



**Too Important to Miss:  
The 2017-2018 Florida  
Constitution Revision Commission**

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# Background

- Florida has five ways to amend constitution
- **Constitution Revision Commission (CRC)**
  - Every 20 years
  - Puts items directly on ballot
  - 37 members
  - Will meet Summer 2017
  - Only third time in state's history

# 1968 Constitution

- “...in the tenth year following that in which this constitution is adopted, and each twentieth year thereafter, there shall be established a constitution revision commission...”

- The commission shall..
  - Adopt its rules of procedure
  - Examine the constitution of the state, except for matters relating to taxation or the state budgetary process
  - Hold public hearings
  - Make recommendations for revisions to go to ballot in next general election
    - Article XI, Section 2 (c) Florida Constitution

“It is my own personal judgment that above all other matters, the new provisions in the 1968 Constitution authorizing means for further constitutional changes are the most important things in the new constitution.”

– Chesterfield Smith

# CRC Commission Members

- 37 Members
- Attorney General
- 15 appointed by Governor (appoints chair)
- 9 appointed by House Speaker
- 9 appointed by Senate President
- 3 appointed by Chief Justice, Supreme Court

# Two Previous CRCs

## 1977-1978



- Chaired by Sandy D'Alemberte
- Eight proposals
- None adopted on ballot but some were implemented later

# 1978 Ballot Measures and Vote

- Omnibus proposal (56 changes) 29%
- Declaration of rights (mini-ERA) 43%
- Legislative Single-Member Districts and Reappointment Commission 47%
- Executive/cabinet restructuring 25%
- Executive Public Service Commission and Public Counsel 36%
- Judiciary: Merit selection of trial court judges 49%
- Finance and taxation 36%
- Education 36%



# 1997-98 Commission



- Chaired by Dexter Douglas
- Nine proposals placed on ballot
- Eight were successful
- Major marketing efforts to inform citizens

# 1998 Ballot Measures and Vote

- Conservation and creation of fish and wildlife conservation commission (72%)
- Public education (71%)
- Judicial selection and funding of state courts (57%)
- Restructuring state cabinet (56%)
- Basic rights (gender equality) 66%
- Local and Municipal tax exemption/citizen access to local officials (49.8%)
- Ballot access, public campaign financing and election process revisions (64%)
- Firearms Purchases (72%)
- Miscellaneous matters and technical revisions (55%)

# Getting Ready for 2017

# Partnership for Revising Florida's Constitution

Educate and inform public of the importance of  
2017-2018 CRC:

- Prior to naming of the commission to insure top-notch choices
- After commission is named to provide analysis of possible amendments
- Encourage citizens to participate and VOTE

# Partners

Bob Graham Center-UF

Center for Govt Responsibility-UF

Community Foundation for NE FL

FL Association of Counties

FL Bar

FL Bar Foundation

FL Chamber Foundation

FL Justice Association

FL Law Related Education Assoc

FL League of Cities

FL Philanthropic Network

FL Press Association

FL TaxWatch

Justin Sayfie

Leadership Florida

League of Women Voters FL

NAACP-FL State Conference

Virgil Hawkins FL Chapter of  
Nat'l Bar Assoc

# What Partners can Do:

- Sponsor event for local/regional leaders, media and the public on the upcoming CRC
  - Presenters—local officials serving on prior commissions; academics; group leaders
  - Highlight importance to the local area
  - Discuss possible constitutional amendments
- Write Op Ed pieces on the upcoming CRC and its meaning to the local community
- Encourage community groups to participate

# Other Efforts

- Citizens' Guide to Constitution Revision Commission (with FL Bar)
  - 120,000 copies
- Animation—I'm Not a Bill
- Kickoff in Tallahassee October 28, 2015
- Webpage, Facebook, Twitter

# Funding

- Jessie Ball duPont—social media/marketing
- Florida Bar—Citizens' Guide
- Bob Graham Center—polling questions (in-kind)



# Why Now?

# Three Phases

- Assuring top-notch commission members
- Presenting possible amendment to commission
- Informing voters and getting out the vote

# Phase 1: Assuring Top-Notch Commission members

- Work with groups to highlight importance of the appointments
- Encourage groups to identify and recommend possible members
- Work with the media to highlight issue

# What kind of person looking for?

- Forward-thinking
- Innovative
- Creative
- Cares about wellbeing of state
- Bipartisan or nonpartisan
- Represents diversity of state

# Likely CRC Timetable

- Session 2016--appropriations for planning
- June 2016--Governor's Constitutional Revision Steering Committee named (state officials) and Executive Director in Governor's office
- February 2017--Commission named
- Session 2017--appropriations for Commission's work

# Phase 2

- What amendments should be considered by the CRC?

# After Commission is Named

- Two sets of hearings
  - Garnering ideas from public
  - Getting feedback on proposals adopted by the Commission
- Participate in hearings/submit position papers and proposals
- Use webpage for linkages to groups
- No partnership recommendations

# Citizens can...

- Follow deliberations of Commission
- Attend hearings
- Communicate with Commission members
- Use the media to discuss ideas



# Possible Commission Topics

- Term limits
- Judicial nominations
- Higher education funding
- K-12 education funding
- Statutory initiative process
- Independent Redistricting Commission

# Who can submit ideas?

- Individuals
- Organizations and groups
- Students/teachers
- **PRETTY MUCH ANYONE!**

# Phase 3

- Amendments approved by the Commission go directly to the ballot
- Need 60 percent vote
- Important to inform citizens about their choices
- November 2018



“Every generation of citizens has a right to  
“choose for itself the form of government it  
believes most promotive of its own happiness.”

– Thomas Jefferson

“We are dealing with a constitutional democracy in which sovereignty resides in the people. It is their constitution...They have a right to change, abrogate or modify it in any manner they see fit...”

– Glenn Terrell, former FL Supreme Court Justice

# Too Important to Miss

- This is the citizens' opportunity to make a difference
  - Members of the Commission
  - Possible Amendments
  - Informed voting

Hope you agree and will work with us.



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