



I WANT YOU!

The Family Café CHANGE AGENT NETWORK THEY NEED YOU!

The Change Agent Network is a project of The Family Café and offers an opportunity for advocates and change agents to work collaboratively to transform the system by: combining abilities, skills, ideas, and talents; standing together for meaningful system reform measures; taking the lead in our communities and neighborhoods; sharing information to help families become effective players within their communities; developing statewide networks to organize and discuss the issues that are most important to families and persons with disabilities; and creating a united position on critical disability policy issues.

Who Will Get Your Vote?

The Florida Voter Registration Deadline is Tuesday, October 9th!

Check your Registration at dos.myflorida.com/elections/

As everyone is fully aware, we have a big election coming up in Florida in mere weeks. As advocates, it is critical that we do our civic duty and vote this November. What's at stake? Pretty much the entire ball of wax! From the United States Senate and the Governor's mansion, to Congress and the Florida Legislature, the political landscape is going to change dramatically.



Regardless of which party wins, we will at the very least have a brand new Governor, Attorney General, Agriculture Commissioner, Senate President and Speaker of the House. And that's just for starters!

Consider this: Democrats have not occupied the Governor's mansion since the end of the Lawton Chiles/Buddy Mackay era nearly 20 years ago, and have had only one elected official (CFO Alex Sink) with a seat on the Florida Cabinet since then. As we head in to November's general election, it is anybody's guess who will win, not only in the Governor's race, but in each and every one of the statewide races. Most polling shows the democratic candidates with a slight edge or within the margin of error. No one on Florida's Cabinet is running for re-election. The only quasi-incumbent is CFO Jimmy Patronis, and this will be his first statewide election after being appointed to fill out the remainder of former CFO Jeff Atwater's term upon his retirement. It has been



many years since Florida has seen the level of turnover that will take place in this election cycle.

In the Governor's race, the stakes could not be higher. Both Mayor Gillum and Congressman DeSantis shocked their respective party establishments by winning their primaries. These two candidates give us very clear, yet very different visions for the future. We asked both candidates for a position statement on disability issues, and we expect to receive them shortly. As soon as we receive a statement from either candidate, we will include it on The Family Café website.

Beyond the individual candidates running for office, there are also numerous ballot initiatives that Florida voters will be asked to consider this

November. Understanding Florida's ballot initiatives is one of the most time consuming aspects of becoming an educated voter. That's why we have brought together some basic info to get you started here.

Please take the time to read and understand what each initiative is proposing to do. Any change to our state's constitution is a big deal. Several initiatives have been deemed unconstitutional recently by the courts, and have been removed from the ballot, but those that remain will have significant impacts. The initiatives listed here are set to appear on the ballot as of today, however, they are still subject to change. Several are still under appeal after being removed by a lower court. Please take the time to do your own research on these initiatives. We are purposefully not including the pro's and con's of each of these, as that is something each voter will have to determine for themselves. To get you started, we are sharing the following explanation that was put together by Elizabeth Koh from the Miami Herald this past June.

Amendment 1, Increased Homestead Property Tax Exemption: Grants an additional \$25,000 homestead exemption for homes valued over \$125,000. Owners of homes worth more than \$100,000 would also receive an increase in their exemption.

Miami Herald: "*would raise the portion of a home's value that can be exempted from non-school property taxes. The Legislature voted to refer the exemption to the ballot in 2017, and the proposed changes would apply to the assessed value of a homestead property between \$100,000 and \$125,000, raising the maximum exemption to \$75,000.*"

Amendment 2, Limitations on Property Tax Assessments: Makes permanent what currently is a temporary cap of 10 percent on annual property value increases for vacation homes, apartments and commercial property, effectively limiting increases on tax bills.



Miami Herald: *"another property tax proposal referred by the Legislature, would cement an existing cap on non-homestead property assessments. Such property tax assessment increases have been limited to 10 percent of the previous year's assessed value since 2008, when another constitutional amendment that capped the increases passed."*

Amendment 3, Voter Control of Gambling in Florida: Requires approval of any new casino gambling through a citizen-initiative constitutional amendment, effectively barring the Legislature from making those gambling decisions by passing laws.

Miami Herald: *"a citizen-initiated amendment, would give voters the exclusive right to decide to authorize expansions of casino gambling in Florida. That authority currently rests with both the Legislature and voters, through constitutional amendment."*

Amendment 4, Voting Restoration Amendment: Would restore the eligibility to vote to persons with felony convictions who have completed their sentences.

Miami Herald: *"another petition-drive amendment, would restore voting rights to former felons if they have served their time, with the exception of those who have committed crimes like murder or sex offenses. For the past seven years, the state has required that felons wait at least five years after their sentences are complete to apply to regain voting rights. The current process can take a decade or more under the Scott administration's requirement that a state clemency board consider each request during its four meetings a year."*

Amendment 5, Super-majority Vote Required to Impose, Authorize, or Raise State Taxes or Fees: Requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to approve any new or increased taxes or fees, rather than a simple majority.

