

ALACHUA COUNTY LABOR COALITION

2024 Florida House District 22 Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS:

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire.

This questionnaire is divided into eight sections covering issues important to Alachua County Labor Coalition members and Alachua county's working class. Each section contains multiple questions (which are bulleted). Be sure to respond to each question, but please limit your responses in each section to 750 words (or less).

We will be hosting a public candidate forum to provide coalition members and the general public an opportunity to follow up on your responses. Separate forums will be held for commission and mayoral candidates.

The forum is scheduled for Thursday, August 1st at 6:00 PM (location TBD).

Candidates must return a completed questionnaire by Monday, July 22nd at 11:59 PM in order to receive an invitation to the forum.

Completed questionnaires should be returned to Coordinator@LaborCoalition.org.

NOTE: The Labor Coalition does not endorse any candidates, and the inclusion of these questionnaire responses to our website should not be taken as an endorsement.

Wages

- Do you support or oppose increasing the Florida minimum wage, which will be \$13.00 an hour as of September 30th, to a living wage? If so, what amount do you think this should be?

I do support increasing the minimum wage to something that families can live by, albeit I believe we need a find a balanced approach to achieve this. Raising the minimum wage is crucial for addressing economic inequality and ensuring that we are fulfilling a basic component of our social contract.

I think we should be taking a balanced approach, gradually increasing rates throughout the next five years, to get us to \$ 17/ hour.

- How do you define a living wage?

A living wage allows individuals to live with dignity, to be able to cover essential costs without requiring someone to work multiple jobs. No full-time worker should be living in poverty.

- Under the current state constitution, the minimum wage must be pegged to the Consumer Price Index beginning on September 30th, 2027. However, the constitutional amendment requiring this was passed in 2020, before anyone expected the persistently high rates of inflation we've experienced since 2021. **Would you support a constitutional amendment referendum on immediately and retroactively pegging the state's minimum wage to the Consumer Price Index?**

Yes, I would.

- Would you introduce or co-sponsor the joint resolution required to propose such a referendum legislatively?

Yes, I would.

- Do you support or oppose the repeal of FL Statute 218.077, which preempts local governments from enacting a living wage that isn't solely for their workers or entities receiving tax incentives?

I support the repeal of FL Statute 218.077. I believe in home rule because no two counties are the same; the needs of each community differ. A living wage should reflect the actual cost of living in one's region; without the ability to reflect cost of living in minimum wages, everyone is held to the same standard, which just isn't realistic for survival.

- Do you support or oppose the repeal of FL Statute 448.106, which preempts local governments from requiring employers to provide heat protections to workers?

This law is just inhumane. It's unethical. It causes undue harm to constituents and violates our oaths to pass, or even suggest, legislation that restrict heat protections in the workplace.

Repealing this statute is imperative because local governments should be able to create their own heat protection regulations; again, back to home rule, communities in areas where higher temperatures are a significant concern should be able to make more tailored, and potentially stricter, heat safety measures.

Home Rule

- Do you *personally* support or oppose local initiatives/ordinances that benefit working families such as: family sick leave requirements, wage recovery ordinances, living wage ordinances, and project-labor agreements?

Professionally and personally, I support initiatives that benefit working families, specifically the ones mentioned above: family sick leave (not just maternal), wage recovery ordinances, living wage ordinances, and project-labor agreements.

I also support fair workweek laws, childcare subsidies, affordable healthcare, affordable housing programs, transportation assistance, job training and workforce development, and food assistance programs.

- Regardless of your personal support or opposition to the types of local initiatives/ordinances mentioned above, do you support or oppose *state preemption* of local communities (counties or cities) to decide these matters for themselves?

I oppose state preemption; I believe that local communities should have the autonomy to address their own unique needs and challenges. I think we should empower local governments to implement measures (such as the aforementioned) that take care of their people and allow them to even take proactive steps to improve their wellbeing, especially in areas with high costs of living.

- Florida is facing a housing crisis. There are numerous causes of this crisis, and the degree of importance of each cause is likely to vary according to the local rental and housing market. Do you support or oppose local governments having the ability to enact regulations addressing each of the following market/government failures (i.e. oppose preemption)?

Again, I oppose state preemption (and I support empowering local governments) because the needs and challenges vastly differ between communities.

