

Florida Education Association

Frontline Report

2023 Legislative Session

April 28, 2023

A Brief Recap of the Week

There's one week left in session, but the fight for educators' working conditions and students' learning conditions knows no end. With [the passage of SB 256](#), we've been given a great organizing challenge from Gov. DeSantis, his allies in the Legislature and the billionaire-backed special interest groups that fund their campaigns. How we respond at this moment will shape the future of Florida. Together, we can make sure the next chapter in our collective history is one in which working people win.

- Where Do We Go from Here?
- Policy Update
- Budget Update
- Thanks!

Read below to find out more.

Where Do We Go From Here?

“Our most fruitful course is to stand firm, move forward nonviolently, accept disappointments and cling to hope.” — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Even as we accept this feeling of disappointment with the [passage of SB 256](#), we stand firm knowing that we are fighting a righteous fight, and we must embrace hope. In every school and worksite in this state, there are educators who are fired up and willing to do whatever it takes to preserve their union, their contract and their voice in their profession. In every ZIP code in Florida, people are rising up, pushing back on Gov. DeSantis' agenda and demanding freedom.

Whether it is the freedom to teach and learn, the freedom to vote, the freedom to make medical decisions without government interference or the freedom to simply exist as an LGBTQ+ person without fear of attack, most Floridians oppose the restrictions on freedom that have been the hallmark of this legislative session.

Twenty years from now, the names of the legislators who passed these terrible laws will be long forgotten. Instead, the story that will be told will be of everyday people like you who stood firm in the face of these attacks, never gave up hope and helped lead a movement to reclaim Florida as a beacon of freedom for all people, no exceptions.

Policy Update

Here's an update on bills we've been monitoring that moved this week:

- [SB 256](#) is the bill that bans payroll deductions for union dues, restricts your freedom to join you union, forces local unions to have costly audits, and enshrines minority rule into law by requiring 60 percent union membership density. The bill passed the House on a [72-44](#) vote when nine Republicans joined all the Democrats in opposing the bill. As you likely remember, [it passed the Senate](#) weeks ago. So, it's now ready for Gov. DeSantis to sign.
- [SB 266](#) is the higher education bill that doubles down on last year's Stop WOKE act and restricts what can be taught in general education courses. It passed the Senate Friday afternoon on a [27-12](#) vote. It has not yet been approved by the House.
- [HB 477](#) is the bill that would shorten term limits for school board members from 12 years to eight years. The bill has been placed on the [Senate's agenda for Monday, May 1](#). It passed the House a few weeks ago on a [79-29](#) vote.
- [SB 1236](#) is the bill that removes financial penalties for school districts in violation of the class size amendment. The bill has been placed on the [Senate's agenda for Tuesday, May 2](#). Its House companion, [HB 633](#) passed the House on a [110-3](#) vote at the end of March.
- [SB 1320](#) is the bill that expands on last year's Don't Say Gay. The bill makes it easier for anyone to ban books, requires state approval for all materials used in a county's sex ed curriculum and restricts inclusive pronoun usage. The bill has been placed on the [Senate's agenda for Tuesday, May 2](#). Its House companion, [HB 1069](#) passed the House on a [77-35](#) vote at the end of March.

Budget Update

As of the writing of the Frontline, there has still been no agreement between the two chambers on retirement. As you might remember, the House has unanimously passed HB 7024, which strengthens the Florida Retirement System by restoring the cost-of-living adjustment, enhancing the employer contribution for members in the investment plan and increasing the interest rate earned while in DROP. For session to end on time, the budget must be completed by next Tuesday. By then, we'll should know if the Senate does the right thing for educators and adopts the House position on retirement.

What the chambers have agreed upon is that they will tout an education budget with "historic funding" and with no regard for inflation. The reality is that when adjusted for inflation, per-student funding in the soon-to-be-approved budget will likely be hundreds of dollars less than the first budget Gov. DeSantis signed. Again, we hope to have final details next week as the budgeting process *should* be completed on Tuesday.

Thanks!

We want to thank the following locals for sending members up to Tallahassee this week to engage with legislators and the legislative process: Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association, Okaloosa County Education Association, Osceola County Education Association and United School Employees of Pasco.

How You Can Take Action Today

Visit the [FEA website](#) to learn more about session and sign up for FEA Action Alert texts by texting “**edactivist**” to 22394.

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