Miami Herald: *"another proposal from lawmakers this year, would require a two-thirds super-majority vote in the Legislature to impose, approve or raise state taxes and fees. The higher threshold means it would take only a third of members in either the state House or Senate to block any future tax increases or repeal existing exemptions. The idea, floated by Gov. Rick Scott last year, would also stop any provisions to raise taxes or fees from being tacked onto other state bills, and does not apply to any fees or taxes that would be levied by local governments or agencies, such as school districts."*

Amendment 6, Rights of Crime Victims; Judges: 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.

Miami Herald: *"the first of the CRC items, links three proposals that would create a bill of rights for crime victims and set new requirements for judges. The bill of rights, modeled after Marsy's Law in California, has the support of major Republican and Democratic lawmakers but has drawn criticism that the way victims' rights are drawn might flood the justice system with additional responsibilities. The latter two proposals increase the mandatory retirement age for judges to 75 from 70, effective July 1, 2019, and would bar judges from deferring to administrative agencies' interpretations of a rule or statute when ruling in cases involving those laws. (A Leon County judge ruled in favor of two sets of plaintiffs challenging this*



amendment on the ballot in August, saying its title and summary did not meet the required standard. Those two cases were merged and heard by the state Supreme Court, which ruled to retain this amendment on the ballot.)

Amendment 7, First Responder and Military Member Survivor Benefits: Public Colleges and Universities, 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 employers or the state pay a death benefit to first responders and members of the military killed in the line of duty.

Miami Herald: "would pull together three proposals, providing college tuition for the survivors of first responders and military members killed on duty, requiring university trustees to agree by a two-thirds super-majority to raise college fees (not including tuition) and establishing the state college system in the Florida Constitution. Universities are in the state Constitution, but state colleges (also known as community colleges) are not."

(A Leon County circuit court judge ruled in early September that this amendment and two others be struck from the ballot because of its bundled status — that decision is currently being appealed by the state.)

Amendment 9, Prohibits oil drilling beneath waters controlled by Florida: Prohibits the use of e-cigarettes, also known as vaping, at indoor workplaces:

Miami Herald: "would tether a ban on oil and gas drilling in state-owned waters with a proposal to add vaping to the ban on smoking indoors."

(A Leon County circuit court judge ruled in early September that this amendment and two others be struck from the ballot because of its bundled status — that decision is currently being appealed by the state.)

Amendment 10, State and Local Government Structure and Operation: Requires the Legislature to hold its session in early January on even-numbered years; creates an Office of Domestic Security and Counterterrorism within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement; mandates the existence of a state Department of Veterans' Affairs; forces all counties to elect a sheriff, tax collector, property appraiser, supervisor of elections and Clerk of Circuit Court.

Miami Herald: "would link four proposals: one to have the state's legislative session start in January rather than March in even-numbered years (the legislature currently changes its dates by statute), two that would create a counter-terrorism office and make the state veterans affairs department constitutionally required, and a proposal that would require five county-level offices to be elected."

Amendment 11, Property Rights; Removal of Obsolete Provision: Criminal Statutes, 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 the law they were originally charged under, even if the Legislature changes that law; deletes obsolete language having to do with high-speed rail in Florida.

Miami Herald: *"would revise the Constitution to remove some language, including a provision that stops “aliens ineligible for citizenship” from owning property and wording approving a high-speed rail system. It would also remove the state’s Savings Clause, which prohibits retroactively applying the amendment of a criminal statute to sentencing for a crime committed before the change, and clarify that repealing a criminal statute would not necessarily affect the prosecution of that crime committed previously."*

(A Leon County circuit court judge ruled in early September that this amendment and two others be struck from the ballot because of its bundled status — that decision is currently being appealed by the state.)

Amendment 12, Lobbying and Abuse of Office by Public Officers: Expands ethics rules for elected officials and government employees, notably by expanding from two to six years the time that many officials would have to wait before they could lobby state government.

Miami Herald: *"a stand-alone proposal, would bar public officials from lobbying both during their terms and for six years following, and restrict current public officers from using their office for personal gain."*

Amendment 13, Ends dog racing: Bans wagering on any type of dog racing, notably greyhounds, as of Dec. 31, 2020, while continuing to allow dog tracks to continue offering other types of gambling, including poker rooms:

Miami Herald: *"a single proposal. It would end commercial dog racing involving wagering by 2020. There are about a dozen tracks in Florida, and the practice has drawn criticism from animal rights advocates who assert that the practice is inhumane. The Florida Greyhound Association has sued seeking to remove the amendment from the ballot."*

(A Leon County judge ruled Aug. 1 that this amendment should be removed from the ballot, saying that the measure misleads voters. The state appealed the decision to the state Supreme Court, which reversed that ruling and ordered the amendment remain on the ballot.)

Remember, there are millions of voters with disabilities or family members with disabilities living in here in Florida, and the voices of those people need to be heard. With so much turnover in the state government, and so many initiatives on the ballot, the 2018 election represents an extraordinary chance to take part in shaping Florida’s future. Please take advantage of it!

The deadline to register to vote in the general election is Tuesday, October 9th. To get registered, or to check on your status, visit the Florida Department of State at dos.myflorida.com/elections/.

#21for21

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