebrated.

*Tony Daunt serves as senior director of Workers for Opportunity, an initiative of the Mackinac Center for Public Policy.*