



Tommy Williams

Texas Senator

**State Senate
District 4**
Chambers
Harris*
Jefferson*
Liberty
Montgomery*
Orange
*Partial County



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TOMMY WILLIAMS

TEXAS STATE SENATOR
DISTRICT 4

September 2009

Dear Neighbors:

Please mark your calendar to vote in the upcoming Constitutional Amendment Election on Tuesday, November 3rd.

One of our most cherished freedoms as Americans is the right to vote. I urge you to protect and exercise your right to vote as a Texan and an American by marking your calendar for this important election. Early Voting begins Monday, October 19th and continues through Friday, October 30th.

The Texas Legislature has proposed eleven constitutional amendments for your review. I have prepared this Constitutional Amendment Voter's Guide to help explain the issues. I have also included a "Voters Aid" which you can cut out, initial, and take to the polls when you vote.

The propositions include such diverse subjects as homeowner and property owner appraisal tax reforms (Propositions #2, #3 & #5); creating more Texas university research jobs and Tier One Universities in Texas (Proposition #4); Veterans' Issues (Propositions #6 & #8); establishing the public's right to use and access public beaches (Proposition #9); and preventing abusive eminent domain authority from taking your property for economic development or other non-public use purposes (Proposition #11).

Some of the items on the ballot will have no direct effect on you. Others may affect you greatly. I hope you will study the arguments for and against the propositions in this Voter's Guide, use the Voters Aid, and go vote.

As always, if you need additional information on any matter, or would like a further explanation of any of these constitutional amendments, please contact my office.

Sincerely,

Tommy Williams

P.S. I was proud to co-author the three appraisal reform proposed amendments you are being asked to vote on this November 3rd. Those are Propositions #2, #3 and #5. These propositions specifically relate to homeowner and property owner protections from abusive tax appraisals. As Chairman of the State Senate Subcommittee on Property and Revenue Caps, I held public hearings statewide over the past two years gathering citizen input which was used to now offer these proposed amendments for voter approval.

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NOVEMBER 3RD CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
VOTERS GUIDE
Election Day: Tuesday, November 3, 2009
(Early Voting October 19 — 30)

