

POLL POINTS TO TROUBLE FOR MANY BALLOT PROPOSALS

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TALLAHASSEE --- Only four of the 13 state constitutional amendments on the November ballot have enough voter support to be enacted, according to a poll from the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

The poll, conducted in late May and early June, showed four amendments with the necessary 60 percent of voter support. They are:

--- Amendment 1, which would expand the homestead property-tax exemption. It was placed on the ballot by the Legislature, with the chamber survey showing 67 percent of voters in support, 22 percent opposed and 11 percent undecided.

--- Amendment 3, which would require voter approval of gambling expansions in the state, including allowing casinos. The amendment, which was placed on the ballot through a voter petition drive backed by Disney World and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, was supported by 61 percent of voters, with 23 percent opposed and 15 percent undecided.

--- Amendment 7, which would require the payment of death benefits when law enforcement officers, paramedics, correctional officers and other “first responders” are killed while performing their official duties. The measure, which came from the Constitution Revision Commission, also would establish a governance system for the 28 state and community colleges and require a supermajority vote by university boards of trustees and the university system’s Board of Governors when raising student fees. It has support from 80 percent of voters, with 7 percent opposed and 13 percent undecided, the poll showed.

--- Amendment 8, which would impose an eight-year term limit on school board members. It would also allow an alternative process for approving public schools, including charter schools, rather than by local school boards. It would establish a requirement for teaching civic literacy in public schools. The measure, which came from the Constitution Revision Commission, has support from 75 percent of voters, with 11 percent opposed and 15 percent undecided.

In a memo sent Friday to members of the Chamber of Commerce’s board of directors, Mark Wilson, the organization’s president, noted support and opposition for the 13 amendments will be impacted by media campaigns seeking to sway voter opinion.

“In other words, these numbers will change as November approaches,” Wilson wrote.

He also noted that with the large number of amendments on the Nov. 6 general-election ballot, the most since the 1998 election, “voter fatigue is certainly a concern of ours.” But he also said the survey showed nearly nine of every 10 voters said they planned to vote on the ballot measures.

Some ballot measures fell short of the 60 percent approval requirement but were close in the survey.

Among them was Amendment 9, which would ban offshore oil drilling and vaping in workplaces and restaurants. It was supported by 55 percent of voters, with 31 percent in opposition and 14 percent undecided.

Also, Amendment 12, which would establish a new ethics standard for public officials and impose a six-year lobbying ban on state elected officials, state agency heads and local elected officials, had support from 55 percent of voters, with 18 percent in opposition and 27 percent undecided.

Among the measures with the lowest voter support was Amendment 4, which would restore voting rights to ex-felons who have served their sentences. The measure, which was the result of a petition drive, had support from 40 percent of the voters, with 17 percent opposed. However, 43 percent of the voters said they were undecided, showing there is room for supporters of the measure to persuade voters to back it.

Only 34 percent of voters supported Amendment 5, which came from the Legislature and would require a supermajority vote by the state House and Senate when enacting taxes or fees. Some 36 percent of the voters were in opposition, with 30 percent undecided, the poll showed.

Another measure that would ban greyhound racing in the state had 47 percent support from the voters, with 36 percent in opposition and 17 percent undecided. Amendment 13, which came from the Constitution Revision Commission, is being contested in court by groups that support dog racing.

The Florida Chamber of Commerce poll was conducted by Cherry Communications between May 25 and June 2. Some 605 “likely” voters were polled, including 249 Democrats, 237 Republicans and 119 others. The margin of error was 4 percentage points.