








Republican Club of the Palm Beaches

2016 RCPB Ballot Questions Forum - October 26, 2016

 Solar		<p>Speaking in favor of Amendment 1 (Solar Energy) will be Cindy Tindell, Vice President of Mergers and Acquisitions at NextEra Energy, the parent company of Florida Power and Light. She has deep regulated utility experience having led Florida Power & Light utility's development and construction planning. Cindy is also the PBCGOP Committeewoman to the Republican Party of Florida and a member of this club.</p>
		<p>Speaking against Amendment 1 will be Richard Pinsky, Public Policy Manager at Akerman, LLP. Richard has over 30 years of government affairs experience in Florida and Washington, D.C. He has an extensive background representing clients before the legislature as well as local government from helping to navigate the budget and appropriation process to issue advocacy. In the 1980s he was a campaign consultant to the RNC, the NRSC and the NRCC, and has served as general consultant to several statewide candidate campaigns and ballot initiatives.</p>
 Marijuana		<p>Speaking in favor of Amendment 2 (Medical Marijuana) will be Raymer Maguire IV, Deputy Campaign Manager for People United for Medical Marijuana, a part of United for Care, the national organization that advocates for the issue in all the states. Raymer was a founding partner of Millenium Partners, LLC, advancing the millennial agenda by providing data focused consulting and project management, where he organized community leaders in South Florida to lobby on behalf of underprivileged students.</p>
		<p>Speaking against Amendment 2 will be Virginia Brooks, a founder of the PBC Faith and Freedom Coalition. Virginia is active in local grassroots organizations, retired from being an associate professor of English at Palm Beach State College, and an interpreter for the deaf at her church. Virginia is also a member of this club.</p>
 Sales Tax		<p>Speaking in favor of the county sales tax question will be Bill Perry, CEO of the Gunster Law Firm and incoming chairman of the PBC Economic Council which is campaigning for the tax increase. Bill practices real estate and business law, specializing in complex commercial and financial transactions. As a member of the Florida Chamber Foundation, he helped launch the Six Pillar Initiative and worked with the Economic Council to introduce it to Palm Beach County, resulting in a PBC strategic plan in 2013.</p>
		<p>Speaking against the county sales tax will be Fred Scheibl, co-founder of the county budget watchdog PBC Taxpayer Action Board, which has been providing analysis of the county budget to its coalition partners since 2010, advocating for fiscal responsibility by county leaders. Fred is a founding member of the Palm Beach County Tea Party and a member of this club.</p>

