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Erratum

In its conclusion, the article, as originally published, the American Legislative Exchange Council was erroneously referred to by the acronym ASEC. The currently published article has been corrected. The eds apologize for the error.

Organizing Faculty Unions in a Right-to-Work Environment

Thomas Auxter¹

Right-to-work states are generally considered to be hostile environments for public employees who try to organize—that is, who try to secure union representation in order to maintain rights to fair treatment and just compensation through collective bargaining over an extended period of time.² However, in one right-to-work state, Florida, we find examples of unions that have managed to survive and develop over decades. Some of them even managed to negotiate comprehensive contracts protecting the rights of public employees in all domains affecting -terms and conditions of employment, including shared governance in decision-making about the work environment.

To understand the significance of this phenomenon, we need to ask several questions. What conditions make this possible? What kinds of unions are favored by these conditions? What goals can unions realistically expect to set? What would it take for public employee unions in other right-to-work states to produce these results?

To show how public employees can build a strong and effective union in a right-to-work state, we also need to know some history. Formed in 1976, United Faculty of Florida (UFF) offers one example. From the beginning, it has represented faculty at all the public universities in Florida. As it developed, it also came to represent graduate assistants at universities, almost half of the state's public colleges, and one independent institution.

By examining the organizing history of UFF, we learn how it is possible to address issues of concern for faculty and professional employees who live in a right-to-work environment. If we attend to the structure, challenges, struggles, and achievements of UFF, within the legal framework for collective bargaining in the state, we can see how other types of public employees in Florida might also organize for representation, and under some conditions, how employees in other states might expect similar results.

¹ Thomas Auxter, Department of Philosophy, University of Florida. An earlier version of portions of this article was presented on April 4, 2016 at the 43rd Annual Meeting of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions in New York, New York. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Thomas Auxter, Department of Philosophy, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. E-mail: tauxter@ufl.edu.

² The author is grateful for comments and suggestions by Jennifer Proffitt, Marshall Ogletree, Kevin Watson, Susan Hegeman, Raul Sanchez, and Rich Templin.

Legal Issues

What is the legal framework within which Florida's public employee unions operate? In the state's Constitution, public employees have the right to union representation. The document identifies a right to work, but also a right to representation by a labor organization. The text reads as follows:

Right to Work. – The right of persons to work shall not be denied or abridged on account of membership or non-membership in any labor union or labor organization. The right of employees, by and through a labor organization, to bargain collectively shall not be denied or abridged. Public employees shall not have the right to strike. (FL Const. art. I, § 6)

In other words, public employees in Florida have a constitutional right to unionize. In order to do so, they must secure a majority vote of those members of a bargaining unit (defined by the Public Employees Relations Commission) who choose to cast a ballot in a certification election.

Bargaining unit members are not legally required to join the union (i.e., right to work). Consequently, the union does not have the right to collect dues from all employees in the bargaining unit. Instead, the union must have express permission from individual employees to withhold dues from paychecks or to collect dues in other ways.

Why did Floridians vote for a constitutional amendment that guaranteed union rights for public employees? In the late 1960s, after a long and punishing strike by teachers objecting to working conditions, unions lobbied aggressively for the language to be included in the amendment, and then they conducted a successful public campaign to get it approved by the state's voters.

Because the bitterness of the strike was still a vivid memory, language was crafted to make it legal for public employees to organize yet illegal for them to strike. Unions realized that the greatest fear among voters was the prospect of another teacher's strike, so they supported this compromise. Because unions wanted to get the amendment passed, the language of the constitutional amendment contains provisions both guaranteeing the right to form unions and prohibiting the right to strike.

The right to form a union, but not to strike, also includes the right to a grievance procedure.

All public employees shall have the right to a fair and equitable grievance procedure administered without regard to membership or non-membership in any organization, except that certified employee organizations shall not be required to process grievances for employees who are not members of the organization. (FL Statutes §447.401, line 12)

In other words, the protections of rights contained in a collective bargaining contract are equally available to union members and non-members. The law guarantees that contract language specifying employee protections confers rights on every employee in the unit.

However, if a non-member decides to file a grievance, the union is not obligated to incur expenses for, or devote time to, moving the process forward. It is not required “to process grievances for employees.” The cost of enforcing legal protections under the contract is covered for union members but not necessarily for non-members. For this cost to be covered by the union, someone must be a member prior to the incident causing the grievance to be filed. Non-members may be required to provide their own legal counsel or otherwise take responsibility for the processing of grievances; the specifics of this responsibility are determined by the union, not the non-member.

For members, the advantage of this arrangement is that they do not see their dues money siphoned off to fight the battles of non-members. This seems fair to most union members, who recognize that they can finance other activities and projects—building a stronger and more effective union—if they do not have to subsidize the legal defenses of non-members.

The issue was not always framed this way. It took more than two decades after the first contract was signed for UFF to change its policy on how to handle non-member grievances. For the first two decades, UFF processed grievances for all non-members, for without cost to non-members.

Originally, UFF reasoned that it should maintain control over all aspects of all grievances in order to make sure that the outcomes of cases did not set precedents unacceptable to other faculty. We also believed that non-members would join anyway once they saw how the contract protected rights, how hard grievance representatives worked, and how vigorously the union defended faculty rights.

However, during this time the experience of handling certain non-members’ grievances convinced most union members that the policy needed to be changed. In 2001, a vote in the statewide union’s governing body, the UFF Senate, changed the policy to make non-members responsible for covering their own grievance expenses.³

Why did this happen, and what were the results? On most campuses, there had been some non-members who used the process to file grievances to defend their rights and then either

³ At that time the UFF Senate consisted of roughly a hundred members elected from every region and constituency in the state; it met twice a year to make policy decisions for the union.

refused to join the union or joined only temporarily (until the grievance process was concluded). In fact, some of these “free riders” did this repeatedly.

When UFF changed the grievance policy, most union members were already prepared to create a different process for non-members. The new process would transfer the expense for grievance representation to a non-member without giving up the union’s right to manage the process. After changing the policy, non-members came to realize how burdensome it would be to cover the expenses themselves.

In some cases, non-members discovered that local lawyers did not know much about labor law. In other cases, the attorneys available locally seemed less skillful and efficient in handling grievances than faculty grievance representatives who understood the contract thoroughly and regularly won cases. In other words, even if expense were not a consideration, the quality of the defense suffered without union help.

Overall, the new grievance policy confirmed that the union was strengthened by prioritizing its members. The new policy helped membership recruitment and increased confidence in the effectiveness of union representation.