- Short-term vacation rentals (e.g. Airbnb, Vbro, etc.) in residential neighborhoods, including outright bans?

I would refer to local governments on this one. We need to find a way that ensures fair practices, protects tenants (and consumers), and maintains economic stability.

On the one hand, everyone has a legal right to own property, but in a climate with an intense housing shortage, I would look at potentially taxing these, or highly incentivizing renting these (and ADUs) to those searching for housing. I'm not sure that, legally, there is an avenue for outright bans because of the right we have to own property and the right to engage in commerce, but I would certainly look to local governments to sort out what is right for their specific communities.

- Lack of proactive enforcement of basic maintenance standards (i.e. landlord licensure programs), which may lead to existing affordable rental stock aging more quickly than necessary?

The lack of proactive enforcement can lead to the deterioration of affordable rental housing, which is critical to have. Identifying and addressing problems before they become severe and ensuring property owners are complying with local housing codes, helps us better maintain affordable rental housing stock and ensure safe living conditions for tenants. Local housing codes can differ, so I would leave these decisions (and enforcement) to local governments.

Healthcare

- Do you support or oppose Medicaid expansion so that almost 600,000 Florida residents can get health care at less than 10 percent of the cost Florida taxpayers currently pay to hospitals to treat the uninsured?

I was a single mom for six years; I juggled three jobs, school, and everything that came with it, including Medicaid. I know what it's like to wonder which doctor I could visit, which bill I could afford to pay and which I'd have to put off, and no one should have to sacrifice basic necessities because of the costs of healthcare.

I, 100 percent, support Medicaid expansion, and was the only candidate to attend and sign a ballot initiative at the Medicaid Expansion Ballot Initiative kickoff press release.

Labor

- Do you support or oppose raising average, statewide teacher pay to the point where we are no longer ranked 48th nationally?

As the only candidate with education as a platform issue, and the only candidate to advocate for higher teacher pay at the ACSB meetings (especially during the contract negotiations for our Superintendent), I have a track record of advocating on behalf of our teachers. We cannot expect our educators to stay in a place they cannot afford to be in. In order to recruit and maintain quality teachers, in order to be leaders in education, we need to be leading with how we pay them.

- Federal laws give most workers the right to form and join unions. Do you support or oppose the right of all private and public sector workers to organize a union?

I support the right for (all) workers to form and join unions, as avenues for ensuring fair labor practices.

- Would you publicly support workers in our state who are seeking workplace rights, including the right to form a union?

I will always support workers' rights to form and join a union to ensure fair workplace practices.

- Would you support legislation revoking union-busting laws, such as the requirement that public-sector unions ensure dues-paying membership rates remain above 60 percent to avoid being decertified as collective bargaining agents?

I would oppose any legislation that causes undue hardship or burden to unions. I support legislation revoking union-busting laws.

- Would you support a legislatively proposed constitutional amendment referendum on repealing the state's "right to work" law?

I am not sure that I would, albeit I fully support, and will continue to support, the labor coalition and its efforts.

On the one hand, repealing the law could lead to an increase in union membership and financial resources, which would strengthen its bargaining power (which, we need).

If we repealed the law, workers might be required to join a union or pay union dues as a condition of employment; even if I believe it's a good idea to join a union, workers should have the right to autonomy, to make their own choices. Forcing them into a union, to pay union dues, could be viewed by some as an infringement on their personal freedoms.

Balancing the pros and cons is crucial, and at this moment, I would not want to give a definitive answer without consulting with major stakeholders on all of the potential ramifications.

- A new state law requires public universities to review, and possibly revoke, a professor's tenure every 5 years. Would you support legislation revoking this law?

I support revoking this law.

My fear with this law is that it could threaten academic freedom. Frequent reviews might make professors feel pressured to avoid controversial topics (essentially anything that could be construed as ideological or partisan) or research areas that could jeopardize their tenure. This could lead to avoiding topics and conversations in class that could help students develop critical thinking skills and find their own solutions to current problems.

The potential for tenure revocation also creates job insecurity, which could make it harder to

attract talent (and retain them) and impacts educators and their families if their tenure is revoked; this could, particularly, impact long-term research fields, which are crucial.