Ballot Number	Title	Description	Arguments
State Ballot Questions			
1	 <p>RIGHTS OF ELECTRICITY CONSUMERS REGARDING SOLAR ENERGY CHOICE</p>	<p>BALLOT TEXT: <i>"This amendment establishes a right under Florida's constitution for consumers to own or lease solar equipment installed on their property to generate electricity for their own use. State and local governments shall retain their abilities to protect consumer rights and public health, safety and welfare, and to ensure that consumers who do not choose to install solar are not required to subsidize the costs of backup power and electric grid access to those who do."</i></p> <p>A YES vote on this amendment will lead to limitations on consumers who install solar equipment from selling power back to the electrical utilities.</p> <p>Passage requires 60% of the voters to approve.</p>	<p>Details: Currently, there is nothing interfering in the "right" for consumers to own or lease solar panels, nor is there anything stopping state and local governments to "protect consumer rights and public health, safety and welfare". The first part of this amendment is specious. What it would accomplish, if passed, is a clear path for utilities to protect their monopoly on power generation. Now that technology is readily available to feed consumer generated power back into the electric grid (as opposed to storing daytime sun power in storage batteries), shifting generation capacity away from the utility monopolies represents a clear threat to their revenue base. This amendment (created and funded by the utilities) would provide a framework in which they could move to prohibit "net metering" - in which the consumer is compensated for the electricity they produce.</p> <p>Pro: From the utility's perspective, it will help them maintain their monopoly.</p> <p>Con: Since net metering is a means that can help make consumer solar generation viable without endless government subsidies, passage of this amendment could be a significant setback to the solar industry in Florida.</p> <p>Supporters: The Consumers for Smart Solar PAC is the primary proponent of this amendment and has spent about \$19M to date to insure its passage. It is funded by all of the major utilities, including FPL (\$5.5M), Duke Energy (\$5.7M), Gulf Power (\$2.1M), Tampa Electric (\$3M).</p> <p>Opponents: There are a number of groups opposing this amendment from both sides of the political spectrum, including the League of Women Voters, AFL-CIO, Green Party of Florida, and the Florida Education Association on the one hand, and the Libertarian Party of Florida, Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship on the other. The Florida Solar Energy Industries Association, and Floridians for Solar Choice oppose the amendment.</p>
2	 <p>USE OF MARIJUANA DEBILITATING MEDICAL CONDITIONS</p>	<p>BALLOT TEXT: <i>"Allows medical use of marijuana for individuals with debilitating medical conditions as determined by a licensed Florida physician. Allows caregivers to assist patients' medical use of marijuana. The Department of Health shall register and regulate centers that produce and distribute marijuana for medical purposes and shall issue identification cards to patients and caregivers. Applies only to Florida law. Does not immunize violations of federal law or any non-medical use, possession or production of marijuana."</i></p> <p>A YES vote on this amendment supports the legalization of marijuana production, sale and use in Florida for individuals with a medical prescription for it.</p> <p>Passage requires 60% of the voters to approve.</p> <p>A similar amendment was narrowly defeated in 2014 with 57.6% of the vote (60% required to win).</p>	<p>Details: Placed by petition, this amendment would insure that the use of marijuana prescribed for individual patients for a "debilitating medical condition", does not subject the patient, caregiver, physician, or treatment center to criminal or civil liability. The Florida Department of Health would regulate medical marijuana and issue id cards to patients and caregivers. The amendment contains limitations to apply only to approved medical use, does not allow operation of motor vehicles under the influence, nor does it require accommodation in the workplace or reimbursement from health insurance. The use of non intoxicating marijuana (eg. "Charlotte's Web") is already permitted under Florida law.</p> <p>Pro: Doctors can prescribe controlled substances (Morphine, etc.), but not marijuana, which also has positive health purposes and is much safer to use. It is useful for the treatment of many diseases and the side effects of their treatments. Under a doctor's supervision, it is no more subject to addiction or abuse than any other prescribed medication.</p> <p>Con: "Debilitating medical condition" is subject to interpretation, leading to anyone who wants marijuana being able to get it. Lax oversight by the state could lead to abuse, fraud and accidents.</p> <p>Supporters: United for Care, SEIU, FL Democrat Party, AFL-CIO, AFSME, ACLU, Planned Parenthood, NORML</p> <p>Opponents: Drug Free Florida Committee, Florida Chamber of Commerce, PBC Substance Awareness Coalition, Florida Medical Association</p>

Ballot Number	Title	Description	Arguments
3	 <p>TAX EXEMPTION FOR TOTALLY AND PERMANENTLY DISABLED FIRST RESPONDERS.</p>	<p>BALLOT TEXT: <i>"Proposing an amendment to the State Constitution to authorize a first responder, who is totally and permanently disabled as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty, to receive relief from ad valorem taxes assessed on homestead property, if authorized by general law. If approved by voters, the amendment takes effect January 1, 2017."</i></p> <p>A YES vote on this amendment would enable the Legislature to exempt first responders with a total disability from an amount up to the entire amount of their property tax on a homestead property.</p> <p>Passage requires 60% of the voters to approve.</p>	<p>Details: This is an enabling amendment which, if passed, would require the legislature to enact a specific statute providing the tax relief and specify the portion of the tax bill exempted.</p> <p>Pro: This amendment adds another category of Homestead exemptions to the constitution, adding disabled first responders to the list which includes low-income seniors, disabled veterans, and the spouses of first responders killed in the line of duty.</p> <p>Con: It further complicates the already cumbersome area of homestead exemptions in the Florida Constitution (Article VII-Section 6) and further weakens the principle that all taxpayers should be treated objectively and consistently in the law.</p> <p>Supporters: This ballot amendment was introduced into the Legislature by Representative Larry Metz (R, FH32-Lake County) and passed unanimously by both the House and Senate.</p> <p>Opponents: No obvious opponents appear to be working against this bill.</p>
5	 <p>HOMESTEAD TAX EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN SENIOR, LOW-INCOME, LONG-TERM RESIDENTS; DETERMINATION OF JUST VALUE.</p>	<p>BALLOT TEXT: <i>"Proposing an amendment to the State Constitution to revise the homestead tax exemption that may be granted by counties or municipalities for property with just value less than \$250,000 owned by certain senior, low-income, long-term residents to specify that just value is determined in the first tax year the owner applies and is eligible for the exemption. The amendment takes effect January 1, 2017, and applies retroactively to exemptions granted before January 1, 2017."</i></p> <p>A YES vote on this amendment defines the assessed value of a property owned by a qualifying senior as of the date of first application for the exemption for the purposes of meeting the \$250K cap.</p> <p>Passage requires 60% of the voters to approve.</p>	<p>Details: This is a "fix up" to an amendment passed in a previous year. It will prevent rising valuations surpassing the \$250K cap from removing the exemption of someone who previously qualified and still meets the income limit.</p> <p>Pro: It corrects the language to more closely meet the intent of the original amendment.</p> <p>Con: None, if you accept the previous passage of the defining exemption.</p> <p>Supporters: Introduced by District 111 (Hialiah) Representative Bryan Avila, the defining bills passed both chambers unanimously.</p> <p>Opponents: No obvious opponents appear to be working against this bill.</p>

