



VoteSmartFlorida.org PowerPoint Presentation Outline

Presenter Notes: the number of signatures and dollar collected for individual ballot initiatives located on slides 17-23 change hourly—you have information current from within last week. Tell audience, they can access the most current information by visiting www.VoteSmartFlorida.org and clicking on “I Vote Smart”.

Slide 1:

- We are here today to talk about the most important issue facing Florida: constitutional amendments. This presentation will cover a lot of information, and through it all, I encourage you to remember one thing: Florida has the easiest constitution in the United States to amend. Even easier than California.
- To address this, the VoteSmartFlorida.org Alliance was formed in January. This Alliance is composed of more than 60 organizations across the state, including the Florida Farm Bureau, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, and yours just to name a few.

Slide 2:

- Read quote: “Today, any special interest group with a fat checkbook can buy a spot on the ballot, and can amend our Constitution to suit their needs.”
- This quote sounds like any of us could say it today, however what is remarkable is the fact this is a Florida Chamber quote from a 1997 Tampa Bay Business Journal article—seven years ago!

Slide 3:

- In 2002, however, we all had a wake up call when pregnant pigs not only made it onto the ballot but passed and was added to our constitution. This is when we knew we had to address this issue.
- A few questions come to mind when you consider the pig issue, with the biggest question being how does protecting pig’s rights end up in a document that is designed to the protect people’s rights? While I’m not here to debate this with you today, the pig example does show why the process needs reform.

Slide 4

- This slide really speaks for itself and contains a few facts that you need to be aware of. First, Florida’s constitution is five times longer than the United States Constitution. Second, we’ve had 95 amendments in 34 years, and if we don’t change, we are on the track to becoming like California who faced 118 initiatives on the ballot in one election year.

Slide 5

- If amendments continue at their current rate, you will see more taxes and money cut from existing state programs to pay for these initiatives. Money may possibly be diverted away from critical needs such as transportation.
- In addition, we are now seeing special interest groups use the constitution to attack competing industries.

- Finally, we have all heard about California and their budget troubles. Without reform Florida is on the way to becoming like California.

Slide 6

- Here is a snapshot of information about the Alliance. We've been studying this issue extensively and increasing awareness among residents throughout the state of Florida. We have conducted six polls and 17 focus groups and through this the Alliance has true pulse on Floridians' views towards constitutional amendments.

Slide 7

- November ballot Amendment 2, or the "No Surprises" provision, was created and passed this legislative session.
- Currently, signatures gathered through the citizen initiative process are due only 91 days prior to the election, leaving little time for education and discussion surrounding proposed amendments. The "No Surprises" provision changes the signature deadline from 91 days to February 1 of the election year and requires the Supreme Court to review it by April 1.
- In addition, this fall we will see the first Financial Impact Statements that will accompany each amendment proposed by a citizen initiative. While this is a good start in the right direction, these financial impact statements only take into account the cost the amendment will have to government. It does not take into account the cost the amendments will have to residents or businesses.
- You will notice on some of these upcoming slides there is a graphic button at the bottom. These buttons represent where you can find the information on our website.

Slide 8

- This slide shows research regarding amendment two. This question deals with the "No Surprises Provision," and, as you can see, voters overwhelmingly support this reform when the provision is explained in detail.

Slide 9

- The signature-gathering business is an industry with very little disclosure and therefore signature gatherers can use a variety of deceptive practices to collect signatures.
- If you have enough money you can buy your way onto the ballot in 120 days.
- There is very little oversight regarding the signature gathering process and verification procedures often differ from county to county.

Slide 10

- This slide shows an ad from the Tallahassee Democrat in May. As you can see, we're in the wrong business. This ad shows that signature gathering has become a money making industry, rather than a true citizen's grassroots effort.

Slide 11

- We have conducted some investigative research and what you see here is a sampling of the type of information signature gathering companies are giving to their employees.
- (Read second bullet)

Slide 12-13

- Over the next several slides I have several fraudulent petitions that have been caught by various supervisor of elections and discarded. However, these petitions show just some of the deceptive practices signature gatherers are using in an attempt to gain signatures.
- Pay close attention on this slide to the name and signature of this voter. (*Flip to next slide.*)
- Now look at this petition. This is the same person yet look how different the two signatures are. Obviously one of the signatures—if not both—are forged.

Slide 14

- This slide shows the example of the forged signature of someone who is deceased, which is another fraudulent technique signature gatherers are using.

Slide 15

- Much of VoteSmartFlorida.org's efforts are geared towards voter awareness.
- We encourage voters to question signature gatherers about the issue and ask if they can take a petition home to review. This allows for voters to have the time to research and understand the ramifications of proposed amendments rather than deciding to sign something based on limited information they receive outside of a grocery store.

Slide 16

- In addition to legislative activity and voter awareness, the third component in VoteSmartFlorida.org's campaign is Ballot Watch. We have been and are continuing to monitor what's headed towards the ballot.
- Here is a sampling of the more than 50 initiatives that are currently filed with the Secretary of State. As you can see, these amendments are all over the board. <Pick three or four to highlight, based on your audience.>

Slide 17

- These next several slides cover some of the amendments that are actively collecting signatures in an attempt to make it to the ballot this November.
- This slide shows the three amendments that are being proposed by the Academy of Florida Trial Lawyers in their battle against the doctors.
- Review slide.

Slide 18

- Citizens for a Fair Share is the doctor's response to the trial lawyers three amendments.

- Review slide.

Slide 19

- Hometown Democracy has decided not to attempt to make it onto November's ballot but is aiming for 2006. However, remember that signatures are valid for four years so the signatures they've collected thus far will still count.
- Review slide.

Slide 20

- Floridians for All is a PAC sponsored by ACORN, which is a national organization that moves from state to state addressing different issues.
- According to an article in Leesburg's paper on July 2, ACORN has collected and turned in more than 900,000 signatures to the various supervisors of elections throughout the state. The Secretary of State does not show that many have been verified.
- Review slide.

Slide 21

- Floridians Against Inequities in Rates is sponsored by John McKay and Jack Latvala. This amendment would require all sales tax to automatically "sunset" or expire in July 2007, unless the Legislature votes to renew them.
- Review slide.

Slide 22

- Governor Bush and CFO Tom Gallagher endorse Derail the Bullet Train, which is an effort to repeal the bullet train that was added to Florida's constitution in 2000.
- Review slide.

Slide 23

- This proposed amendment is the most concerning. While advertised as a savings to homeowners of \$500/year, this will reduce county revenues in excess of two **billion** dollars a year. This will leave counties with three options: 1) cut services; 2) increase fees on county services or 3) increase taxes on the remaining taxable property.
- Review slide and note contributions.

Slide 24

- The No Surprises provision will be on the ballot this fall as **Amendment Two—please vote YES!**
- There are other ways you can get involved, Here is what we're asking from you...(read slide)