PROPOSITIONS	ARGUMENTS "FOR"	ARGUMENTS "AGAINST"
<p>1 Allowing Buffer Zones Next to Military Installations "The constitutional amendment authorizing the financing, including through tax increment financing, of the acquisition by municipalities and counties of buffer areas or open spaces adjacent to a military installation for the prevention of encroachment or for the construction of roadways, utilities, or other infrastructure to protect or promote the mission of the military installation."</p>	<p>The amendment takes care of a growing need in Texas by providing cities and counties clear authorization to use bonds or notes to buy land for creating buffer areas around military installations.</p>	<p>Property owners are already overburdened with high property taxes, and this amendment could provide cities and counties with another means to justify an increase in your property taxes.</p>
<p>2 Requiring Residence Homestead Appraisal Based Solely on Homestead Value "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for the ad valorem taxation of a residence homestead solely on the basis of the property's value as a residence homestead."</p>	<p>The amendment protects homeowners from increased property taxes because it restricts appraisals to be based on residential property value only - not what the property might be worth if it were converted to commercial use.</p>	<p>The amendment moves the property appraisal process further away from a true valuation of the property according to its worth. Allowing residential homestead property to be valued solely on its residential use and exempted from a highest and best use valuation will reduce taxable property values and therefore reduce local tax revenue.</p>
<p>3 Allowing for Uniform Appraisal Standards and Procedures "The constitutional amendment providing for uniform standards and procedures for the appraisal of property for ad valorem tax purposes."</p>	<p>Property located in one county should be appraised in the same manner and by the same rules as similar property located in another county in Texas. Property owners should be treated fairly and equally across the state.</p>	<p>County appraisal districts already know their local markets and economic realities better than state officials and a one-size-fits-all approach.</p>
<p>4 Creating More University Research Jobs and Tier One Universities in Texas "The constitutional amendment establishing the national research university fund to enable emerging research universities in this state to achieve national prominence as major research universities and transferring the balance of the higher education fund to the national research university fund."</p>	<p>Tier-one universities are responsible for developing a highly skilled, educated workforce which is vital for Texas to maintain success in a globally-competitive economy. Texas trails other states in the number of Tier-one universities. Lack of major research and development is each year costing billions of dollars in lost opportunities to attract research funding.</p>	<p>In the current economic climate, Texas should be focused on universities closest to attaining Tier-one status, and devoting the state's limited funding sources to those institutions instead of spreading funding out to emerging research universities.</p>
<p>5 Allowing Voluntary Consolidation of Appraisal Boards in Under-populated Areas "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to authorize a single board of equalization for two or more adjoining appraisal entities that elect to provide for consolidated equalizations."</p>	<p>Rural, less populated counties have a difficult time finding enough qualified candidates to serve on appraisal boards. Allowing consolidated appraisal review boards increases efficiency, and would only be done on a voluntary basis.</p>	<p>Local appraisal review boards are more familiar with their markets and local economies. The amendment removes this familiarity by allowing board members from adjoining districts.</p>
<p>6 Renewing Veterans' Land Board Bond Authority for Land & Mortgage Loans "The constitutional amendment authorizing the Veterans' Land Board to issue general obligation bonds in amounts equal to or less than amounts previously authorized."</p>	<p>The amendment will help the Veterans' Land Board continue financing land purchases and home mortgages for veterans at lower than market rates as a reward for their service to this country. It would make obtaining funding for the Veterans' Housing Assistance and Veterans' Land programs more stable and efficient.</p>	<p>The amendment could expand state debt by authorizing the Veterans Land Board to issue more than \$2 billion in new state-backed bonds.</p>
<p>7 Allowing Texas State Guard Members to Serve in Other Government Offices "The constitutional amendment to allow an officer or enlisted member of the Texas State Guard or other state militia or military force to hold other civil offices."</p>	<p>Many civil/government officials are members or would like to become members of the Texas State Guard or other Texas military forces. The amendment would allow them to do so while still holding another civil office. Being an officer or enlisted person in the Texas State Guard or militia is not incompatible with being a civil official.</p>	<p>All specific exceptions should be eliminated from the constitution and be replaced with a general prohibition against holding two offices simultaneously. The legislature can then make any needed exceptions by statute, and the court system can determine on a case-by-case basis whether the same person can hold two offices at the same time.</p>
<p>8 Authorizing the State of Texas to Contribute Resources to Veterans' Hospitals "The constitutional amendment authorizing the state to contribute money, property, and other resources for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of veterans' hospitals in this state."</p>	<p>This amendment would improve access to medical care for Texas veterans, especially in underserved areas. It would ensure, beyond question, the state could contribute to a federal initiative to build, operate, and maintain veterans' hospitals in the state.</p>	<p>Specifically authorizing state contributions for veterans' hospital facilities previously funded exclusively by the federal government could lead to the expectation that the state would contribute a portion of the funding for future facilities.</p>
<p>9 Establishing the Public's Right to Use and Access Public Beaches "The constitutional amendment to protect the right of the public, individually and collectively, to access and use the public beaches bordering the seaward shore of the Gulf of Mexico."</p>	<p>The amendment would strengthen the Open Beaches Act by preserving it in the Texas Constitution. It would preserve access to Texas beaches for present and future generations.</p>	<p>The amendment would lock into the Constitution a law which has allowed the state to force property owners to remove structures ending up on the public beach when vegetation lines shift due to weather events and erosion.</p>
<p>10 Allowing Emergency Service District Board Members to Serve Four Year Terms "The constitutional amendment to provide that elected members of the governing boards of emergency services districts may serve terms not to exceed four years."</p>	<p>The amendment would promote stability and continuity on emergency service district boards by allowing board members more time to gain experience.</p>	<p>The amendment will diminish public oversight of the members of the governing boards of emergency services districts. Those board members who are elected should be held accountable to the voters by election every two years.</p>
<p>11 Restricting Eminent Domain to Taking Property for Public Purposes "The constitutional amendment to prohibit the taking, damaging, or destroying of private property for public use unless the action is for the ownership, use, and enjoyment of the property by the State, a political subdivision of the State, the public at large, or entities granted the power of eminent domain under law or for the elimination of urban blight on a particular parcel of property, but not for certain economic development or enhancement of tax revenue purposes, and to limit the legislature's authority to grant the power of eminent domain to an entity."</p>	<p>The amendment would protect property owners from instances where private property is taken because it is "blighted," then transferred to another private owner in the name of economic development. This amendment adds key protections against abuses of the power of eminent domain by clarifying what constitutes a legitimate "public use." It will restrict the use of eminent domain only when absolutely necessary.</p>	<p>The amendment would erode a municipality's ability to designate a blighted area and use its eminent domain authority to promote urban renewal.</p>

Study The Amendments Before You Vote!

