

# RYAN TORRENS

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## RYAN TORRENS TO TECO: STOP PUTTING PROFITS AHEAD OF WORKER SAFETY

TAMPA, FL – Ryan Torrens, Democratic candidate for Florida attorney general, is demanding that Tampa Electric Company (“TECO”) immediately reevaluate safety measures in the wake of the recent incident at TECO’s Big Bend power plant and its horrendous track record on worker safety.

Last month, TECO employees and contractors were attempting to clean a tank when the slag that can reach temperatures of 1,000 degrees exploded out of an access opening onto the men. Five workers have died from injuries sustained from the molten slag.

This recent Big Bend incident joins a series of worker safety incidents at TECO. According to the Tampa Bay Times, of power plant fatalities across the state, half are attributed to TECO even though TECO covers less than 10 percent of households.

Since the most recent tragedy, I have had the privilege of meeting with Mr. Doug Bowden, business manager of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (“IBEW”) Local 108, who represents the TECO workers. As early as last September, the Union had warned TECO management of the risk of requiring TECO workers to work on the slag tanks while they are online. Despite employee concerns and demand for a change in protocol, TECO management refused to make any changes and continued to require the workers to work on slag tanks while they are online.

Mr. Bowden has made three simple and reasonable demands for TECO to improve safety and save lives. These demands are: 1) no employee be required or allowed to work on a slag tank while the Unit is online 2) no employee be terminated for declining to take what he or she determines to be an unsafe action and 3) if a safety issue reaches the formal grievance process, that all three safety grievance steps be heard within 30 days to allow for alternative actions to be taken in a timely manner.

Unfortunately, TECO has not taken these demands seriously and therefore does not take the safety of their workers seriously. “TECO’s last CEO retired with a golden parachute of \$21.3 million, but TECO refuses to take worker safety seriously if it cuts into their profits. This is wrong,” said Torrens. “I join Mr. Bowden and call upon TECO to immediately meet these reasonable demands to ensure the safety of their workers and avoid future accidents,” said Torrens.

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