

## HARD TIMES

## With bipartisan leadership, Florida can give families a chance at prosperity

BY MADELEINE K. THAKUR  
childrensmovementflorida.org



Imagine your boss calls you into her office with big news: Your hard work is being recognized and you are getting a raise. This should be a moment to celebrate, but you realize the negative impact on your family budget. Fifty cents an hour more at your full-time job will bring about \$1,000 more into your bank account that year, but you'll lose a subsidized health insurance plan for your daughter, and those costs rise from \$240 to \$3,000.

It's hard to celebrate when you're on the edge of a cliff.

When a small increase in income brings a loss in public benefits — whether for food, housing, health insurance or childcare — resulting in fewer net resources for the family, we call that a “fiscal cliff.” As a matter of public policy, we should not create situations where parents are forced to decline a pay raise, choosing their children's well-being over the financial independence of their family.

I lead a movement focused on getting all children ready for kindergarten, advocating for the health access, early learning and parent support they need to thrive in the first five years. I am also a wife and working mother with two young boys, so I know that children get sick—a lot. When they do, their health and learning is affected and it creates challenges for our entire family.

Having a relationship with a pediatrician or trusted health practitioner is critical. You don't have to go too far back in history to a time when close to a million children in Florida were without health coverage. Thankfully, elected leaders from both sides of the aisle have prioritized eliminating unnecessary barriers and expanding access, which has helped to lower that number. Today, through Florida KidCare, qualified families that make too much to access Medicaid can enroll in subsidized, comprehensive coverage for \$15-\$20 per month — for all children in the household.

This year's legislative session — under the leadership of Speaker Paul Renner, Sen. Alexis Calatayud, Sen. Keith Perry, Rep. Robin Bartleman and Rep. Dana Trabulsy — the Florida Legislature expanded eligibility for Florida KidCare from about 200% of the federal poverty level (\$60,000 a year for a family of four) to 300% (\$90,000 a year). Families may pay a bit more when a new sliding fee scale is established, but less than the \$250 per child per month that the full-pay program offers families that are over-income.

This policy moves us in the right direction to support family prosperity and reflects the economic reality that the cost of living in Florida is outpacing wages.

As state leaders look for other ways to smooth out fiscal cliffs, they will find a significant opportunity in Florida's School Readiness program, which provides subsidized early learning options so young children can learn while parents work. Educational childcare is crucial to children's success, and a new study from the Florida Chamber reminds us it is also vital for our economy: Our state loses nearly \$5.4 billion annually because of inadequate childcare.

In Miami, School Readiness serves families working in the core of our economy: in retail, restaurants and hotels. However, with entrance eligibility capped at 150% of the federal poverty level, a two-parent household where both adults are employed full time making minimum wage is too wealthy to qualify, no matter how many children they have. An income under \$50,000 certainly does not allow a family to pay for childcare (about \$10,000 a year per child) and afford to live in this community.

Creating glide paths for family-support programs that allow parents to grow in their careers is critical to the wellness of all Florida families — and to the success of Florida's children. We thank the Legislature for placing these issues front and center in the policy debate and look forward to celebrating what bipartisan leadership can continue to achieve.

Then more families can celebrate, too.

Madeleine K. Thakur is president and CEO of The Children's Movement of Florida.



JOSH MORGAN USA TODAY

A “Republican Shutdown” countdown clock sits next to U.S. Rep. Jamie Raskin, D-Md., as the House Oversight committee holds a hearing on the basis for an impeachment inquiry of President Biden.

## ‘Floridians should not have to bear the brunt of House Republicans’ inability to lead’

BY FEDERICA S. WILSON  
wilson.house.gov



With so little time remaining until a potential extreme-MAGA shutdown, I am mourning our government hitting rock bottom and the severe consequences for Florida families.

Floridians should not have to bear the brunt of House Republicans' inability to lead.

A shutdown would place our troops in the line of duty without pay, inflict harm upon small businesses, gamble with disruptions in air travel and jeopardize access to vital food assistance for our families.

It is unconscionable that House Republicans would inflict such pain on hardworking families, jeopardize our economic stability and place our national security at risk.

I will continue to leverage every resource at my disposal to ensure the government remains

operational and safeguard Florida families from the specter of a costly and reckless shutdown. It's high time House Republicans do their damn jobs and end this irresponsible march towards a government shutdown.

A Republican government shutdown would mean:

- 102,413 active-duty and reserve personnel serving the nation's armed forces in Florida would be forced to go without the pay they earn during a shutdown.

- The Small Business Administration would stop processing loans, halting a program that provides \$2,539,670,300 in funding to small businesses in Florida every year.

- 185,297 people flying through Florida airports every day would face potential delays and safety concerns because of staffing impacts on TSA agents and air traffic controllers.

- 421,294 people in Florida would soon lose access to Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits.

- 115,126 federal work-

ers in Florida would be furloughed or forced to work without pay, in addition to the many employees of businesses with government contracts who could be laid off, furloughed, or see their hours cut.

