



The Abrams Agenda

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Palm Beach County Commissioner
Steven Abrams

Dealing with Iguanas



Many residents in South County (including myself) are experiencing ongoing problems with the growing population of iguanas. I recently met with officials at the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) to discuss the problem. The bottom line is these pesky creatures are here to stay and we must learn to

live with them. Unfortunately, they reproduce in large numbers and can wreak havoc on our property.

There is a lot of helpful information on dealing with these pesky creatures provided by the FFWCC at their [website](#). Here are some recommendations on discouraging Iguanas:

- Never feed iguanas.
- Keep a water hose ready and available to spray basking iguanas on pool decks or boats.
- A startling noise will also create an unwelcome atmosphere for a sunning iguana.
- Hang CDs near seawalls or dangle them like wind chimes from trees or prized plants. Their reflective surfaces often scare away iguanas.
- Protect plants with cages or screen enclosures.
- Use iguana-resistant plants such as citrus, milkweed, pigeon plum,

oleanders, coonties, etc., in your landscape.

- Avoid planting iguana favorites such as hibiscus, orchids, impatiens, roses, garden greens, melons, etc.
- Remove protective cover such as dense thickets and piles of landscape timber or rocks.
- Fill vacant burrows with rocks.

This **FFWCC link** provides additional information on removal, deterrents and prevention of iguanas. Also, online are the following links for local trappers:

www.animalrangers.com/palm-beach-county/iguana-removal.html

www.wildliferemovalservicesofflorida.com/

www.iguanacatchers.com/service.html

www.iguanacontrol.com/

www.nuisancewildliferangers.com/

www.trutechinc.com/

Please feel free to contact the FWCC Regional office at 561-625-5122 to speak with a wildlife assistance biologist or an exotic species biologist.

Getting Ready for the November Ballot



The November ballot will feature a total of 13 Constitutional Amendments. Eight of the amendments were approved by the state's Constitution Revision Commission, which meets every 20 years, and combines several issues in each ballot question. The remaining five other measures include three approved by the Legislature and two approved in petition drives.

The amendments proposed by the Legislature include an expansion of the homestead property-tax exemption and a requirement for two-thirds votes by future legislatures when raising taxes or fees.

The County projects passage of the increased homestead exemption will result in a \$27 million hole in the budget with similar losses to the city budgets.

To be approved, each amendment must receive 60% of the vote.

Amendment 1 – Increased Homestead Property Tax Exemption

To increase the current homestead exemption from \$50,000 to \$75,000. This exemption applies to the portion of home's value between \$100,000 and \$125,000 and would exclude schools district taxes.

Amendment 7 – First Responder and Military Member Survivor Benefits and Public Colleges and Universities

This will pull together three proposals, providing college tuition for the survivors of first responders and military members killed on duty, requiring university trustees to agree

The amendment could save property owners a few hundred dollars a year, but will have a substantial adverse effect on local government budgets including the county, cities, and other entities such as libraries and fire rescue. Consequently, local taxes may be increased to offset the loss of revenue.

Amendment 2 – Limitations on Property Tax Assessments

Creates a permanent 10% cap on annual non-homesteaded parcel (both residential and non-residential properties) assessments which was set to expire on 1/1/19.

Supported by the Florida Association of Realtors. According to the Property Appraiser, if the amendment fails, approximately \$28 million in unrealized tax revenue for Palm Beach County would be added.

Amendment 3 – Voter Control of Gambling in Florida

This citizen-initiated amendment, gives Florida voters the exclusive right to authorize casino gambling. Currently, the authority rests with both the Legislature and voters through constitutional amendments. Over the years, gambling bills have failed repeatedly trying to make their way through the state senate and house.

It also defines casino gambling (i.e., card games, casino games and slot machines) and clarifies that this amendment does not conflict with federal law regarding state/tribal compacts.

Supported by Voters in Charge, whose contributors include the Seminole Tribe of Florida and Disney, Inc.