Criminal Justice

- The ability of prison inmates to communicate freely with their loved ones is not only humane, but also reduces recidivism. Would you work on legislation improving the ease and frequency of Florida prison inmates' communication with loved ones? If so, what policies would you include?

I don't believe that our criminal justice system is humane, and it needs to be reformed. With that said, I would absolutely work on legislation that improves quality of life and promotes human decency and dignity (i.e. inmates' communication with loved ones).

Outside of the ability to communicate, I would support legislation that focuses more on rehabilitation, legislation that helps with the release and reintegration into society. Setting those with carceral experience up for success is another way to reduce recidivism.

I would work to ban solitary confinement, work to improve conditions inside the prisons, and make more avenues for education accessible (inside and outside of incarceration).

- Would you support legislation guaranteeing Florida's prison inmates receive free phone calls?

Yes, unequivocally.

Miscellaneous

- If elected, what would be your top three priorities, and how would you go about addressing them?

Before I state my top three platform issues, I would be remiss not to say that the biggest issue we have is our inability to effectively communicate and work together. We've forgotten how to

disagree without being disagreeable. We've forgotten how to constructively disagree. Because of this, we've engaged in tribalistic warfare of sorts, have become aggressively polarized, and have become, very much, red-versus-blue. As a result, we aren't able to address the needs of everyday Floridians. Last session, we didn't address affordability because we were too busy trying to pass twenty-three bills that would eradicate the rights of LGBTQIA+ constituents, and too busy trying to destroy women's rights and education. Because of this, we need a candidate who is trained in de-escalation and civil disagreement, a candidate who won't just fill the seat, but will pass legislation by bringing people to the table.

With that said, my top three priorities would be: women's rights, education, and home rule.

- 1) Women's Rights: I think women's rights are a huge part of what needs to be addressed, and not JUST the right to choose (although, that's' paramount). We need to expand Medicaid and WIC, expand resources for ELC, and ensure that moms have the resources they need to survive. We need to enshrine the right to choose, and then we need to protect health data to ensure that apps and our location data cannot be used against us.

I have already written a piece of legislation (there's an article in The Iguana about it) that would protect women's health data in Fem Tech Apps. With abortion bans in our state and surrounding states, governments have threatened to use this data in prosecutorial cases. My bill would prevent that, force the scrub of geolocation data, and more.

I was the only candidate in this race to show up to Gainesville and Orlando's rallies against the six-week ban, have attended numerous women's rights events, and if elected, I will fight for autonomy, fight for privacy, and fight for equality in this state.

- 2) Education: academic freedom is under attack. We're now leading in book bans, we have choice vouchers that take from the public school system, we've eradicated Sociology and DEI, erasing and rewriting history, and saying that slavery "benefitted" slaves. "Handmaid's Tale" has somehow become our instruction manual, not our cautionary tale. I will fight for the right to learn, and the right to teach, a whole education. I will fight for academic freedom. I have attended multiple summits with PEN America, have spoken

out at numerous ACSB meetings, co-chaired the DAC, and will continue doing everything in my power to ensure that education can be truthful, whole, and free from the injection of partisan rhetoric.

3) Home Rule: I was the only candidate to attend the JLAC meeting and fight for our right to own GRU. I told Rep Caruso that the takeover was unconstitutional, because it was. I will fight for communities and local governments to tailor regulations according to the unique needs and challenges of their communities.

- What role do you think the representative for District 22 should play in addressing community concerns about GRU and its future? What actions would you take, if any, on the issue of GRU?

It was our Representative that got us into this mess, and it may take one of us to get us out of it. I spoke in Tallahassee on behalf of GRU once and I will continue to do so until it's back into the lawful hands of Gainesville City Commission. I would fight to ensure the legal ownership, fight to ensure that we remain the cleanest energy in the state (and not sold to the highest bidder), and to ensure that decisions being made are made by the people utilizing the service, by means of their elected commissioners.

- If elected, what policies would you pursue to alleviate the home insurance crisis, if any?

There are lots of things we should consider, and we need bold ideas to address the crisis. In addition to creating an emergency grant to help people with their insurance bills, I would advocate for the (already being discussed, and much-needed) creation of a public nonprofit insurance company that would be accessible and open to all Floridians.