As it happened, ominous developments in the political arena provided an even stronger reason for faculty non-members to join the union to protect their rights. In 1998, many of the leaders elected, along with a new generation of legislators, were committed to dramatic spending reductions for higher education. They saw the union as an obstacle to their plans for reducing faculty employment costs. They believed that a collective bargaining contract, which protected rights to tenure and continuing employment, prevented the state from replacing faculty who had job security with a less expensive academic workforce that could be hired and fired at will. Indeed, faculty were entering a larger theater of action that would determine whether they would have any legal protections at all.

The Attack on Faculty Unions

The election in November 1998 changed how many looked at the need for a union. The composition and agenda of the new state legislature directly challenged faculty and created a growing belief that faculty needed a union to defend the profession. Suddenly the protections in collective bargaining contracts were at risk. Faculty realized they would need to engage much more aggressively in government relations and legislative action in order to defend their rights. In the 1998 election, a governor and legislators came into power with a decidedly anti-union agenda. They proposed to reduce taxes by abolishing the statewide faculty union contract and

announced that they would thereby eliminate much of the burden of paying for university instruction, which they claimed could be delivered to the taxpayer much less expensively.

For example, the new Governor, Jeb Bush, argued that tenure should be abolished at the universities so that Ph.D.s could be hired and retained temporarily, at the lowest possible price—until other Ph.D.s could be found to work for even less at the same jobs. This attack on the faculty collective bargaining contract was occurring at the same time faculty faced another more comprehensive attack on unions: Governor Bush encouraged legislators to push through legislation that effectively abolished *all* existing statewide union contracts for public employees on university campuses—including the UFF contract.

After the Governor and the Legislature abolished the statewide Board of Regents, which had negotiated the contract with UFF, they replaced it with local boards of trustees for each campus. Now, faculty could only vote for collective bargaining and be certified at the campus level, where the ultra-conservative boards appointed by the Governor controlled the outcome.

Faculty union members responded by actively organizing to recertify UFF at the university and college levels. UFF also filed a lawsuit to restore the rights lost through legislative action. But as expected, this would not be settled in the union's favor for years.

UFF immediately launched a card-signing campaign which soon yielded overwhelming majorities on all campuses. Within six months, the union was recertified. In some cases, UFF subsequently had to hold elections on a campus to become certified locally, but the results of these elections were in the range of 95 to 96% in favor of the union. On other university campuses, the administrations and boards of trustees decided to voluntarily recognize the union instead of going through an election battle over certification, which they came to see as pointless and divisive.

The very existence of UFF was continually at risk during the eight years Governor Bush and his allies were in office. Various “devious plans” and maneuvers were foiled by an ever-vigilant unionized faculty intent on protecting their rights.

“Devious plan” is language used by Governor Bush to describe and explain to trusted allies how he intended to pit taxpayers against teachers to achieve reductions in the education budget.⁴

⁴ “Governor Discusses Preventing Class Plan,” The Associated Press, October 5, 2002. A constitutional amendment to limit class size, sponsored by Sen. Kendrick Meek (D-Miami), was submitted for a vote in the 2002 November election. Class sizes would be limited to 18 students in kindergarten through third grade, 22 in fourth through eighth grades, and 25 in high school. It was strongly supported by the Florida Education Association and the NAACP. Governor Bush opposed the measure and used the phrase ‘devious plans’ to describe his intention to fund it, if it passed, at the expense of funding nursing homes. It passed. FEA president Maureen Dinnen is quoted as opposing

How did he plan to do this? In what ways did he think he had the power to discredit teachers and reduce support for public education enough to have a major impact on the budget?

Launching an economic attack could only work if citizens saw funding for public education as a wasteful expenditure. By undermining confidence in the competence and effectiveness of teachers, Governor Bush sought to raise doubts about money spent on public education. By attacking the teachers' union—the Florida Education Association (FEA), which represented teachers in all but one county and enforced teachers' rights under collective bargaining contracts—he could argue that teachers' unions were protecting incompetent teachers. This meant, he said, that Florida was wasting money that could be used to reward superior teachers or to pay for vouchers for private schools, which he claimed would provide a better education.⁵

Although Governor Bush did not intend to make a public announcement about his “devious” strategy and was only speaking to allies in what he thought was a private meeting, nevertheless, a Gannett News Service reporter was in the audience recording the session and released the tape to the state's newspapers. Soon, he was facing banner headlines and detailed articles quoting his language. Unfortunately, this did not dissuade him from pursuing the plan. In retrospect, he aggressively pushed different versions of the plan in each of the eight years he was governor. In other words, through his tenure as governor, there was an annual “devious plan.”

It is important to note that it is doubtful whether his claims about the superiority of private schools, which were not subject to testing, could be substantiated. Indeed, his administration succeeded only in starving public education and thereby punishing students in public schools while giving private schools a free pass to offer inferior schooling and never be challenged on the point.

For our purposes, it is also important to note that his attacks on teachers did not directly affect public higher education. However, similar attacks on higher education were taking place at the same time throughout his days in office, and in fact the Governor did treat higher education

the ‘devious plans’ both because the Governor is violating what she expects will be the voters’ approval of a constitutional mandate and because his strategy would violate the collective bargaining rights of teachers. See also “Governor Tells of ‘Devious Plans’ to Undo Class Size Vote, Linda Kleindienst, October 5, 2002.

⁵ In 1999 the Legislature passed Governor Bush's “Opportunity Scholarships” bill, which provided vouchers to students for attending private schools (including schools with religious affiliations) instead of public schools. FEA was joined by the NAACP in filing a suit in state court contending that the bill violated the separation of church and state in the Florida Constitution. The Florida Supreme Court later ruled it unconstitutional. New voucher plans, with some changes in legal language each time, were introduced repeatedly during the Bush years. The Florida Education Association then filed suit and won repeatedly—thereby blocking implementation. As a consequence, FEA became the principal adversary of the Governor on education issues. The teachers' union was seen by Bush as blocking improvement of the education of poor students who would otherwise be eligible for a better education. See “Florida Begins Voucher Plan for Education,” the Associated Press, August 17, 1999.

as if it were a wasteful expenditure of state funds. (UFF is a local of FEA.) It is not too much to say that there was an annual “devious plan” for higher education too, although the Governor never made the same mistake about revealing it.

