



Brevard Federation of Teachers Retired Chapter News “Retired, Not Expired”

Volume 30, Number 4
Feb. 2026

President’s Message

--Anne Marie Monteparo

“Every moment is a fresh beginning.” – T.S. Eliot

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2026! I hope everyone had a happy holiday and was able to spend some time with family and friends. After spending two weeks in Kentucky, I am grateful to be back enjoying our Florida winter weather. Even our “chilly” 60 degrees feels great.

Nancy Rhodes and I attended the FEA-Retired meetings in Orlando and discussed the upcoming elections. The FEA Retired membership chair will be updating our members’ information. If you have any changes to your address, phone number, or E-Mail please let me and Sheila Cootes know now to ensure FEA has the correct up-to-date information. If you choose not to vote electronically, you must submit the form on page 4 of this newsletter by January 30.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at our General Membership meeting!



Next Meeting--Thur, Feb. 5, 2026

1007 Florida Ave, Rockledge

11:30 Brown bag lunch

12:00 Business meeting

12:30 Speaker: Dr. Ben Brotemarkle, Florida Historical Society

BFT-R will provide drinks, dessert & paper products

In February we are fortunate to have Dr. Ben Brotemarkle be our speaker once again. Dr. Brotemarkle is executive director of the Florida Historical Society, the oldest existing cultural organization in Florida. Ben serves as producer and host of “Florida Frontiers: The Weekly Radio Magazine of the Florida Historical Society” on NPR, and the PBS series “Florida Frontiers”. He has written five books on the history and culture of Florida.



Membership News

--Sheila Cootes

The following are on the **2025-26 "Honor Roll"** (those members who have paid their 2025-26 dues since the last newsletter): **Phyllis Day, Linda Guiles, Eileen Schaap, Jonathan Schuman** and **Susan Vincent**.



Life membership is \$400. We (BFTR) will pay your local dues the year you become a "life member." Save \$46 per year (plus the \$30 we "give" you for that first year's local dues). We will be glad to accept the \$400 amount in two or three (your choice) installments.

Membership questions? Just call or text (321) 427-7808 or e-mail (scootes@earthlink.net)



Political News



-Patty Farley

As of January 18, 2026, key bills to watch in the Florida Legislature include expanding **E-Verify mandates for employers (HB 197)**, allowing **wrongful death suits for fetal loss (HB 289)**, addressing **water quality and environmental issues (SB 1386, general environmental bills)**, tightening college admissions for non-citizens (SB 1052), and significant budget/policy discussions around **AI (Artificial Intelligence)**, rural health, and education. Many bills from the first week are moving to committees, with a focus on immigration, education, and health policy shaping the early session.

Key Bills & Topics:

- **Immigration/Employment:**
 - **HB 197 (E-Verify Expansion):** Requires all employers to use E-Verify, a federal system for checking worker eligibility, passed the House and moves to the Senate.
 - **SB 1052:** Would restrict public colleges to admitting only U.S. citizens or legally present individuals, impacting adult education programs.
- **Health & Families:**
 - **HB 289 (Fetal Wrongful Death):** Allows parents to file wrongful death lawsuits for the loss of a fetus at any stage, passed the House.
 - **Rural Health Transformation Program:** A major \$209.9 million annual grant program (from the federal "Big Beautiful Bill") is being implemented.
- **Environment & Water:**
 - **SB 1386 (Septic Tanks/Water Quality):** Mandates septic tank inspection programs and better pollution monitoring.
 - General focus on water pollution, conservation lands, and protecting marine life.
- **Education:**
 - Bills on cursive instruction (HB 127) and teacher oaths (HB 147) are being considered.
 - Discussions continue on managing school voucher programs and enrollment drops.
- **Technology & Budget:**
 - **AI Regulation:** Governor DeSantis prioritizes an "AI Bill of Rights," with Senate proposals filed.
 - **Budget:** Negotiations are ongoing for the 2026-2027 fiscal year budget.
 - Governor Ron DeSantis has already asked for a special session following the regular session to work on special redistricting.

Field Trip

--Lin Herz

Join us on **February 24th** as we visit the **Elliot Museum in Stuart** (about an hour and a forty minutes from Melbourne) to see King Tut as well as their many other terrific exhibits.

