

# ***PROPOSED FLORIDA CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS***

## **AMENDMENT 5**

This proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution would effectively eliminate state required school property taxes that provide a substantial portion of the funding for public education. While this measure does stipulate that public education would be “held harmless” from a funding perspective, it does not identify a definitive and secure funding source to make up for this major loss of secure revenues for public education. A provision in the measure to raise state sales taxes and eliminate certain tax exemptions to compensate for these lost revenues would not make up the total funding – amounting to billions of dollars -- that would be lost to public education by elimination of the property tax.

## **AMENDMENT 7**

This proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution would remove current language from the state constitution that specifically prohibits the use of taxpayers’ money for religious and other sectarian purposes and institutions. The proposal is similar to a measure approved by the Florida Legislature ten years ago that would have permitted taxpayers’ money to be used to pay tuition costs at private and religious schools by use of vouchers. That measure was declared illegal by a state appellate court. This proposed amendment uses different language to accomplish the same thing.

## **AMENDMENT 9**

This proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution resurrects the old vouchers issue to provide taxpayers’ money to fund private school tuitions. It would also require school districts to allocate a minimum of 65 percent of their total state education funding directly to classroom instruction. The language of this measure leaves open to interpretation exactly what would be included in this 65 percent category, including but not limited to various services and materials that directly support classroom instruction such as guidance counselors, social workers, security personnel and technology. Under most criteria, Broward County Public Schools already allocates more than 65 percent of the state funding it receives directly to classroom instruction. Masked in this measure is a provision to provide public funding to various alternatives to public education – the so-called voucher initiative – which would drain additional state funding from public education and channel it to private schools through tuition vouchers.

## **COMMONALITIES AMONG THE AMENDMENTS**

All three proposed amendments contain major unknown elements that would not become apparent until after passage, including alternative education funding sources for Amendment 5; unknown destinations for taxpayers’ monies associated with Amendment 7; and an undefined clear definition for what would be included and excluded for Amendment 9. These unknowns render all three proposed constitutional amendments open to wide interpretations and definitions after passage that could prove devastating to public education in Florida.

Amendment summaries and related information are available on the following websites: Florida School Boards Association ([www.fsba.org](http://www.fsba.org)); Florida Association of District School Superintendents ([www.fadss.org](http://www.fadss.org)); Florida Education Association ([www.feaweb.org](http://www.feaweb.org)); Florida Parent Teachers Association ([www.floridapta.org](http://www.floridapta.org)); Broward Parent Teachers Association ([www.browardpta.org](http://www.browardpta.org)).