From 2001 to 2010, union membership more than doubled from roughly 3000 to 7000. Activism multiplied on every level. Indeed, during this decade UFF had 600-800 member activists and organizers statewide making sure everyone in each bargaining unit was contacted in face-to-face meetings to get cards signed for campus certification elections. The union urgently needed to build teams of members covering each union organizing activity.

Faculty now had many incentives to join the union and to pay dues. Everyone’s rights were at risk without the union, and more faculty came to see the defense of those rights in a grievance as worth the cost of membership.

The threat to the UFF’s very existence during the Bush years was certainly a result of living in a right-to-work state. But it was also a constant incentive to grow larger and stronger in order to fight back and defend faculty rights.

As we have seen, this threat first took the form of abolishing by legislative action the statewide UFF contracts for public university faculties. However, the anti-union forces had mistakenly assumed that unions would be too weak to recover from the statewide abolition of their operations. They likely did not expect faculty would rebuild the unions locally.

There were faculty on campuses in each large city in Florida. This meant that activists could effectively contact other faculty members on a local campus and get cards signed in a relatively short period of time. Moreover, given the legislative challenge to faculty’s core values, it was not hard to convince people to sign cards. In fact, faculty unions rebounded much faster than other kinds of unions and even provided an example for other unions of how to organize to recertify.

The threat of abolition took new forms once the Bush administration realized that more was required to finish the job. New legislation surfaced in most legislative sessions that, if passed, would have abolished or weakened public university unions. One bill threatened to abolish unions with less than a certain percentage of membership. Another bill would have stopped payroll deduction for union members thereby causing a huge drop in membership. Public employee unions stood together, lobbied the legislature, and prevented the passage of these anti-union measures. In other words, Governor Bush and his allies were thwarted in their efforts to reorganize higher education, pass new laws on certification, and abolish faculty unions in the right-to-work environment defined by the Florida Constitution.

In an interview which he gave as he left office in March 2006, Governor Bush admitted that he did not make progress in “reforming” higher education: “In some significant areas, Bush leaves confusion. His back-of-the-napkin plan to incorporate the state’s colleges and universities into a ‘seamless, K-20’ system simply didn’t work, he acknowledges: ‘That is one place where I would say that I’ve not been successful.’” (Howard, 2006, para. 10)

The Academic Bill of Rights

Although efforts to abolish faculty unions by direct, frontal attacks on their certification failed, state legislators could still pass laws that indirectly but seriously undermined such unions. In 2005 one such measure surfaced.⁶ A Republican state representative, Dennis Baxley, introduced a bill that was a version of the so-called Academic Bill of Rights (ABOR⁷). As Scott Jaschik noted at the time, “[t]he legislation was created by David Horowitz, the one-time campus radical whose politics have shifted rightward and who argues that liberal professors use their classrooms to indoctrinate students.... Rep. Dennis K. Baxley said his own undergraduate education at Florida State University—in the 1970’s—illustrated the failings of higher education. The problem was that an anthropology professor ‘did a tirade’ in his course that evolution was correct and that creationism was not. Baxley said the students should not ‘get blasted’ as he did for not believing in evolution.”⁸ (Jaschik, 2005)

Advocates of ABOR claim that it will protect students from listening to any controversial political or religious statements made by a professor in the classroom. ABOR is formulated in such a way that a professor cannot even conduct a discussion of a controversial issue without dividing the issue into two opposing positions and giving equal time and equal treatment to each side. It also precludes talking about topics controversial enough to upset even one student in the class. The proposed law contains an enforcement provision so the student can file a complaint against a professor who violates a student’s rights as defined by ABOR.

⁶ Another such measure in the 2005 legislative session was the ban on faculty travel to Cuba and four other “state terrorist” countries. With financial support from the National Education Association (NEA), UFF filed suit in federal court challenging the ban. Financial support, ultimately amounting to tens of thousands of dollars, was secured after a UFF motion in the NEA Representative Assembly, which was backed by our affiliate, the FEA, passed with roughly 8000 votes in favor and only a few dissenting votes. As I argued at the time, “The bill is counterproductive because ignorance is counterproductive.” UFF finally lost the legal battle but made the point with educators across the nation that a union can fight restrictions on research and teaching. Educators agreed with our arguments that ignorance about issues affecting international relations and world peace is not sound policy and that faculty research and teaching inside nations considered a threat, even at the height of the cold war with the Soviet Union, have always informed U.S. policy decisions and prevented serious mistakes.

⁷ It is sometimes called the Student’s Bill of Rights.

⁸ In the same article Jaschik quotes my response to Baxley’s Academic Bill of Rights: “the legislation looks like a nice shiny apple with all its talk about academic freedom, but there are razors in that apple.... This is about intimidating professors.... If he had a bad experience 30 years ago, get over it.”

Since the majority party in the Florida Legislature was Republican, Rep. Baxley could, with the approval of the leadership, call a hearing on the issue and even use legislative funding to pay an expert witness. At the time, the leadership was willing to consider any bill that would reduce the power of a faculty union to define conditions on campus, although there certainly were independent Republicans that could object if a hearing turned up evidence indicating there might be a problem with the bill. (One of the most popular sayings in the Legislature was, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”)

Baxley chose David Horowitz as the expert witness. Horowitz had testified in some other states as well, although he did not have a Ph.D. and was never employed as a full-time faculty member. In legislative hearings, his main credential was that he was an ex-communist who had seen the light and was now on a national crusade to expose every “leftist” professor who exercised any power in a university or college.

As president of a statewide union elected to represent faculty at all public universities and half the public colleges as well, I was chosen by leaders of the minority party to present expert testimony against proposed legislation affecting state universities and colleges. This meant that I would have the opportunity to reply to the testimony of David Horowitz. As it happens, I also had a chance to provide an update when Rep. Baxley called a second hearing and presented his arguments for a final vote.

Because I had testified in the Legislature on previous occasions, I was aware of the power that Rep. Baxley had, as chair of the committee, to interrupt testimony and move to a vote. Time is of the essence, and only succinct testimony would have a chance for a hearing. My goals were (a) to argue Florida did not have a problem with faculty abusing the political and religious rights of students, and (b) to argue that the bill had other consequences that would deny students a complete and authentic educational experience.

Most of Horowitz’s testimony was devoted to his mission as an ex-communist and to examples he gathered from personally visiting other states where faculty were said to use the classroom to indoctrinate students with leftist views. This made it easier for me to argue (a) that there was no evidence presented to show Florida has a problem and (b) that untoward consequences followed from adoption of the bill.