- Workers at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would be sidelined, risking interruptions and delays to the 1,117 food safety, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and other inspections conducted in Florida last year.

- The Department of Agriculture would be forced to stop processing housing loans, which provide \$437,011,602 in funding to help 2,067 families in rural Florida communities buy homes every year.

- The Department of Agriculture would be forced to stop processing farm loans which provide \$22,725,000 in funding for farmers in Florida every year.

- 3,023,426 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries in Florida would lose access to benefits in a prolonged shutdown.

- Every year,

14,399,363 people visit national parks in Florida. Those who would go during the shutdown would be turned away or unable to fully access parks, monuments and museums.

- State governments would be forced to pay for federal services like the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, potentially risking benefits for the 49,026 TANF beneficiaries in Florida.

Democrats and the Biden-Harris administration have delivered a historic economic recovery that is growing the middle class and rebuilding American manufacturing, with 1,122,800 jobs created in Florida since President Biden took office. Republicans' shutdown would undermine our nation's economic progress and hurt working families.

Federica S. Wilson represents Florida's 24th congressional district, which includes parts of Miami, Miami Beach, North Miami, Miami Gardens and Miramar.

## Biden wades into a strikingly complicated labor dispute. Risky move

BY ROBERT F. SANCHEZ



Tuesday, President Biden grabbed a bullhorn and joined a picket line of striking auto workers at a General Motors plant in Belleville, Michigan. No previous president had ever done such a thing, and for good reason: It ended any pretense that the government will be fair to both sides in this labor-management dispute.

This ill-advised stunt was a desperate ploy by a politician who no longer is supported by most of his fellow Democrats. Worse, a Washington Post/ABC poll released on Sunday showed him trailing former President Trump, a potential opponent who could easily end up campaigning from behind bars.

Trump, an equal-opportunity demagogue, was scheduled to speak to auto workers on Wednesday. He has gained some political traction among them and other union members by attacking trade treaties such as NAFTA and by railing against migrants who “steal Americans' jobs.”

The start of the United Auto Workers walkout overlapped two other labor disputes. In Hollywood, writers and actors have both been out on strike since May, but on Monday the movie studios and Writers Guild of America reached what was called a tentative agreement that will allow the writers to resume work.

With the writers' strike apparently settled, the studios have turned their attention to negotiating with the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), which struck for the first time since 1960 when the union's president was that well-known radical, Ronald

Reagan.

Given that the SAG picket lines included some of Hollywood's more photogenic stars, it's not surprising that the mainstream media's coverage of these three labor disputes was inversely proportional to their economic impact — until Biden briefly joined the picket line while the TV cameras rolled.

### OTHER CONSEQUENCES

Strikes often have ripple effects whose collateral damage extends far beyond the striking workers themselves. For instance, the prolonged halt in the production of movies and TV shows affected thousands of other entertainment industry workers, suppliers and distributors.

That said, the likelihood that movie goers and TV viewers might have had to endure a slight delay before binge-watching Hollywood's latest trifles is unlikely to cause widespread misery and suf-

fering, and the nationwide economic impact is relatively negligible.

The UAW strike is another matter. If the industry were to cave to the union's patently exorbitant demands, the companies' costs would rise well beyond what they can recoup by raising their already high prices.

In North America, Detroit's Big Three automakers operate in a competitive global marketplace where they must compete with imports and with non-union factories mostly in the South's right-to-work states.

Moreover, the companies now need to be profitable enough to amass large amounts of capital. That money will be needed to meet the Biden administration's edict to phase out the internal combustion engine and switch to building electric vehicles, which have yet to be embraced by American consumers.

Even so, the union — citing what it calls huge

industry profits and exorbitant management salaries — is demanding a phased-in 40% increase in the workers' hourly pay, with a 20% hike to take place immediately. The union is also demanding a four-day work week and a boost in pensions, among other things.

### ALL EYES ON UAW

If the UAW gets its wish, the effect may extend well beyond the price sticker on the window of that vehicle you've been hoping to buy. Unions in other industries are closely monitoring this dispute.

An all-out UAW victory could lead to a wave of strikes and a wage-price spiral. That occurred right after World War II, when pent-up demand ran into short supplies of many commodities, triggering inflation. The last thing the U.S. economy needs is more inflation and interest-rate hikes.

This is not to say that the UAW members don't deserve a raise to offset

cost-of-living increases that are traceable, at least in part, to the Biden administration's Green New Deal energy policies, which led to the surge in gasoline prices.

During the Great Recession of 2007-09, the union commendably made concessions that helped automakers survive the downturn and return to profitability.

Moreover, in recent years, workers' productivity has greatly improved thanks to automation and, increasingly, robotics on the assembly lines. So the companies, which always claim that they want wage increases linked to productivity increases, are now able to produce more vehicles while employing far fewer workers.

However, this labor dispute is no longer about economics. It's now about politics, and unfortunately Biden's intervention won't help the two sides reach a happy Hollywood ending worthy of an Oscar for best script.