

Constitutional Amendment Election: November 8, 2011

Proposition 1, SJR 14: Tax Exemptions for the Spouses of Deceased Disabled Veterans

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a 100 percent or totally disabled veteran."

Summary: Currently, the Texas Constitution exempts the residential homesteads of totally disabled veterans from property taxes. This would extend the exemption to the veteran's surviving spouse, as long as the survivor does not remarry and the property remains the survivor's residential homestead.

Supporters: Veterans' spouses make great sacrifices, many of which are financial, for our country's safety and security. Extending the tax exemption to disabled veterans' surviving spouses is an appropriate tribute to their role in securing our freedoms.

Opponents: Texas should be cautious about granting property tax exemptions. This reduces revenue for local government, and increases the burden on other taxpayers.

Proposition 2, SJR 4: Bonds for Water Resources Development

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of additional general obligation bonds by the Texas



Governor Perry and Rep. Laubenberg on the House Floor



Participating in a civics lesson with District 89 students

Water Development Board in an amount not to exceed \$6 billion at any time outstanding."

Summary: The constitutional amendment would allow the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to continually issue bonds for the Texas Water Development Fund II without future voter approval, as long as the principal does not exceed \$6 Billion. These bonds provide assistance to local water and wastewater projects.

Supporters: Entities need state backing to complete these expensive and vital water resource projects. TWDB now depends on recurring constitutional amendment approval to ensure Texas' water future. This would allow a predictable, perpetual bond authority.

Opponents: The bond debt is paid for by the taxpayers. Because of the large amounts of money involved, repeated voter approval should be required for TWDB to continue issuing bonds.

Proposition 3, SJR 50: Bonds for Government Loans to Students

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of general obligation bonds of the State of Texas to finance educational loans to students."

Summary: This constitutional amendment would give the Higher Education Coordinating Board authority to fund student loans through bonds, as long as the total amount does not exceed the amount previously approved by voters. At present, legislative and voter approval is required for additional bond capacity.



Attending the City of Anna's National Night Out

Supporters: Education costs continue to increase. The state must do everything possible to help students achieve their higher education.

Opponents: Allowing perpetual bonding authority is a dangerous precedent, especially when Texas is struggling economically. Increases should be subject to voter and legislative approval to maintain accountability.

Proposition 4, HJR 63: Use of Property Taxes for Transportation Funding

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit a county to issue bonds or notes to finance the development or redevelopment of an unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted area and to pledge for repayment of the bonds or notes increases in ad valorem taxes imposed by the county on property in the area."

Summary: The constitutional amendment would allow counties to pledge increased property tax collections for transportation funding in special reinvestment zones.

Supporters: Cities and towns already use increased property tax collections for this purpose. This would give counties the same tool to finance transportation projects.

Opponents: The property tax system is problematic and already overburdened. Texas should not expand use of these taxes. Approval

of this amendment will only serve as an incentive to increase property value appraisals, and will not address the true problems with state transportation funding.

Proposition 5, SJR 26: Interlocal Contracts

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to allow cities or counties to enter into interlocal contracts with other cities or counties without the imposition of a tax or the provision of a sinking fund."

Summary: This constitutional amendment would allow the Legislature to authorize cities and counties to enter into interlocal contracts with other cities or counties without meeting certain tax assessment and sinking fund requirements. Currently, a city or county cannot take out debt unless it levies a tax sufficient to pay the interest and creates a sinking fund of at least two percent.

Supporters: Authorizing this policy would allow cities and counties to jointly administer programs and services without facing unnecessary barriers. This would save taxpayer money by reducing duplication of government services.

Opponents: If the merged programs are implemented poorly, transparency and accountability could be an issue.



Hosting Sarah Satterwhite as an Honorary Page, and her grandfather, Bill Satterwhite, former state legislator

Proposition 6, HJR 109: Fund Transfers to the Available School Fund

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment clarifying references to the permanent school fund and allowing the legislature by general law to direct the General Land Office to distribute revenue from permanent school fund land or other properties to the available school fund."

Summary: The Permanent School Fund (PSF) is a special supplemental fund that provides additional monies to school districts. Those funds are distributed by the State Board of Education (SBOE) through the Available School Fund (ASF). This amendment would expand authority for distribution of those funds to the General Land Office (GLO) or the School Land Board (SLB). It would allow the GLO or SLB to distribute up to \$300 million. The amendment also will temporarily increase the market value of the PSF to allow the distributions.