Some of my testimony, which made a difference in the outcome, follows. The testimony is itself a narrative that tells the story of the kind of challenges we face as well as an indication for other unions of the kind of arguments that work in a fast-paced and demanding legislative context.

It bothers me that these are all anecdotal complaints, that we have very little evidence ever produced in these complaints, and that most of the complaints are not from Florida. There are very few complaints I've ever heard from Florida on this kind of issue. What I've found at the University of Florida, where I have taught for 30 years, is not people using the classroom as a platform and not faculty punishing students.... What I find is that there are not enough minutes in a class to cover an incredible amount of material, and there is more and more demand for things that have to be covered. So, what faculty do is carefully manage their time. I don't see the problem.

What I do see is the potential for incredible damage that could occur. For example, when national publications, like *Nature* and *Inside Higher Education*, call me, they're saying this issue didn't get very far in other states, and ask why is it getting so far in Florida?

I did not want to answer that question directly. I wanted to speak to you instead, and ask you not to let us be perceived as doing something radical to change the nature of academic freedom because it has taken a long time to build what we have in the universities. It has been very hard to recruit faculty at the salaries we have here, and we have done a very good job of this. It is hard enough to keep faculty here and hard enough to attract them to Florida. Please don't give people an incentive for not coming here.

When he was conducting the second hearing, prior to a vote, Rep. Baxley summarized the argument for his bill. "While all institutions have policies that protect faculty and their academic freedom, few have policies to protect student academic freedom. This bill requires that faculty grade students on merit and not discriminate based on the student's beliefs." When I appeared at the microphone and offered an update on what had happened to the bill in the rest of the nation during the interval, I was given an opportunity to testify. Some of that testimony also follows.

David Horowitz last time said that there is a long list of states seriously considering this bill. I just returned from a higher ed conference in Minnesota, and they held a session on how much progress is being made. The presentation showed that Florida was the only state left where it seriously has a chance of passing. So I would like you to think about the fact that the eyes of the nation will be on us from the point of view of the academic world. We'll be looked at to see whether or not this is going to be a test case.

Should we under these circumstances introduce something that has so many questionable consequences for higher education? I think it is a bad idea to do this, and we should listen to the things faculty are saying that call into question whether or not this is appropriate legislation and way to use legislative power. The main objection that people have is that it is substituting political standards for how it is that you approach the discovery of truth and how it is that you discuss truth. It is substituting political standards and methods for academic standards and methods. Every time you introduce a controversial issue in the

classroom, the questions will be raised: Are you allowed to talk about this? Can you prove on the spot that this is relevant to the content of this course? What are the standards for avoiding litigation from the students in the class? The standard will be the most easily offended student and whether or not that person will react against what you are saying. Faculty don't like this imperative to be looking over their shoulder every time they use examples. In fact, faculty often use ludicrous examples and positions in order to generate discussion among students.... Success is when they have students participating in the class and still discussing and arguing points as they are walking out at the end of the class. It is about encouraging how to think. Faculty are not there to teach what to think.

Does that mean there are never abuses? Of course, there are abuses. There are abuses in any kind of institution. The question is how widespread are they? The evidence we've heard from David Horowitz is underwhelming. What we have heard is anecdotes from other states. We have not heard Florida examples. In addition, we have not heard of any investigations of the contentions he has made about people in other states. So I would not, based on very little evidence, do something so dramatic as to curtail academic freedom, cause faculty in the rest of the country to question whether or not they should come to Florida, and whether they'd be subject to lawsuits that they're not subject to in any other state, and do the damage this bill will do....

Before the vote was taken, one Republican legislator said he had decided to vote against ABOR based on the faculty testimony. And although Rep. Baxley's Committee finally voted in favor of ABOR, the issue was never again taken up by the leadership and never scheduled for a final vote. What was the reason for this?

There were several factors involved. First, a student from Florida State University (FSU) also testified and agreed with the faculty testimony. Second, faculty were called upon by the union to show up at the hearing, and so they comprised over 90% of the audience. Third, the issue was covered extensively by all forms of media in Florida and was becoming an embarrassment for the leadership. Fourth, we asked UFF members, as well as members of our union affiliates, to make calls to local legislative offices; the result was that each legislator's constituents were objecting to the bill. Finally, the leadership is not going to waste time holding more hearings or a vote on the floor when there are going to be problems passing it.

The only citizens testifying were one faculty member, representing the union, and one student, who saw the original faculty presentation on television and then testified in the second hearing. The faculty senate presidents of the universities were glad I was pursuing the matter, talked with me about it, and looked to me to handle the issue. To avoid a possible conflict of interest (because they were the duly appointed faculty representatives on campus boards of

trustees), they did not themselves want to testify. However, for reasons of their own, university presidents were invisible during the entire process, even though they had no conflict of interest. University presidents are clearly authorized to speak to the Legislature about how a bill might affect their universities, and they occasionally do so on other issues. Their absence seemed odd at the time because it was clear to everyone that nothing less than the very quality of higher education was at stake.

In short, if the union had not taken up the issue, publicized the dangers, and organized to get Floridians to contact legislators, we could have seen a different result when the leadership decided whether it wanted to push it to a final vote in the Legislature. If passed, ABOR would have changed the nature of academic life in substantial ways.

Organizing, Growth, and Development

A series of such measures loomed over Florida's university campuses during the first decade of the 21st century. Each measure threatened either to abolish the faculty union or to transform academic life in ways that would change it substantially and trivialize its mission. Through intensive legislative action faculty defeated these measures and kept new union contracts in place.

Consequently, faculty became much more effective in this larger theater of action. Successes in the legislature encouraged them to believe they could actually stop destructive bills from passing in the legislature. These successes also encouraged the belief that the hard work of negotiating strong contracts on campus would be worthwhile in the long run in efforts to protect the integrity of the profession in a state where threats to it were real.

Throughout the same decade, increases in membership, sometimes dramatic, accompanied each wave of legislative action. Each new organizing activity and spike in membership deepened the belief that faculty had found a way to defend what they cared about.

How were unionized faculty able to engage in enough substantial legislative action to thwart these anti-union cabals and survive and grow through the decade? Why does UFF still exist today and how have we managed to add provisions to local contracts that have made a significant difference in the quality of academic life for faculty?

