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Constitutional Election November 8th

If history repeats itself, voter turnout for the November 8th Constitutional Amendments Election is likely to be very low. The highest turnout since 1999 in Galveston County occurred in 2003 (13.3%) and in Texas in 2005 (18%).

This is pretty poor participation considering the issues. For example, the year of lowest participation was 2001 and 19 amendments were proposed. While one would think home improvement loans and cancellation of special elections for vacant legislative seats were important issues, same sex marriage - one of nine proposals in 2005 - garnered far more interest throughout Texas (surely not the land title issues in Upshur and Smith Counties). The 22 amendments presented in 2003 had many Galveston County voters attention with hot button issues including changes to school funding, medical lawsuit reform and optional tax freezes for counties, cities and junior college districts likely having the greatest impact on voter activity.

The 1876 Texas Constitution is one of the longest in the nation and consists of 380 sections organized into 17 articles. Of the 643 amendments placed before voters, 467 have been approved. The reason for so many amendments is that the Texas Constitution functions as a limiting document rather than proposing a higher level public policy framework such as that provided by the much shorter US Constitution. Thus, proposals to change it should be weighed carefully by voters.

Whether a Constitutional, primary, general or local election, voting is a vitally important right and every eligible voter needs to participate. So - pull out your voter certificate, validate the address and head to the polls beginning October 24th! The last day to register or update address information is October 11th.

Voter registration applications are available at all County Tax Offices and online at www.galcotax.com or www.VoteTexas.org. If you have questions regarding your registration, contact the Voter Registration Department toll free at 1-888-976-2280. For information regarding voting times and locations or to obtain a mail-in ballot, contact the Elections Division of the County Clerk's Office at 1-409-766-2207.

The ten propositions as they will appear on the ballot along with a brief summary of each proposal may be found on the GCTO website at www.galcotax.com under the Important Information tab. The actual propositions are listed below:

Proposition 1 "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation of all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of the surviving spouse of a 100 percent or totally disabled veteran."

Proposition 2 "The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of additional general obligation bonds by the Texas Water Development Board in an amount not to exceed \$6 billion at any time outstanding."

Proposition 3 "The constitutional amendment providing for the issuance of general obligation bonds of the State of Texas to finance educational loans to students."

Proposition 4 "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit a county to issue bonds or notes to finance the development or redevelopment of an unproductive, underdeveloped, or blighted area and to pledge for repayment of the bonds or notes increases in ad valorem taxes imposed by the county on property in the area. The amendment does not provide authority for increasing ad valorem tax rates."

Proposition 5 "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to allow cities or counties to enter into interlocal contracts with other cities or counties without the imposition of a tax or the provision of a sinking fund."

Proposition 6 "The constitutional amendment clarifying references to the permanent school fund, allowing the General Land Office to distribute revenue from permanent school fund land or other properties to the available school fund to provide additional funding for public education, and providing for an increase in the market value of the permanent school fund for the purpose of allowing increased distributions from the available school fund."

Proposition 7 "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to permit conservation and reclamation districts in El Paso County to issue bonds supported by ad valorem taxes to fund the development and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities."

Proposition 8 "The constitutional amendment providing for the appraisal for ad valorem tax purposes of open-space land devoted to water-stewardship purposes on the basis of its productive capacity."

Proposition 9 "The constitutional amendment authorizing the governor to grant a pardon to a person who successfully completes a term of deferred adjudication community supervision."

Proposition 10 "The constitutional amendment to change the length of the unexpired term that causes the automatic resignation of certain elected county or district officeholders if they become candidates for another office."