Supporters: The General Land Office is already making distributions when needed and this amendment brings constitutional clarity for the Attorney General's office.

Opponents: This amendment is unnecessary because the State Board of Education can act quickly to transfer the proceeds to the Available School Fund. Additionally, it is inappropriate to artificially inflate the market value of these properties, even if it is a temporary measure.



Pastor Kris Segrest, First Baptist Church of Wylie, serving as Pastor of the Day on Collin County Day



Speaking to the Allen Area Patriots

Proposition 7, SJR 28: El Paso Parks

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to fund the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities."

Summary: This constitutional amendment would allow El Paso County to finance and construct parks and recreation centers through property taxes.

Supporters: Ten counties already have this option. This is an issue that only applies to El Paso County and has support from the local officials.

Opponents: This is a vehicle for new taxation of El Paso residents, which is especially imprudent in these tough economic times. Ten counties already allow this additional property taxation; Texas should not precipitate a trend that would lead to all counties having this authority.

Proposition 8, SJR 16: Tax Breaks for Water Stewardship

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment providing for the appraisal for ad valorem tax purposes of open-space land devoted to water-stewardship purposes on the basis of its productive capacity."

Constitutional Amendments



Exercising our Second Amendment Rights at a CHL Class

Summary: The constitutional amendment would allow landowners to receive property tax exemptions for water stewardship. The tax exemption amount would be based on the productive water capacity of the land.

Supporters: This measure would be a significant incentive for private property owners to engage in water conservation. This is particularly important given predicted future water shortages and the fact that the vast majority of Texas water is on private land.

Opponents: Tax exemptions are already available for wildlife management and for agriculture. Too many tax exemptions result in additional burdens on remaining property owners.

Proposition 9, SJR 9: Gubernatorial Pardon Authority

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment authorizing the governor to grant a pardon to a person who successfully completes a term of deferred adjudication community supervision."

Summary: Currently, the Governor can only pardon individuals with criminal convictions, but cannot pardon defendants who have entered a plea of guilty or no contest and have completed probation without a conviction. This amendment would allow the Governor to do so.

Supporters: Although individuals who have received deferred adjudication are not convicted, they still carry the arrest and community supervi-

sion on their record. They deserve a chance to have their records expunged and so improve their chances to remain in society and gain employment.

Opponents: The record of the individual's arrest and community supervision should remain public information. It is risky at any time to restrict access to this type of information.

Proposition 10, SJR 37: Resign-to-Run Requirements

The Ballot will Read: "The constitutional amendment to change the length of the unexpired term that causes the automatic resignation of certain elected county or district officeholders if they become candidates for another office."

Summary: At present, if a county official files candidacy for another office with more than one year left in their current term, they must resign to run. This constitutional amendment would only require county officials to resign to run if there is more than one year and thirty days left.

Supporters: This amendment is necessary to line up with the earlier filing deadlines Texas has enacted to comply with the federal Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act, which allows overseas voters more time to meet voting deadlines.

Opponents: Resign-to-run should be repealed. Other elected officials are not required to resign when they run for another public office; county and district officials should be allowed this same benefit.



Visiting with Hayes and Ann Hettinger, State Director, Concerned Women for America



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State Representative **JODIE LAUBENBERG**

DISTRICT 89



Dear Friends,

This November, ten Texas State constitutional amendments will be on the ballot for your consideration. This is an opportunity for all Texans to make their voices heard in our state's political process. I hope that you will be among those who help choose Texas' direction for the future.

The deadline to register to vote is October 11, 2011. Early voting begins on October 24, and Election Day is on November 8th. To find your nearest polling place, you can visit your county's election website, or you can call the Secretary of State's Elections Division at 1-800-252-8683.

Texas law allows you to take this newsletter into the voting booth; I hope you will find it a useful reference as you consider your position on each issue. As always, I encourage you to contact me should you have any questions or concerns. I will be more than happy to assist you in any way I can.

Respectfully,

Jodie Laubenberg
State Representative, District 89



Texas State Representative **JODIE LAUBENBERG**

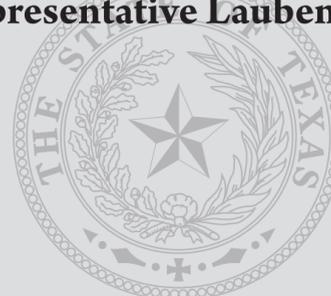
House District 89

CAPITOL REPORT

How to Contact

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