There are many details that I could cover to explain how and why this occurred. Here, I merely offer three points. First, UFF came into existence in 1976 after running a statewide campaign based on identifying issues faculty care about and organizing around those issues. In practice, this means explaining to faculty in face-to-face meetings how collective bargaining can

be used to write contract language specifying professional rights. (Our first bumper sticker was “Restoring Faculty Rights.”) The initial organizing successes were based on what we would much later call “issues-based organizing.” However, by the 1990s, UFF had devolved into a service model of a union, committed primarily to implementation of contract provisions and defending faculty whose rights were violated. The energy for organizing dissipated as the concern for service became the focus of attention.

When the union’s existence was threatened by developments after 1998, we returned to our original central organizing mission and again began to grow rapidly on every campus. UFF not only survived by this means; the union became more effective in defending every aspect of terms and conditions of employment that has a bearing on the quality of academic life.

Second, UFF has a Government Relations Committee at the state level charged with the tasks of developing strategies and coordinating contacts with legislators. Union representatives on each campus then form a team of faculty that meets with local senators and representatives. Faculty meet with them when they are at home during the fall and discuss issues and possible legislation that would help fix problems. During the legislative session in the spring, the campus teams encourage faculty to contact local legislators through their district offices. Then it is clear to legislators, who have already met with and know faculty locally during the fall, that faculty are informed and have strongly-held views about what does and does not work in legislation affecting faculty.

Third, UFF receives substantial support from all affiliates, and especially the FEA, representing 140,000 members, in working to defeat bad legislation. FEA also helps draft, find sponsors for, and finally pass legislation that improves conditions for faculty. We also receive support from the Florida AFL-CIO for our legislative goals. Both the FEA and the Florida AFL-CIO have changed their legislative programs to include citizen lobbyists. These programs, which increase the effectiveness of unions, have been replicated in several other states. The National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) also help us organize campaigns to increase membership and train activists.

In 2011, the Florida AFL-CIO created the Labor Table, a coalition of all unions working together on legislative issues. It consists of FEA (AFT, NEA), American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Teamsters, Firefighters, Fraternal Order of Police, Communication Workers, and several other unions. The Labor Table is responsible for subsequent labor successes since 2011—coordinating labor actions within the state and leveraging significant resources from national partners.

This strategy of issues-based organizing served UFF well through the entire period from 2001 to 2015. When Jennifer Proffitt (Florida State University) became UFF statewide president in 2015, the strategy was used again and developed in a substantial way. The most recent organizing success is on the issue of guns on campus.

For the last two years, the National Rifle Association (NRA) has promoted a bill to permit citizens to carry guns on campus to defend themselves and to fire at campus shooters. The NRA claims that this measure will reduce violence on campus—including sexual violence against women.

At legislative hearings, women argued that the NRA misunderstands the problem of sexual violence on campus when it contends that rape occurs by sexual predators who live near campus and need to be stopped with guns when they enter and commit crimes. While the problem of rape is extremely significant and certainly needs to be addressed, they said, acquaintance rape by male students, not stranger rape, is the issue. In other words, the NRA is misidentifying the issue in arguing for an extreme solution that does not address the real problem.

African-American faculty and students also criticized the NRA position. They argued that there is a problem in our society with shootings of black citizens, who are more readily seen as threatening than are white citizens. They argue that in emergencies, there is an assumption often made by whites that the danger comes from blacks who are perceived to be a “threat.” Guns on campus will mean that African-Americans will be shot or injured when they were never a threat at all. (See below in *The Dimensions of the Problem* for a discussion of Florida’s Stand Your Ground bill, which was introduced as legislation by Dennis Baxley and supported by ALEC.)

Faculty are clearly concerned about the effects of this change. In 2014 the UFF Senate overwhelmingly voted to oppose the bill and approved a list of talking points to distribute to all faculty in the state. The goal was to give faculty data and arguments to use when contacting legislators. UFF then contacted leaders of faculty senates on campuses across the state and asked them if they would pass a similar motion so it would be clear that faculty from all sectors were opposed. The results were encouraging as faculty senates again and again voted for motions and even came up with additional evidence and arguments to use.

UFF affiliates joined the effort. The FEA mobilized the state’s teachers to join the struggle. At the same time President Jennifer Proffitt also reached out to leaders of other organizations that might join us. The League of Women Voters (LWV) already had plans to oppose the bill. LWV worked with President Proffitt to build a coalition of citizens’ groups. LWV even hosted an event to videotape interviews with campus police chiefs, who gave the most powerful testimony of all about why the bill was a dangerous step toward increasing possible deaths and

injuries from multiple shooters, causing confusion and chaos and thereby hindering the effectiveness of police in crisis situations.

The results of this organizing were apparent in the testimony before legislative committees. The audience in the hearings mostly reflected the diversity and number of people opposing the bill. On the other hand, those in favor of the bill followed the lead of Marion Hammer, former national director of the NRA, who testified in the hearing for the Florida NRA. She was joined by a few citizens who represented groups hard to recognize as having a significant membership and base except for those already in the NRA. One could hardly say there was a diverse constituency there supporting the NRA.

The leaders of both sides were not always given a sufficient time to make the case for their positions. However, the side speaking for UFF and LWV was able to give some of the careful arguments they had already developed. These opposition arguments were reinforced by the testimony of the campus police chiefs. It was interesting to see that from among those in the diverse group in the audience, both women and African-Americans (from FSU and Florida A&M University) testified on issues of sexual violence and racial discrimination on campus—arguing against the NRA position.

The NRA did not acknowledge or respond to points made by opponents of the bill concerning either sexual violence or racial discrimination. Two years in a row, the NRA bill went down to defeat. Each year the result was surprising to those who had followed the history of NRA bills in the Legislature. The NRA had never lost a final vote on a bill. UFF's organizing strategy of expanding the union's political horizons and joining forces with citizens' groups that share our concern on an issue made a real difference.

After the NRA bill was defeated for the second time, Professor Proffitt stated, "The notion that dramatically increasing the number of deadly weapons on our campus is good public policy has been and continues to be pure folly driven by the gun industry lobby. It represents a fundamental threat to our students, faculty, staff, and members of the general public who use these public facilities. It is also a threat to the spirit of higher education, for the guarantee of a safe space for exploring and challenging intellectual inquiry is paramount."⁹

What does this mean for issues-based organizing in an environment where at any time there may be new threats emerging to what faculty care about? As always, the key to the union's

⁹ In New York Jennifer Proffitt received a national award for her outstanding work on this issue. At the ceremony, she said, "I am honored by this recognition by the Campaign to Keep Guns off campus, but it is important to note that these recent victories are the result of the tireless efforts of faculty, students, parents and families across Florida. This award is also for all of them. UFF will continue our state and national partnerships and mobilize every time this bad public policy rears its ugly head."

continuing existence lies in the activist approach to confront issues when they surface and to mobilize the membership. UFF has regularly defeated initiatives that undermine the integrity of the profession and the quality of what faculty do. This is how UFF defeated legislative efforts to abolish faculty unions and to prohibit controversial subjects from being discussed in the classroom with the Academic Bill of Rights. But in building the resistance to guns on campus the union expanded its approach to legislative issues.

