

“Amending Florida’s Constitution”

Each general election cycle, the Florida electorate has the opportunity to choose representation on the local, state, and national level. Additionally, we decide who will serve the public within the legislative, executive, and judicial ranks. But arguably, the most important decisions we make on each ballot deal with proposed changes to the state’s most binding document, the Constitution of the State of Florida.

Since 1998, Florida has seen the passage of 30 constitutional amendments ranging from parental notification of minors seeking abortion to voluntary pre-kindergarten to protecting pregnant pigs. On the 2006 general election ballot, you will be asked to decide to adopt or reject six more proposals to the Constitution.

As Election Day nears, it is important to be armed with as much information possible to make a better decision when voting. Below, you will find the official ballot summary of each amendment, background information, and arguments for supporting and opposing each amendment.

For more additional information on each amendment, I would encourage you to visit <http://www.votesmartflorida.org>. This free website is an excellent non-partisan source for learning about Florida’s proposed constitutional amendments.

If you have further questions regarding the ballot amendments, please contact my office at 772-344-1140 or pruitt.ken.web@flsenate.gov.

Sincerely,



Ken Pruitt
State Senator
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2006 CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

State Planning and Budget Process.....	2
Requiring Broader Public Support for Constitutional Amendments or Revisions ...	3
The Protect People from Smoking Amendment.....	4
Increased Homestead Exemption.....	7
Permanently Disabled Veteran’s Discount on Homestead Ad Valorem Tax.....	8
Eminent Domain.....	9

AMENDMENT 1 - STATE PLANNING AND BUDGET PROCESS - SUMMARY

Proposing amendments to the State Constitution to limit the amount of nonrecurring general revenue which may be appropriated for recurring purposes in any fiscal year to 3 percent of the total general revenue funds estimated to be available, unless otherwise approved by a three-fifths vote of the Legislature; to establish a Joint Legislative Budget Commission, which shall issue long-range financial outlooks; to provide for limited adjustments in the state budget without the concurrence of the full Legislature, as provided by general law; to reduce the number of times trust funds are automatically terminated; to require the preparation and biennial revision of a long-range state planning document; and to establish a Government Efficiency Task Force and specify its duties.

This proposed constitutional amendment requires that no more than 3% of nonrecurring general revenue be appropriated for recurring costs in any fiscal year. It establishes a Joint Legislative Budget Commission to issue long-range financial outlooks.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES

The proposed amendment will establish a long-range budget planning process, creating a document with both budget and revenue estimates. It would establish a Government Efficiency Task Force to seek input from the public as well as the executive and judicial branches and create a long-range financial plan. The task force would be appointed every four years by the Governor, Senate President and Speaker of the House.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION/PRESENT SITUATION

Currently, there is no limit on the amount of nonrecurring funds – one-time influxes of money that cannot be expected in following years (for example, funds from selling a state building) – the legislature can devote to recurring expenses (for example, payroll for state employees). In its current form, the Legislative Budget Commission only submits an advisory, non-binding estimate of the state's outstanding debt.

POSITIVE ASPECTS OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- The budget and revenue estimates would be combined in one document that is easy to read and understand.
- The Legislative Budget Commission would be required to produce a long-term financial outlook.
- State funds would be managed more judiciously, with recurring costs funded with recurring revenue.

NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

- Funds may be more difficult to access on short notice, such as during a state emergency.

