

# South Florida Chapter

Labor and Employment Relations Association

*Newsletter*

## **ADVANCING WORKPLACE RELATIONS**



Winter 2015

**Jerry Grayson, President**  
jerryarb@verizon.net

**Dr. Gerald Grayson, Editor**  
graysog@farmingdale.edu

### **PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE:**

**Gerald H. Grayson, President**

#### **What's Happening in Michigan and What Does it Have to do With Florida?**

On October 8th we had our semi-annual chapter meeting. We were graciously hosted by the Dade Cty School Maintenance Employees Ctte. Our speaker was a former colleague of mine, Cheryll Conklin, who is the Central Zone Director for the Michigan Education Association. One of Cheryll's prior jobs was as executive director for the Eastern Michigan University chapter of the American Association of University Professors. At that time, I was the executive director for New York State for the AAUP and our paths crossed frequently.



Her topic was, "What's Happening in Michigan and What Does It Have to Do with Florida?" At the present time, in the state of Michigan, the governor and the legislature have enacted a number of laws taking many rights away from public employees in that state.

She noted that in the 1970s Michigan was fourth in the U.S. in education and is now 46th. The decline began in the 1980s with reign of Governor John Engler and the establishment of the Mackinac Center, a well funded conservative think tank with one goal—to destroy teachers' unions and public education.

The governor took money from the state pension system to balance the state budget. In 1994 it was made illegal for teachers to strike, with \$1000 per day fines to each individual and huge fines for the union. At the same time, private charter schools started popping up everywhere.

Also, local control over school funding was ended and the state was given full control. Throughout the 2000s attempts were made to decrease school funding and to divert money away from school employee wages. In 2011 the state legislature enacted a number of prohibited subjects for bar-

### **Upcoming Chapter Meeting**

# **SAVE THIS DATE**

**Wed., Apr. 8, 2015, 6:00 p.m.**

**Place:** Boca Community Center

**Speaker:** Representative of NLRB

**Topic:** Recent changes in NLRB procedures

**Food will be served (no charge). If you wish**

**to join the chapter, please bring a check for**

**\$25 for a single member or \$125 for group**

**membership of 6 made out to SF LERA**

**Chapter.**

**FREE LABOR RELATIONS BOOK  
FOR THOSE WHO ATTEND**

The South Florida LERA Newsletter is an occasional publication of the South Florida chapter of the Labor and Employment Relations Association.

**President**

**Gerald H. Grayson**

**Vice President**

**Jeanne Charles Wood**

**Secretary**

**Gilbert Escudero**

**Treasurer**

**Ines Delgado Alberto**

**Newsletter Editor**

**Gerald H. Grayson**

Inquiries about this publication, as well as submissions, etc., should be sent to Jerry Grayson at <jerryarb@verizon.net>.

South Florida LERA Chapter

7007 Lombardy St

Boynton Beach, FL 33472-7345

561-736-9251

# SF LERA.....

gaining including: evaluation, discipline; layoff/recall; seniority, assignments and merit pay. They also made a change to the tenure laws removing just cause for discharge and replacing it with arbitrary and capricious standards.

In 2012, the specific attacks against teacher unions escalated, including forced auditing of local union finances and the dagger was the prohibition of using payroll deduction for union dues. This was a sudden and huge loss for unions. In minutes, they had to get members into a direct pay system.

Also, in 2012 they enacted pension reform which resulted in shifting more cost to individual school employees and districts. They also enacted Right to Work legislation which took immediate effect and there were no hearings. Citizens were locked out of the capital and the law was passed.

Almost all of the initiatives had their origin in the program of ALEC (The American Legislative Exchange Council is an organization of conservative state legislators and private sector representatives that drafts and shares model state-level legislation for distribution among the United States. According to its website, ALEC "works to advance the fundamental principles of free-market enterprise, limited government, and federalism at the state level through a non-partisan public-private partnership of America's state legislators, members of the private sector and the general public.") They prepare the language of these initiatives for legislators. Their list of goals includes vouchers for private schools, more charter schools, defund public schools, eliminate collective bargaining rights for all public sector unions, enact right to work laws and erode public sector pensions. ALEC is everywhere, pushing legislation to privatize public employees jobs and destroy their unions.