The organizing strategy developed in the last two years by Jennifer Proffitt takes UFF to a new stage of enlisting and mobilizing more than just faculty and affiliates. We are now building coalitions that mobilize organizations and constituencies never considered to be part of the union's organizing efforts. In this new stage, we are ready to deal with the most formidable opponents yet encountered. At the same time, we deepen and broaden the appreciation of values that those in higher education share with others who are now ready to join with us in our struggle.

The Dimensions of the Problem

What, then, is a possible result of organizing faculty unions in a right-to-work state? The most direct conclusion from this example of success is to encourage faculty in any right-to-work state to think about organizing—perhaps even seeking some changes in their own right-to-work laws if that would make it easier to organize effectively, as the Florida example illustrates.

Are conclusions here restricted to right-to-work states? Can unions in agency-fee states learn from these experiences? What is the national significance of the Florida labor experience for faculty in agency-fee states too?

Unions everywhere face challenges to create a sense of purpose and a spirit of solidarity as they organize to achieve results. The fact that organizing in Florida has been unusually challenging, and may even seem like an extreme case, does not change this. Conclusions reached about organizing in Florida could well be generalized and applied for organizing in other states too – across markedly different work sites and types of employment.

Nevertheless, this history is not intended to be an argument for a single paradigm or model for others to imitate. Rather it describes a paradigm case—one of many possible paradigm cases from many states—exhibiting features of situations and opportunities for development that invite successful activity. The central question in any state is: How can organizers and activists develop an effective union? If the goals are (a) to organize the unorganized, and (b) to organize unions through issues-based organizing, then we should be advocating the formation of unions in

whatever context it is possible. The strategy is to get contracts with comprehensive protections for faculty resulting from issues-based organizing.

It is clear from the example of organizing in Florida that campaign victories in right-to-work states are possible. It is also clear that the strategy of using issues-based organizing can result in contracts with comprehensive protections for faculty in most domains. Even provisions for shared governance in decision making—affecting the goals of the institution and the nature of work performed—are possible. This means that faculty unions have the power to transform the work environment and defend the integrity of the profession in the face of the most extreme threats imaginable in every region of the country.

This raises larger questions about what it would mean for the success of the union movement across the country to create a national plan for organizing strong unions in every state. What actions would it take? What would it mean if we did not write off a right-to-work state as a lost cause for union organizing?

Should unions be discouraged from organizing in such states because the odds are against winning without long struggles and without extraordinary difficulties? This is not the attitude that created a powerful labor movement in the United States. Historically, success was only possible against the odds. The lesson is: the more formidable the adversary, the greater the commitment it takes to win. The lesson is not: organize only if success is likely.

The development of a national labor strategy, suitable for meeting the challenges of the time, is underway with all of UFF's affiliates. This holds the promise of building the labor movement in all regions and stopping any erosion in labor's ability to win benefits. Moreover, this revitalization is essential for the success of the progressive movement in politics, which needs the material resources and disciplined organizing energy of labor to prevail in times of elections—especially in times when there is a hostile national climate. Right-to-work states should be seen as opportunities to expand, not as warnings to avoid trouble.

However, nothing I have said so far should be taken to mean that it is fine for agency fees to be outlawed and replaced by right-to-work laws, which is one of the objectives of ALEC. Indeed, it would be much better, and certainly fairer, if agency fees were required for cost sharing by bargaining unit members everywhere.

In the meantime, we need to defend agency fees for reasons that go beyond fairness. The so-called reform of labor law by replacing agency fee with a right to work in every state would clearly be a step backward. It would seriously hurt the labor movement. Why is this?

Organizing successes in right-to-work states have not occurred solely from the energies of activists living in those states. These organizing efforts are in part the result of grants and support from unions in agency-fee states that underwrite campaigns, send experienced organizers to advise the activists, and thereby make success possible. While the “boots on the ground” consist of local activists, the experienced advisors are often volunteers from agency fee states whose expenses are paid. Financial assistance from national affiliates also helps—often by covering some communication expenses.

After unions in right-to-work states are organized, they pay dues that may come back to them as grants until they stabilize and become fully functioning. Eventually the dues paid to national affiliates by a relatively new union will end up helping unions elsewhere. In other words, unions help each other grow stronger.

The strength of agency-fee states makes a real difference in the ability of established unions to offer help to unions that are in the early stages of development in right-to-work states and struggling to exist. By weakening agency-fee states, the progress of unions in right-to-work states is weakened too. Indeed, the strength of agency-fee states affects the ability of national affiliates to have resources to help struggling unions as well. Without agency-fee states, the entire union movement is weakened at a time when corporations are larger, richer, and more powerful than ever. As it is now, the playing field is already tilted toward the interests of corporations. To tip the legal balance even more in favor of corporations would be to destroy the union movement itself. In other words, this could have the effect of undermining democracy in the United States—perhaps fatally.

There is another dimension to the problem that increases the danger to both unions and democracy. Faculty union leaders in Florida are aware that the bills filed to eliminate or sideline union activities come from a national source that drafts bills, trains legislators in how to defend the bills, and lobbies for their approval. The source is well-funded and can fly legislators from around the country to national conferences to train them to take on unions, among other things.

We see anti-labor legislation coming at us. We know who files it, who lobbies for it, and who benefits when it passes. The national source for anti-labor legislation is ALEC. There are many ways to uncover information about ALEC, but in Florida the evidence appeared on the legislation itself. When Rep. Baxley filed the Academic Bill of Rights legislation,” he forgot to take ALEC’s name off the bottom of the page before filing. ALEC’s model bill, given to legislators to file in states across the country, was filed in Florida with ALEC’s name still on it.

The Florida case is interesting, not because it is unique, but because it is typical of a tactic employed in other states too. Some key questions emerge:

Who is behind this cabal? Where does ALEC's money come from? ALEC certainly is visible, but the organization is careful not to reveal what happens in its secret meetings each year. There are other actors behind the scenes that exercise power and supply funding as well. Among ALEC's Private Enterprise Board members are major corporate and foundation sponsors. These include Walmart, the Koch Brothers, and AT&T.