Amendment 4 – Voting Restoration Amendment

by a two-thirds super majority to raise college fees (not including tuition) and establishing the state college system in the Florida Constitution. Universities are in the state Constitution but state colleges are not.

Amendment 8 - School Board Term Limits and Duties and Public Schools

The amendment has three parts. It proposes eight-year school board term limits, expanded civics education in public schools, and enabling charter schools to bypass local school boards by expanding the state's authority to control and supervise them.

Supporters of the amendment say the language would ensure charter schools are not unfairly denied and opponents allege it would shrink local board autonomy and oversight.

Amendment 9 – Prohibits Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling and Prohibits Vaping in Enclosed Indoor Workplaces

Prohibits drilling for the exploration or extraction of oil and natural gas beneath all state-owned waters between the mean high water line and the state's outermost territorial boundaries.

Also, bans the use of vapor-generating electronic devices in enclosed indoor workplaces with exceptions such as private residences, retail tobacco and vaping shops, smoking-permitted guest rooms in hotels; and stand-alone bars.

The oil and gas industry opposes this amendment.

Amendment 10 – State and Local Government Structure and Operation

This links four proposals. It would require establishing a state

To restore the voting rights of Floridians with felony convictions after they complete all terms of their sentence including parole or probation.

The amendment would not apply to those convicted of murder or sexual offenses, who would continue to be permanently barred from voting unless the Governor and Cabinet vote to restore their voting rights on a case by case basis.

This petition-driven amendment is the subject of an ongoing legal battle that is in the process of an appeal in the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Reportedly, it will probably remain unresolved before the vote in November.

Amendment 5 – Supermajority Vote Required to Impose, Authorize, or Raise State Taxes or Fees

Prohibits the legislature from imposing, authorizing, or raising a state tax or fee except through legislation which must be approved by a two-thirds vote of each house of the legislature. The bill may not contain any other subject.

This proposal does not authorize a state tax or fee otherwise prohibited by the Constitution and does not apply to fees or taxes imposed or authorized to be imposed by a county, municipality, school board, or special district.

The Florida Chamber of Commerce and other business groups support this amendment.

Amendment 6 – Rights of Crime Victims; Judges

Creates constitutional rights for victims of crime, requires courts to provide victims, their families and lawful representatives with specific

Department of Veterans Affairs and create Office of Domestic Security and Counterterrorism within Department of Law Enforcement.

It would also prohibit counties from abolishing local offices such as the sheriff, property appraiser, supervisor of election, tax collector, and clerk of court.

Lastly, the amendment requires the state's legislative session to start in January rather than March in even-numbered years.

Local governments are opposed because they believe the local office provision undermines the principles of home rule.

Amendment 11 – Property Rights, Removal of Obsolete Provision and Criminal Statues

Removes discriminatory language related to real property rights and obsolete language repealed by voters. Deletes a provision that an amendment of a criminal statute will not affect prosecution or penalties for a crime committed before the amendment. It will retain the current provision allowing prosecution of a crime committed before the repeal of a criminal statute.

Amendment 12 – Lobbying and Abuse of Office by Public Officers

Expands current restrictions on lobbying for compensation by former public officers to six years after leaving office. It creates restrictions on lobbying for compensation by public officers currently in office and prohibits certain abuses of public office for personal benefit.

Amendment 13 – Ends Dog Racing

Phases out commercial dog racing in connection with wagering by 2020. Other gaming activities are not

rights including due process, right to be treated with fairness and respect, right to have their welfare considered when setting bail and right to be free of unreasonable delays in proceedings. It also requires judges and hearing officers to independently interpret statutes and rules rather than deferring to a government agency's interpretation.

Additionally, it also raises the mandatory retirement age of state judges from 70 to 75 years; deletes authorization for judges to complete term if one-half of term has been served by retirement age.

affected.

There are about a dozen dog tracks in Florida and the practice has drawn criticism from animal rights advocates who assert that the practice is inhumane. The Florida Greyhound Association has sued seeking to remove the amendment from the ballot. (A Leon County judge ruled August 1 that it should be removed from the ballot, saying it misled voters. The state has appealed the decision.)

