



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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2000 Tampa Residents Rally at 'Awake The State' Against Governor Scott's Devastating Budget Proposal

Unions, Community Groups Stand United



Tampa, FL – Approximately 2000 people joined together today in Tampa rally today as part of a statewide, grassroots chorus of protests against draconian budget cuts being proposed by Gov. Rick Scott and legislative leaders. 15,000 people rallied across the state in similar 'Awake the State' rallies held in 30 cities throughout Florida.

Festivities started well before the 5pm rally start time as hundreds of members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers arrived over an hour before the event. The teachers and their supporters gathered at 4pm on the corner of Willow and Kennedy, where approximately 500 of them marched down Kennedy to join the rally. They were treated to a raucous ovation as they joined the rest of the attendees at the rally.

“The rally was a rousing success. There were 2000 very active, energized members of the community. We had teachers and parents and students and electrical works and firefighters and members from all sorts of organizations who care about the health and well being of the community,” said Jean Clements, President of the Hillsborough Classroom Teachers Association. “They left the rally committed to continuing to stand united for the children and families of the state of Florida for as long as it takes.”

A wide range of speakers representing a number of different constituencies fired up the crowd. Doretha Edgecomb, Hillsborough County School Board Member, Jean Clements, President of the Classroom Teachers Association, and Melissa Erikson from the Parents Teachers Association all spoke to the effect that the budget cuts will have on teachers, families, and students. Libby Delvin & Gwen Collins from National Nurses United talked about the risk the private sector faces from the attack on union workers. Tracey Crocker from the Homeless Coalition, Rev. McKenzie and Rev. Wright spoke about how the Governor’s budget would gut services for the poor and Florida’s most vulnerable communities.

“It is important that the people in this state realize that many of the elected officials, including the governor, are in a very real sense, are trying to implement policies that are outdated and ineffective, said Rev. McKenzie. “The ramifications of these public policy ideas and initiatives will be devastating for the middle class and working people of this state.”

Several local officials attended the event, including City Council members Yvonne Yolie Capin and Mary Mulhern, and Hillsborough County Commissioner Kevin Beckner, who also spoke at the rally.

Rally organizers stressed that today’s event was just the beginning of a sustained and unified campaign to stand up from working people. Event attendees were asked to give their information on sign in sheets to help coordinate future actions.

“The private sector and public sector are both under attack, and recognize that Rick Scott’s budget proposal is unfair. That working people across the state will stand united for long as it takes. As long as the attacks continue, we stand in solidarity,” said Jason Smith, the AFL-CIO mobilization coordinator for West Central Florida. “We may not be able to win every

battle or stop every bad bill, but we will be a force strong enough throughout the state to protect working people from some of the Governor's most egregious proposals."

One common suggestion at the event was that instead of cutting vital services to Florida's working families, the Governor close corporate tax loopholes and not cut corporate taxes any further.

"The remedy is to restructure the tax formula for this state, and to begin by closing the billions in tax loophole that is essentially nothing more than corporate welfare," said McKenzie.

"Florida is not for sale, and the governor is mistaken to believe that he should destroy the people who are trying to make a living for the benefit of corporations that elected him," added Alison Blake Morano, Vice Chair of the Florida Democratic Party.

Approximately 20 people participated in a peaceful counter protest across the street from the rally.

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