Diane Ravitch (2012) states that "ALEC crafted the 'Stand Your Ground' legislation that empowered George Zimmerman to kill an unarmed teenager with the defense that he (the shooter) felt threatened." It should be noted that Dennis Baxley, the same legislator who introduced the Academic Bill of Rights for ALEC, also introduced the Stand Your Ground bill ALEC and the NRA. Subsequently all the publicity about the Trayvon Martin case caused several sponsors to drop out, including McDonald's, Kraft, Coca-Cola, Mars, Wendy's, Intuit, Kaplan, and PepsiCo. Contributions are described by ALEC as tax deductible gifts. Common Cause has filed a 'whistleblower' complaint with the IRS about ALEC's status. (Ravitch, 2012)

After so many corporate sponsors pulled out, the NRA stepped in to help cover lost funding. In other words, ALEC is now an agent promoting the priorities of the NRA, which is a major source of funding for ALEC. Guns on Campus is one of the most recent initiatives of the NRA.

Many of the actors in this drama are not seen, and if known, remain elusive, answering few questions. To get the level of sophistication necessary for the effects that are seen, there must be others behind the scenes who are specialists doing the work necessary to move history. An army of lawyers, accountants, and public relations specialists, among others, are required to grease the way. They are needed to generate the cumulative effect: mixing up, re-categorizing, re-codifying, re-computing, or otherwise re-configuring the details of where money comes from, where it goes, and how it is used. Sources and recipients thus remain hidden. Success brings with it obfuscation and mystification. It takes a team of specialists to do this properly and get away with it.

Discovering the depth and scope of the activities of these forces, as well as how much money they can invest in reaching their goals, raises yet other questions for unions. Do the political dimensions of the problem, which are national as well as statewide in scope, call for an expansion and redefinition of the problem of organizing successfully at the state level? Is it possible to reach conclusions about the success of unions at the state level—whether in right-to-work or in agency-fee states—without devising and incorporating a strategy for defending unions against powerful and well-funded national organizations seeking to abolish or severely limit them? Can we adequately address the problem of organizing unions if we fail to comprehend the

extent to which this political context threatens unions? Answering these questions helps redefine the goal of effective organizing.

A closer look at the dimensions of the problem reveals how much the success of labor organizing depends on recognizing and fighting political efforts by ALEC and others to disable the labor movement. In this process, we come to recognize that the threat is not just to labor; the threat is also to democracy. For example, the disappearance of agency-fee states would exacerbate the decline of democracy itself. The balance of power between corporations and unions everywhere changes as unions are weakened in each state. American democracy depends on maintaining a balance of power among countervailing forces. This balance of power is more than just maintaining a set of checks and balances between branches of government. It requires maintaining checks and balances between political interests and forces in electoral politics as well.

If corporations have the power to deal a knockout blow to labor unions in any state, as the ultimate result of a national trend toward reducing the rights of labor to organize and develop, the range of viable candidates and policy options on the ballot would be greatly reduced for all citizens as well. The resulting one-sided set of political consequences that follow would also have an impact on the choices available for every level and kind of community life in the society.

If all of these consequences are not bad enough, there is yet another dimension to the threat to democratic institutions that should be mentioned. The danger is compounded by the phenomenon of “dark money,” which has influenced the outcome of elections since the Supreme Court issued the *Citizens United* decision in 2010. This decision treats the use of money in politics as an unrestricted right to free speech. Research on this topic has uncovered an extensive network of actors who work with ALEC to shape and determine political results. The actors she cites include the Koch Brothers, Richard Mellon Scaife, John M. Olin, and the Bradley Brothers. (Mayer, 2016)

The very existence of such a phenomenon should raise doubts about the future of democracy. Citizens of the United States should not accept the *Citizens United* decision as fair. Citizens of a democracy should not give away their rights by accepting corporations as citizens too. It is tantamount to choosing to live with the consequences of “dark money.” Even worse, there are critical questions never asked and deliberations that never occur as a direct result of “dark money” affecting voting and citizenship. What is at stake in the fate of unions in the United States and nothing less than the survival of democracy itself. The threat to democracy grows as the threat to organized labor grows.

Conclusion

The goal of this essay is to show how it is possible to build a strong and effective faculty union in a right-to-work state. I have argued that success is possible using a strategy of issues-based organizing implemented by a corps of activists ready to meet the most serious challenges by mobilizing members to respond to threats to the profession. This conclusion about faculty unions may be extended to other categories of public employee unions in right-to-work states as well.

Because this environment is not as union friendly as situations in agency-fee states, union leaders can expect political attacks any time there are excuses anti-union forces can use to rationalize abolishing unions or limiting their ability to function. As we have seen, these excuses are often related to claims about shortages in state revenue or claims about wasteful uses of state resources. A rapid response system is necessary to mobilize members when these attacks occur – often with little notice in advance.

We have also seen that powerful forces like American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), with deep pockets lined with money provided by a few large corporations and private donors, are stepping up the attacks when opportunities occur. The chances of victories for these political forces have increased for two reasons: (1) For ALEC, some corporate funding that was lost after ALEC supported stand your ground legislation, has been replaced by new funding from the NRA, which owes a debt of gratitude for the legislative victory. ALEC now has a reliable funding source with very deep pockets; and (2) After the election results in November 2016, we are living in a different environment at both the state and national levels. A shift to the Right at both levels means that there is an opportunity for anti-union forces to succeed that they would not otherwise have at this point and may never have again.

Now a single party controls the White House, Congress, almost all state houses, and most state legislatures. It can do what it wants to do for as long as it continues to have a consensus. What can unions do in the face of this seismic shift in power? How can union organizing affect the result in a way that will allow unions to survive and grow?

For organizing purposes, the Florida experience is instructive. For almost two decades Florida has had a single party (Republican) holding the state house and two-thirds of the seats in the House and the Senate. Yet the union movement in the state has grown more powerful in every way during this time.

Why is this? First, faculty unions actively support pro-union Republican legislators running for re-election. We make it clear that we do not favor Democrats or Republicans; we favor

legislators who are pro higher education. There have always been at least 10 senators (out of 40) who are Republicans we strongly support with substantial campaign energy and resources coming from faculty volunteers. This gives us enough of a base in both parties of the Senate to block hostile legislation.¹⁰

Second, we have always believed that there are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies. In practice this means that no vote can be taken for granted, and that during the session (60 days), we need to be talking directly with legislators. Faculty must be visible in the Legislature every week on every vote that matters, with faculty constituents at home contacting district offices at the same time to reinforce personal contacts made by the team of activists working in state capitol. With these policies and strategies, we have had a chance in the past to stop most hostile actions in the Legislature.

