

**Postions on the 2018 Amendments
as listed by the Florida League of Women Voters**

Below are the many constitutional amendments which will be appearing on the ballot in November, along with explanations and the positions taken by the League of Women Voters. The President of the League, Patricia Brigham, explained:

“As you know, this year's amendment count is higher than usual due to those submitted by the Constitution Revision Commission.

“The board examined every amendment that voters will decide on and determined positions on each. The bundling of topics within amendments presented a challenge, but the board weighed already established League positions heavily in their decisions.

“Below you will find brief descriptions of each amendment and the board's position. We hope this clarifies any remaining questions you might have.”

Amendment 1 - Amendment placed on the ballot by legislation to increase the amount of a home's value exempted from property tax

LWVFL position: Oppose. The League has a position that "no tax sources or revenue should be specified, limited, exempted, or prohibited in the Constitution."

Amendment 2 - Amendment placed on the ballot by legislation that makes the cap on non- homestead parcel assessment increases permanent.

LWVFL position: Oppose (same reasoning as Amendment 1).

Amendment 3 - Amendment placed on the ballot via citizen initiative that requires approval of any new casino gambling through a citizen initiative constitutional amendment, effectively barring the Legislature from making gambling decisions by passing laws.

LWVFL position: Support. It restricts casino gambling and allows Florida voters to make any decisions regarding increases of casino gambling, consistent with League position against gambling. This amendment is also supported by No Casinos, Inc. and Disney. .

Amendment 4 - Amendment placed on the ballot via citizen initiative that automatically restores the voting rights of felons after they've completed their sentences, except for those convicted of murder or sex offenses

LWVFL position: Support. The League was one of the sponsors of this initiative. Florida is one of only four states that permanently bars felons from voting after their sentences are completed. This restriction on voting is a vestige of Florida's post-Civil War Constitution. Everyone deserves a second chance.

Amendment 5 - Amendment placed on the ballot by legislation that requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to approve any new or increased taxes or fees.

LWVFL position: Oppose, as in 2012 when a similar amendment was on the ballot. This amendment does not include a provision that would allow for tax increases in times of emergencies (hurricane, floods, recession, etc.) and is an abrogation of the Legislature's fiduciary responsibility to pass a reasonable budget.

The next eight amendments are all from the CRC:

Amendment 6 – Vastly expands the scope of victims rights under the state Constitution; increases the mandatory retirement age for judges from 70 to 75; forces courts and judges to interpret laws and rules for themselves rather than rely on interpretations by government agencies.

LWVFL position: Oppose. Victims' rights are already protected in the Constitution, and this amendment would eliminate an existing provision that victims' rights do not interfere with the constitutional rights of the accused.

Amendment 7 - Creates a supermajority requirement for universities to impose new or increase existing student fees, enshrines in the Constitution guidelines for the State College System, mandates that the state pay a death benefit to first responders or members of the military killed in the line of duty.

LWVFL position: Oppose. We oppose a supermajority vote to increase fees or taxes. Family members of the military who die in the line of service are already compensated through the federal government.

Amendment 8 - Mandates term limits of eight years for all school boards, allows the state to create "public schools," something only local school boards currently can do , and requires schools to teach "civic literacy."

LWVFL position: Oppose. We believe local voters have the authority to set term limits now, by voting. We are opposed to an alternative school system for establishing and operating public schools with no local accountability . Civics is currently a required course in middle school. A constitutional amendment is unnecessary .

Amendment 9 - Prohibits oil and gas drilling beneath all waters controlled by Florida and prohibits vaping in enclosed indoor workplaces.

LWVFL position: Support. Our concern for the environment overrides our concern about putting vaping in the Constitution. We also believe that if this amendment passes, it sends a signal to the federal government that Florida cares about off-shore drilling.

Amendment 10 - Requires the Legislature to hold its session in early January on even numbered years, creates an Office of Domestic Security and Counter-terrorism, mandates the existence of a state Department of Veteran Affairs, and forces all counties (both charter and non-charter) to elect rather than appoint all constitutional officers.

LWVFL position: Oppose. This limits the voters in local communities from deciding on the election of county officers. It adds an unnecessary provision as the Legislature already has the power to set dates during even numbered years. FDLE is already the lead agency in coordinating efforts to prevent terrorism, and the Constitution already has authorized the Legislature to create a Department of Veteran Affairs. This amendment is clearly an effort to restrict the powers of local government.

Amendment 11 - Repeals the state's ability to prohibit non-citizens from buying, owning, and selling property; deletes a provision that forces the state to prosecute criminal suspects under a law that has become obsolete; deletes obsolete language regarding high speed rail in Florida.

LWVFL position: No position. Although we think that removing obsolete language is a good thing, there is a lot of other obsolete language that is not being addressed.

Although the first issue regarding the ability of non-citizens to purchase and sell property cannot be enforced, the provision that requires criminal suspects to be prosecuted for an obsolete law should be changed.

Amendment 12 - Expands ethics rules for elected officials and government employees by changing from 2 to 6 years the time that they would have to wait before being able to lobby state government.

LWVFL position: No position. Although there is need for lobbying reform, we felt that six years might be onerous, and this amendment does not address the real issue regarding lobbying, which is the impact of money in political campaigns.

Amendment 13 - Bans wagering on any type of dog racing, notably greyhounds, by Dec. 31, 2020., while continuing to allow dog tracks to offer other types of gambling, including poker rooms.

LWVFL position: Support. This is primarily a gambling issue, and the League has held a consistent position against gambling.