The cost is **\$18 per person** (\$16 if we're more than 10 people).

<https://hsmc-fl.com/elliott-museum/>

If you'd like to join us, RSVP by February 9th to Lin Herz by text to 321-960-8194 or lin32905@gmail.com. (please put field trip or Elliot Museum in the subject time.)

Read, Recycle, and Reward Program

--Rita Hewett

Happy New Year and welcome to 2026, everyone!

The first semester of school has been very busy, and we are grateful for the positive feedback we've received from our book distributions to both schools and the community.

One of our partner schools sent us a thank-you card that read:

"I would like to thank your team for such an amazing activity during your visit. You ladies did a fantastic job preparing items for the different grade levels. It was clear how much effort you put into assembling the packages, from matching plush toys with books to creating beautiful handmade bags for teachers. It was a pleasure to assist while watching the students' happy faces. Thank you for all you do and for being a great example of love."

We've also seen the impact of our work in other settings. A friend of mine who is a dentist recently asked if she could have some of our books displayed in her office waiting room. She shared:

"The kids in our office really enjoyed the books you gave us last year. They helped keep children quieter and calmer while waiting. Little by little, all the books are gone. If you have any extras, please think of us--we could really use them."

Another meaningful moment happened during a community outreach event at a local food pantry. I overheard a parent say to her friend, "*Wow, I didn't know they did all of this. I'm going to call my sister so she can come and get some books for her children too.*" By the end of the day, all of our books had been distributed.

We are currently waiting for our next school delivery and look forward to continuing this work in the months ahead.

Happy New Year! Read more books to children, recycled books, and pass on the love.

Volunteer Hours

--Susan Vincent

Please write in your volunteer hours on the sign-in sheet at our next meeting or email them to me. You don't have to volunteer at schools for your hours to count. You can also count your travel time. You can send them to my email: snv1@cfl.rr.com. Please put "volunteer hours" in the subject line.

FEA-Retired Election

If you would like a paper ballot instead of electronic voting for the upcoming FEA-Retired election, you must complete the form on page 4 & submit it by Friday, January 30. **Please note every paper/mail-in ballot costs FEA-Retired an additional \$3.** Members are encouraged to vote electronically and to vote on the first day of voting in order to easily find their electronic ballot.



FLORIDA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION-RETIRED

2026 ELECTIONS

PAPER/MAIL-IN BALLOT REQUEST

I AM NOT VOTING ELECTRONICALLY – I AM REQUESTING A PAPER MAIL-IN BALLOT.

- I understand that I will not receive an electronic ballot.
- It is my responsibility to return the Mail-in Ballot Request form in sufficient time for it to reach ElectionBuddy by March 27, 2026 at Midnight deadline.
- I understand that FEA-Retired shall not be responsible for mail not received by the deadline.

Return this form to Frank Roder at romerxvi@aol.com or 908 East Louisiana Avenue, Tampa, FL 33603.

This form must be received by January 30, 2026 at Midnight. Requests received after this time will not be processed.

Please verify your name & address. **ALL FIELDS MUST BE COMPLETED**

PRINT LEGIBLY!

Name:		Male: _____ Female: _____
Chapter Name (please spell out:)		
Mailing Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Contact Number:		Home: _____ Cell: _____
Signature:		Date:



Brevard Federation of Teachers-Retired Chapter News

OFFICERS

CALENDAR

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BFT Office
1007 Florida Ave, Rockledge
-11:30 Brown bag lunch
-12:00 Business meeting
-12:30 Speaker: Dr. Ben
Brotemarkle, Florida Historical Society**

Next meeting - Mar. 5, 2026

Membership Application

I want to join BFT/R for the 2025-2026 school year and receive membership benefits. Enclosed please find a check payable to BFT/R for:

New Member

___ Annual dues \$76.00
___ Lifetime dues \$400.00
(state and national)

Renewing Member

___ Annual dues \$76.00 (For non-life members)
___ Local dues for Lifetime members **\$30 each year**
___ Lifetime dues \$400 (BFTR pays local dues 1st year)

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____
E-mail _____ Phone _____ Cell _____
Former School _____ Subject /Grade Level _____
Interests _____
Signature _____

Please complete this form and mail it and your check to Sheila Cootes, 3737 Sunward Dr., Merritt Island, FL 32953.