

STUDENT SENATE RESOLUTION 2009-1060

TITLE: Resolution in Support of the Proposed Temporary One-Percent Sales Tax Increase for Public Education

AUTHORS: Senator Ben Cavaturo and Skeet Surrency of the Save Our Schools Coalition

SPONSORS: Senators Ben Cavaturo, Jennise Acosta, Gaby Alvarez, Travis Baker, Gary Benedix, Dylan Billiodeaux, Jacob Fyda, Stacey Gray, Jared Hamil, Christos Lampropoulos, Alfred Leon, Jonathan Ossip, Naadira Renfroe, Kyle Robisch, Dave Schneider, Paul Pino, and Ryan Weiss

WHEREAS, the State of Florida faces an unprecedented and devastating budget crisis; and

WHEREAS, over the past several years, Florida's public schools, community colleges, and public universities have seen funding cuts over \$3 billion; and

WHEREAS, the University of Florida faces yet another round of budget cut, with a proposed 10 percent (\$108 million) cut leading to the elimination of 748 positions, including 306 staff layoffs and 73 faculty layoffs, including several tenure-track faculty; and

WHEREAS, the University of Florida faces the proposed elimination of several programs and units, including the Department of Religion, Department of Geological Sciences; Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders; the Educational Psychology program at the College of Education; the Center for Leadership and Service and Office of Multicultural and Diversity Affairs at the Dean of Students Office, including the Institute of Black Culture and the Institute of Hispanic-Latino Culture (La Casita); the award-winning Documentary Film Institute at the College of Journalism and Communications; the Scuba program; Living Well facilities; and Athletic Training in the College of Health and Human Performance; and

WHEREAS, virtually every unit at the University of Florida has faced large budget cuts this year or in past rounds of budget cycles, including University-wide services such as the University Libraries; and

WHEREAS, the Florida Education Association, through its "Make Our Schools a Priority" campaign, is the lead sponsor of a campaign for a temporary penny sales tax increase; and

WHEREAS, education graduate student Kali Davis formed the Save Our Schools Coalition, bringing together faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students, and the community in support of higher education; and

WHEREAS, the Save Our Schools Coalition, the United Faculty of Florida, and Graduate Assistants United supports the temporary penny sales tax increase; and

WHEREAS, the temporary penny sales tax increase would raise an estimated \$2.8 billion annually and would be used to restore previous budget cuts and fill the gap left after the federal stimulus program ends in the fiscal year 2010-2011; and

WHEREAS, the last increase in the state sales tax took place in 1988, more than 20 years ago; and

WHEREAS, the temporary penny sales tax increase has bipartisan support and is sponsored by state Senator Stephen R. Wise, a Republican, but has limited time to be approved by a three-quarters vote in the state Legislature before the end of the session; and

WHEREAS, under Senator Wise's proposal, the proposed temporary penny sales tax increase would be approved by 60 percent of voters in a special election; and

WHEREAS, in a poll released April 7, 2009, 77 percent of Florida voters favor a penny sales tax increase for three years if funds are dedicated to public education, and fully half of Florida voters strongly support the temporary penny sales tax increase; and

WHEREAS, the proposed temporary penny sales tax increase would provide a vital source a funding solely for public education, and would save thousands of jobs and protect educational quality at the University of Florida; then

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Student Senate of the University of Florida strongly affirms the importance of public universities in Florida and the need for fully-funded public higher education for the economic and social vitality of our State; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Student Senate of the University of Florida urges the state Legislature to put a temporary, three-year one-cent sales tax increase proposal on the ballot and urges Florida's voters to support the proposal.

Provided, That a copy of this resolution be sent to members of the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate.