

Defending Florida's Environment through the Constitutional Revision Commission

INTRODUCTION

Every 20 years, Florida's Governor, the Senate President, Speaker of the House, and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court appoint delegates to a 37-member commission of citizens to review the state Constitution. Known as the Constitutional Revision Commission or "CRC," this body has the authority to propose amendments to be placed on the next general election ballot in 2018. These amendments are approved with a 60% margin.

As part of its duties, the CRC holds public meetings across the state to identify issues, perform research, and draft amendments to the Florida state constitution. Unlike citizen initiatives, the Commission places proposed amendments to the constitution directly on the ballot, without collecting signatures or getting supreme court approval. The CRC proposals also do not require any legislative review.



HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROCESS

The 2017-2018 Constitutional Revision Commission is now underway and the first round of public meetings have been scheduled. Florida's wildlife, waterways, and remarkable natural areas need you to be their eyes, ears, and voices at these hearings. Proposed amendments will appear on the 2018 General Election ballot and must be approved by Florida voters with a 60% margin.

Your participation in this unique democratic process is crucial. Please attend the hearings in your area and help spread the word about these meetings with your friends and neighbors. Participation in this process would also make a great discussion item for civic groups, homeowners associations, and activist clubs.

Our lawmakers and public officials need to hear from you about the issues that matter most. Don't miss out on your chance to make your voice heard.



FROM THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION

Article II, Section 7 of the Florida Constitution states:

It shall be the policy of the state to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty. Adequate provision shall be made by law for the abatement of air and water pollution and of excessive and unnecessary noise and for the conservation and protection of natural resources.

Adequate provision shall be made by law ... for the conservation and protection of natural resources.

CONSIDER THESE TALKING POINTS AS YOU PLAN FOR YOUR REMARKS

The Commission's Process

- To ensure maximum participation by citizens, meetings of the CRC should provide ample advance notice to the public so that citizens can attend. What are your plans for notifying citizens of meetings?
- The public deserves clear information explaining the process for submitting comments and proposals, including ample notice of deadlines to submit comments and proposals.
- The CRC rules should prohibit legislators or other elected officials who serve on the Commission from accepting campaign contributions from any person or organization that is lobbying an issue before the CRC.

The Constitution as a Statement of Our Shared Values

- Florida's Constitution and voters have always placed a high value on protecting our natural resources. For example, since 1994, voters have approved numerous proposed amendments (at least 8) to our Constitution relating to conservation and clean energy.

Preserving Ecologically Sensitive and Vulnerable Lands

- In Florida, protecting conservation lands is conserving water, which is why I urge the Commission to consider proposals that acquire and restore lands necessary to protect our drinking water sources and protect the water quality in our rivers lakes and streams.
- Land conservation also provides habitat for wildlife and creates recreational opportunities for residents and visitors alike, fueling our tourism economy.

Protecting Water for the Environment

- Access to clean water sustains our growing population of 20 million residents, and our rivers, streams, lakes and springs it is the reason so many people choose to live and visit Florida.
- In Florida, our rivers, lakes, and springs are held by the state in trust for all of its citizens. As such, we hope the Commission will bolster protections for our rivers, lakes and streams, and recognize that all of our livelihoods depend on access to clean water.

Promoting a Clean Energy Future for Florida

- Florida has the potential to be among the top solar-producing states in the country, but we currently generate only 1% of our energy from solar power.
- With at least forty percent of our state's population at risk from sea-level rise, Florida is on the front lines of climate change. We cannot ignore this any longer, and must instead embrace policies that will enhance our use of clean, solar energy.
- Sparked in part by the passage of Amendment 4 and the defeat of Amendment 1 in 2016, awareness and support for forward-thinking solar policies in Florida is growing.
- We need to move our state toward an affordable, resilient energy system that relies on clean energy sources like solar and avoids risky and expensive investments in outdated fossil fuel sources.
- Going solar gives Floridians more options as consumers, decreases our dependence on fossil fuels, and creates well-paying jobs for our economy.

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Florida Conservation Voters

Tell us how the public meeting went at
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