Since Palm Beach County is home to the Palm Beach Kennel Club which features dog racing, this would have an adverse economic effect on the local economy such as job loss.

New Boca Raton Offshore Reef



The county's Environmental Resources Management Department recently created a new artificial reef offshore north of the Boca Inlet in about 35 feet of water. The Boca Step Reef consists of 530 tons of limestone rock and will attract juvenile fish and marine species moving from inshore waters to offshore natural reefs. The reef was placed offshore to assist in reestablishing lost nearshore habitat.

BCC Briefs

At the August 14, 2018, Board of County Commissioners meeting, the board took the following action:

Palm Tran – approved the Title VI Service equity analyses required by the Federal Transit Administration indicating that major service changes to the Palm Tran network have no disparate impact to minority or low-income populations and approving the recommended major service changes proposed by the Route Performance Maximization initiative, effective September 30, 2018. Using existing resources, Palm Tran's new fixed-route bus network will provide more convenient and faster service to key employment, educational and economic centers throughout the county.

Schools – approved placing a referendum on the November 6 ballot authorizing the School Board of Palm Beach County to levy 1.00 mill of ad valorem millage

for operational purposes of non-charter district schools for a four-year period beginning July 1, 2019.

Tax Collector – adopted a resolution instructing the Tax Collector’s Office not to mail notices to any taxpayer for any parcel when the amount owed is less than \$15. The previous minimum tax bill notification was \$5.

Loxahatchee Groves – approved an interlocal agreement with the town of Loxahatchee Groves allowing the Loxahatchee Groves Water Control District (LGWCD), which recently became a dependent special district of the town, to continue to provide water control, drainage, and road maintenance services to several unincorporated properties that are now outside the LGWCD’s jurisdictional boundaries.

Project Mercury – conceptually approved a cash incentive of \$45,000 over six years for Project Mercury. The provider of emergency response systems is contemplating expanding its facility in Palm Beach County or moving to Alabama. The project will invest \$3.6 million to improve and equip an existing facility and create 150 new jobs over a three-year period at an annualized average wage of \$53,298 and retain 198 existing jobs. The estimated five-year local economic impact is \$295 million.

Sikorsky Aircraft – revoked a three-year ad valorem tax exemption granted to Sikorsky Aircraft in 2016. Sikorsky met the agreement’s job creation and maintenance requirements, but was not able to document compliance with the job advertising requirements. Rather than request a waiver, Sikorsky intends to return all tax exemptions provided to date. No cash incentives were paid to the company.

Easements – approved utility easements with FPL, AT&T, Comcast and the city of Boca Raton over the northern half of the right of way for Canary Palm Drive in the Golf Vista planned unit development. The county is vacating its interest in a 24-foot-wide portion of Canary Palm Drive from Golf Vista Way to Palm D’Oro Road; also approved abandoning the public’s interest in a one-foot-wide section along the east edge of a 12-foot-wide drainage easement in the Meadowbrook PUD near Belvedere and Jog roads in unincorporated West Palm Beach.

Property maintenance – adopted an ordinance revising provisions in the property maintenance code to improve public safety and welfare, ensure that developed and vacant properties and abandoned golf courses meet minimum maintenance requirements, update swimming pool barrier requirements, require owners of multiple occupancy structures to provide for extermination within the structure and make changes recommended by the County Attorney's Office. Changes include requiring grass, weeds and low-growing vegetation on abandoned or inactive golf courses to be mowed to seven inches on the first 25 feet from the property line and 18 inches on the remainder of the property.

Investment policy – approved revisions to the county’s investment policy, increasing the cap on potential investment in bonds, notes, or instruments backed by the full faith and credit of the government of Israel from 3 percent to 5 percent.

Library grant – agreed to submit a letter of support to Florida Atlantic

University on its grant proposal to the National Institute of Health titled
“Increasing Research Participation in Alzheimer Disease Clinical Studies.



**If you have any questions or require assistance, please contact my office
at 561-355-2204 or email at sabrams@pbcgov.org.**