After Ms. Conklin completed her talk there were a number of questions and comments from those attending. The first comment from one of our members was expressed in a tone of incredulity. He said that he thought of Michigan as the state where many of the major unions that were the pioneers of the modern labor movement were formed. Ms. Conklin replied that he was right, but that with the election of Governor Rick Snyder and of a Republican majority controlling the state legislature, times have changed.

There are a number of serious questions that emerge from the chronicling of the events and their subsequent impact on the state of labor relations in Michigan and the rest of the country.

It would be a factual statement to say that labor unions have been in decline in the United States for the last three to four decades. Perhaps one of the seminal events was the strike of the air traffic controllers who belonged to PATCO during the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

Despite the fact that Ronald Reagan came into office without any particular desire to destroy the American trade union movement in the United States, his actions helped to precipitate



Cheryll Conklin  
Michigan Education Association

itate the air traffic controllers strike, which was illegal under federal law. The conclusion was that thousands of controllers lost their job and the union was decimated. While it may seem like a great leap to go from the PATCO incident in 1981, one need only look at the data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to see the steady decline in union membership.

Obviously, there are other factors (globalization, union busting law firms, unfriendly congresses and courts). But the result has been clear.

So what? Why should we care? We could begin to answer this question by saying, "I've got mine. I have a job, I have a pension, I have a house, my children have completed college and they do not have any student loans to pay and they also have good jobs. So what?"

Where should I begin? Perhaps the best place to begin is with the recent data on income inequality in the United States. Since the 1970s, the percentage of income inequality between the middle class and the top 1% has increased dramatically.



Is there any correlation between the decline in union membership and the increase in the gap of income inequality. Of course, it would be ostrich-like to deny this relationship. But the decline in union membership is not the only causal factor. Without question, globalization and the outsourcing of jobs have contributed, first to countries within our hemisphere and then to nations in other parts of the world. Along with outsourcing came advances in technology in most cases replacing human strength and dexterity with machine strength and dexterity.

Without the opportunity to work at jobs their parents had that allowed for a middle class lifestyle, young people are urged to go to college. For a while earning a college degree was a ticket to a decent lifestyle but now millions of graduates are not able to find jobs that match their education and they have accumulated \$2 trillion (yes, trillion) in student loan debt.

But the events in Michigan should be a wake-up call. No one can be certain, either in the private sector or the public sector, that their job and their pension (if they have one) are safe.

This is not an issue of labor versus management. The age-old battle lines are no longer relevant since those of us who manage and administer will also not have a job if the work is being done in China or Bangledash.

So the answer to "So What," in this author's opinion, is that if those of us who work for a living by providing goods or services, whether in the public or private sector, whether in unions or not unionized, whether managers or those supervised, we must understand the need to make a conscious effort to make those who we elect to represent us do what is right for us. If we continue to allow a portion of the 1% to .

continue to control our state houses and our legislative chambers in Washington we will find that it is too late to take back the levers of power and we will have a generation of Americans with no hope of a decent future.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS, NOTICES**

If you have an announcement or job posting that you would like to have published in our newsletter, send it for consideration to the editor at:

<jerryarb@verizon.net>.

### **SEEKING WRITERS AND ARTICLES**

*If you can write. I can edit and publish. Let's get together. Have you had a case or incident at work that would provide insight to others?*

*Have you read a book or article that you believe others might learn from and enjoy reading? Let's get together. Send me your manuscript via email to: <jerryarb@verizon.net>.*



Q and A after Ms. Conklin's presentation

**YES!** Enroll me as a SF LERA member

Regular..... \$25  
Full-Time Student.....10  
Organization.....125 for 6 memberships

**PROFESSION**

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neutral                | <input type="checkbox"/> Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Academic               | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Management             | <input type="checkbox"/> Consultant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Union (Private Sector) | <input type="checkbox"/> Student    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Union (Public Sector)  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other      |

Send check made payable to: SF LERA  
PLEASE MAIL TO: Ines Delgado Alberto, Treasurer  
SF LERA  
FMCS  
14411 Commerce Way, Ste. 100  
Miami Lakes, FL 33016

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone (Office) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

List 6 members names and e-mails

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_