



Amendment 4: Higher Taxes, Fewer Jobs, More Lawsuits

Amendment 4—a statewide “Vote on Everything” initiative—is a grave threat to Florida’s future. A comprehensive economic study by the *Washington Economics Group* indicates that this proposed amendment to our state constitution will **imperil Florida’s economy, cost tens of thousands of jobs, and force local governments to either “cut services or raise taxes”** (www.florida2010.org/home.php).

If adopted, Amendment 4 would require expensive referenda for any change to a local comprehensive plan. In 2006, the small Pinellas county town of St. Pete Beach adopted a local version of this idea. Since then, the town has suffered through **economic gridlock, greater special interest influence on the political process, and higher property tax rates.** According to the town’s former Mayor, Ward Friszolowski, “Since the measure was passed, the residents of St. Pete Beach have endured endless lawsuits and seen little progress. Even die-hard disciples of Amendment 4 have since converted back to common sense.”

Now, this idea threatens to go statewide and much is at stake for all Floridians:

- **The disruption** to the daily lives of Floridians will be extraordinary. Taxpayers will be required to fund elections for each proposed comprehensive plan change – not just major projects, but even minor technical details. It will not be unusual for the voters to face 200 to 300 comprehensive plan changes every year. In the last four years alone, this amendment would have required an average of over 10,000 additional local referenda per year in Florida. According to a review of state records, if Amendment 4 had been law in 2006, the residents of Carrabelle, a small Franklin County town, would have voted 617 times!
- **The disorder** will further disenfranchise Florida's electorate. Voters will be deluged with highly technical background materials prepared by local government planning staff. The legalese of proposed comprehensive plan changes, often puzzling for expert engineers and attorneys, will further dampen voter turnout. Lines at voting booths will grow as Floridians attempt the virtual impossibility of voting on hundreds of separate and often confusing ballot questions.
- **The cost** to Florida taxpayers will be astronomical. Every city and county in Florida will be burdened with the time and cost of holding additional elections to vote on proposed changes to comprehensive land use plans. The *Orlando Sentinel* notes that these **costs would “soar into the millions.”** And in these difficult economic times, **local taxpayers will be left with the bill.**
- **The result** will be a system that is far worse, not better. That’s why respected environmental leaders (<http://www.1000friendsofflorida.org/planning/fhd.asp>) refuse to support the amendment. They know this proposal will transform every planning decision into a political campaign, thereby encouraging sprawl and making smarter growth impossible.

In its Editorial against Amendment 4, the *Palm Beach Post* focused on the disaster in St. Pete Beach. The *Post* wrote that **“because St. Pete Beach suffered for three years, Florida can avoid having to suffer for much longer.”**