Third, during the last decade, the coordination of labor efforts by the FEA and the Florida AFL-CIO has been essential in defeating legislation that would undermine or restrict UFF contracts protecting faculty rights and the integrity of the profession. Since 2011, the Labor Table has increased labor's political and legislative effectiveness in Florida.

Before November 2016, we could view the UFF example as showing that organizing in a right-to-work state can be successful using the strategy of issues-based organizing. Under the right conditions, this example might encourage others to organize too. The fact that UFF encountered extraordinary obstacles in this struggle could be attributed to unusually severe conditions in Florida with a collection of anti-labor state politicians and anti-union national organizations (with plenty of money to spend) thrown into the mix. In this case, Florida is merely an extreme example of how formidable the opposition can be before labor eventually wins the struggle. Or maybe it is just an example of how victory can be achieved under difficult circumstances.

After November 2016, the political landscape changes. Unions across the country now face a political problem potentially more serious than anything faced previously. The election victory means there may be little resistance to anti-labor proposals from large corporations and wealthy donors during this period. Most states could become unwelcome environments.

To be sure, demographic factors eventually work against these corporate interests. Increases in the diversity of the electorate mean that we can expect significant changes in the outcomes of elections at least every two years, favoring a party that recognizes diversity as a strength, not a threat. By 2030, the change in the electorate will be enough to change

¹⁰ Only twenty votes are needed for a tie, which stops legislation before it goes to the Governor.

expectations about elections. However, this is not enough to eliminate or reduce the current threat to labor. Indeed, it is possible that anti-labor forces may see the current election victory as their last and/or best opportunity to remove labor from the scene. This may even cause these forces to intensify their efforts to deliver the knockout blow to labor while there still a chance to do this.

The advantages gained by corporations eliminating the political power of labor is not merely that labor will be cheaper—with corporations making more money. Labor unions' significance goes beyond setting the level of wages. Labor is also critical to the successes of progressive movements at election time. As we have seen, without labor's energies and funding, the progressive movement itself may suffer a setback. If this occurs, we could see protections on health and safety, as well as adequate compensation for workers, eliminated or reduced for more than a decade until demographic changes can restore the balance.

After November 2016, and before there are significant demographic changes, we need to imagine how bad it could become soon across the entire nation and prepare ourselves for what may be coming our way. It is not a stretch of the imagination to think that an election setback for labor could be followed by a sharp increase in anti-labor legislation, perhaps drafted by ALEC, surfacing in state after state, with expectations of support from the political party that now dominates the scene. In this case, Florida can be seen as an example of how aggressive and devious anti-labor forces can be. This in turn should give us a sense of how aggressively unions in most states will need to organize to make it into the future.

Organized labor now faces an existential crisis. Choices made now will determine whether labor survives with rights intact and growth maintained. Most unions could be wiped out in two to four years after the victory for so-called conservatives. The election changes the rules of engagement.

Given this situation, what is the best organizing strategy for labor to adopt at both national and state levels? Outlines of the choice we will face in the future are beginning to emerge. When a union's life is threatened, the most fundamental decision is to decide to launch a full-scale organizing campaign. This means organizing for survival in the present and for growth and development in the future.

For many unions, this is not an easy choice to make. If a union has not faced an existential threat since its founding, and perhaps not even then, it is likely to devolve into a service model union. Its sense of urgency fits within a "business as usual" service mission. Priorities and timelines are understandably adapted to carrying out duties of fair representation. A union serves its members effectively by meeting deadlines to file documents for legal representation, under

ordinary circumstances. It may be a life or death situation for someone's career, but it is not life or death for the union itself.

However, UFF has faced an existential threat for almost two decades (since 1998).. There are experiences, strategies, and tactics UFF can share with other unions about what it is like to be "on alert" for an extended period and what responsibilities and commitments are needed from leaders and activists until the existential crisis is over.

A decision to launch a campaign under these circumstances is transformational. It requires decisions and commitments on every level of union life. The pivotal decision, the central decision on which everything else turns, is to launch an organizing campaign. It means subsuming all activities under this central goal and postponing indefinitely anything that does not advance the campaign.

What policies, actions, and attitudes are necessary? Union leaders need to start the process with an internal debate on the nature of the crisis and what it will take to make the transition from a service model to an organizing model. In the case of UFF, I framed the question in a statewide election for president in 2000. I asked members not to vote for me unless they recognized the threat to our existence and were committed to joining a campaign to meet the challenge. The decision was not about what members like in a leader; it was about what members were committed to doing.

After the election, the UFF Senate approved an organizing plan to contact all faculty members on every campus in face-to-face meetings and ask them to join the campaign. If they were not yet members, we asked them to join and become activists. Voting for the motion required volunteering to work in the campaign for at least three hours each week. It passed unanimously.

The UFF Senate also approved the goal of doubling the statewide union membership from 3,000 to 6,000 within eight years. This was critical for growth and development and was folded into the organizing campaign plan. It worked. We reached the goal of doubling the membership and at the same time doubled the leadership, creating new leadership and activist jobs on each campus. An integrated plan to increase involvement and activity for every campaign function was the result.

This was the structure we put into place after we made the decision to launch a campaign. But something also needs to be said about the attitude and resolve that come with this pivotal decision. An existential threat calls for a change in how activists think about each week and each day. For leaders, activists, and members, the threat is to an entire way of life. They have

dedicated themselves to a profession that must function on its own terms. What they value is the integrity of that activity. What they fear is a profession undermined and corrupted by schemes to cut costs, like using temporary or part-time instructors in the classroom. Reducing a profession to the terms and conditions of contingent labor is tantamount to attacking the profession itself—along with all the benefits to a democratic society accruing from citizens educated by that profession.

What does losing union representation mean? It means there may be substantial cutbacks in full-time positions. When there is a major reduction in the full-time workforce, leaders and activists are the first to go. If they stay, they will reorganize later. If they are terminated, they are no longer a problem.

The attitude that carries a union to success in this kind of situation begins with realizing that everything you care about is up for grabs. It ends with the resolve and commitment to wake up every day thinking about what can be done with others to defend an entire way of life. The existential question is, ‘What does it mean to organize the union as if your life depended on it?’

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