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Florida AFL-CIO

# Press Release

## STATEMENT FROM FLORIDA AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MIKE WILLIAMS IN OPPOSITION TO SUNRAIL IMPLEMENTING LEGISLATION & SPECIAL SESSION

"The Florida AFL-CIO has worked tirelessly over the past few weeks in an effort to play a meaningful and constructive role in crafting a compromise among all interested parties that would enable the SunRail project to move forward, the Tri-Rail system to have a dedicated funding source and high speed rail to move forward. It was our goal to achieve a compromise that would allow broad-based support of this legislation that included a wide, bi-partisan coalition of Republicans and Democrats interested in advancing Florida's public rail system, while at the same time assuring such system created the highest-quality job force and safety conditions possible. In fact, we believed based upon the good faith efforts of the Florida Senate that we were very close to achieving such a compromise. But due to a lack of cooperation or compromise from FDOT, the Administration and the Florida House, the legislation being considered for the proposed special session next week fails Florida workers by continuing to enable FDOT to have unfettered authority to fire railroad workers subject to federal railroad protections and safeguards and replace them less qualified, less experienced transit employees not subject to federal railroad protections or safeguards."

"Therefore, the Florida AFL-CIO and our half-million members across Florida must reiterate our strong opposition to the CSX/SunRail transaction and the implementing legislation currently being considered for a special session. As it has from its conception, this transaction remains nothing short of government-enabled union busting by FDOT, a move that threatens vital protections for thousands of workers and, by extension, the safety of the riding public."

"While we respect and commend the goal of bringing commuter rail to Greater Orlando, we oppose this transaction and future transactions authorized by any implementing legislation that will give FDOT unfettered authority to enter into future projects that destroy federal railroad worker protections and railroad worker jobs."

"It has become clear that FDOT's *primary purpose* of the current SunRail deal is to ensure that federal railroad worker protections including, but not limited to, federal collective bargaining rights, federally-protected pension plans and federal railroad worker's compensation protections become unavailable to workers in all future state-acquired rail corridors. FDOT's goal here is, put simply, to decimate federal railroad protections in Florida's railroad system, putting the jobs of thousands of railroad workers, their families' livelihoods and the safety of the riding public in jeopardy. The Florida AFL-CIO has no choice but to fight aggressively against the SunRail enabling legislation as long as getting around federal railroad worker protection laws remains a component of the deal."

"Today, we began a concerted and aggressive outreach to our friends and allies in the Florida Senate to oppose this legislation and to characterize it for what it is: a direct attack on organized labor. We have asked them to stand with us against the implementing legislation, against a special session being called and against this deal until such time that a legitimate, meaningful compromise has been achieved on the labor issue. Unfortunately, that time has not yet arrived and a special session on SunRail is premature. Should one occur next week, we will be asking our friends in the Senate to vote against the implementing legislation."

"The Florida AFL-CIO stands strongly in opposition to the SunRail transaction and will continue to fight for the Florida's railroad workers until such time that their issues are addressed. We will fight for their jobs, their benefits, their rights and their dignity."

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