Election Day: Tuesday, November 3, 2009

Early Voting: October 19-30, 2009

Please carefully study the pros and cons of each proposed amendment before you vote.

To assist you with your voting, you may want to review your position on this "Practice Ballot" before you vote. State law allows you to take this information into the polls with you **if you sign your name or initial this "Voters Aid"**. Please feel free to cut out this "Voters Aid" and take it with you when you vote.

Senator Tommy Williams

November 3rd Constitutional Amendment Practice Ballot/Election Day Aid



- | | | For | Against |
|-----|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| #1 | Allowing Buffer Zones Next to Military Installations
"The constitutional amendment authorizing the financing, including through tax increment financing, of the acquisition by municipalities and counties of buffer areas or open spaces adjacent to a military installation for the prevention of encroachment or for the construction of roadways, utilities, or other infrastructure to protect or promote the mission of the military installation." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #2 | Requiring Residence Homestead Appraisal Based Solely on Homestead Value
"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for the ad valorem taxation of a residence homestead solely on the basis of the property's value as a residence homestead." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #3 | Allowing for Uniform Appraisal Standards and Procedures
"The constitutional amendment providing for uniform standards and procedures for the appraisal of property for ad valorem tax purposes." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #4 | Creating More University Research Jobs and Tier One Universities in Texas
"The constitutional amendment establishing the national research university fund to enable emerging research universities in this state to achieve national prominence as major research universities and transferring the balance of the higher education fund to the national research university fund." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #5 | Allowing Voluntary Consolidation of Appraisal Boards in Under-populated Areas
"The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to authorize a single board of equalization for two or more adjoining appraisal entities that elect to provide for consolidated equalizations." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #6 | Renewing Veterans' Land Board Bond Authority for Land & Mortgage Loans
"The constitutional amendment authorizing the Veterans' Land Board to issue general obligation bonds in amounts equal to or less than amounts previously authorized." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #7 | Allowing Texas State Guard Members to Serve in Other Government Offices
"The constitutional amendment to allow an officer or enlisted member of the Texas State Guard or other state militia or military force to hold other civil offices." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #8 | Authorizing the State of Texas to Contribute Resources to Veterans' Hospitals
"The constitutional amendment authorizing the state to contribute money, property, and other resources for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of veterans' hospitals in this state." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| #9 | Establishing the Public's Right to Use and Access Public Beaches
"The constitutional amendment to protect the right of the public, individually and collectively, to access and use the public beaches bordering the seaward shore of the Gulf of Mexico." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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"The constitutional amendment to prohibit the taking, damaging, or destroying of private property for public use unless the action is for the ownership, use, and enjoyment of the property by the State, a political subdivision of the State, the public at large, or entities granted the power of eminent domain under law or for the elimination of urban blight on a particular parcel of property, but not for certain economic development or enhancement of tax revenue purposes, and to limit the legislature's authority to grant the power of eminent domain to an entity." | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

• Your Signature or Initials Are Required to Personalize this
"Voters Aid" If You Want to Take This to The Polls to Vote.





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Inside: A Voters Guide on the November 3rd
 Constitutional Amendment Election



**State Senate
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 *Partial County

November 3rd
Constitutional Amendment Voters Guide
 Election Day: Tuesday, November 3
 Early Voting: Monday, October 19 through Friday, October 30

THE TEXAS SENATE IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, RELIGION, AGE OR DISABILITY IN EMPLOYMENT OR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES.

HELPFUL TOLL-FREE NUMBERS

Abuse Hotline (children, elderly, disabled)	800-252-5400
Children’s Health Insurance (CHIP)	800-647-6558
Child Support Enforcement	800-252-8014
Consumer Protection (Attorney General)	800-621-0508
Consumer Credit Helpline	800-538-1579
Crime Victims Compensation	800-983-9933
Crime Stoppers	800-252-8477
Emergency Roadside Assistance	800-525-5555
Governor’s Citizen Assistance Hotline	800-843-5789
Injured Workers	800-578-4677
Insurance Information and Assistance	800-252-3439
Legal Referral	800-252-9690
Medical Hotline	800-252-8263
Runaway Hotline	888-580-4357
Student Financial Aid	877-782-7322
Taxpayer Information	800-252-5555
Voter Registration/Elections	800-252-8683
Youth Hotline	800-210-2278

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