Ballot Number	Title	Description	Arguments
County Ballot Questions			
PBC 1	 <p style="text-align: center;">PALM BEACH COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOLS, CITIES AND COUNTY GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE ONE-CENT SALES SURTAX</p>	<p>BALLOT TEXT: <i>"To enhance education by improving district-owned school buildings, equipment, technology and security; purchase school buses, public safety vehicles and equipment; and equip, construct and repair roads, bridges, signals, streetlights, sidewalks, parks, drainage, shoreline and wastewater infrastructure, recreational and governmental facilities; shall the County levy a one-cent sales surtax beginning January 1, 2017 and automatically ending on or before December 31, 2026, with independent oversight by citizen committees?"</i></p> <p>A YES vote on this questions will raise the county sales tax on purchases from 6% to 7%.</p> <p>Passage requires a majority of the voters to approve.</p>	<p>Details: If passed, the PBC sales tax will be raised from 6% to 7%. The estimated \$2.7B collected over 10 years would be allocated 50% (\$135M per year) to the School District, 30% (\$81M per year) to the county government, and 20% (\$54M per year) to the municipalities. Unlike the first 6 cents, all of this money would be spent locally (less a small collection fee to the state). The enabling statute (FL212.055(2)) requires that the money must be spent on "infrastructure", which is defined as: "Any fixed capital expenditure or fixed capital outlay associated with the construction, reconstruction, or improvement of public facilities that have a life expectancy of 5 or more years, any related land acquisition, land improvement, design, and engineering costs, and all other professional and related costs required to bring the public facilities into service".</p> <p>Pro: If passed, it will provide funds to address infrastructure projects that have been deferred over the years. From the perspective of the county and the school district, it provides a 10 year revenue stream that cannot be challenged in the budget process and will have much less public scrutiny than ad-valorem taxes. It will free up ad-valorem dollars to spend on other priorities such as employee raises and mitigate the budget busting effect of year after year increases for the Sheriff (over which the county commissions has little control.) It is estimated that tourists will pay approximately 25% of the taxes collected.</p> <p>Con: It is a net tax increase of \$270M per year, with no offsets to property taxes. It is regressive and will affect low income residents the hardest. It is not subject to the scrutiny applied to the annual ad-valorem budget. It creates an incentive to purchase outside the county (Both Broward and Martin are at 6%). It is not an "infrastructure maintenance tax" but includes many new capital projects. Unlike an infrastructure bond that would raise just enough money for critical needs, this granular tax generates a specific amount of money, and low priority projects will be funded in order to spend it all.</p> <p>Supporters: The county government and school system is joined by the Economic Council and the Chambers of Commerce in supporting this tax.</p> <p>Opponents: There is currently no funded opposition to the tax, but polling done earlier in the year suggests that it is a significantly unpopular proposal given the year after year tax increases we have seen from rising valuations and flat millage.</p>
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