April 12, 2018

Delivered Via Email

Dear Chairman Beruff and Commissioners:

It is our understanding that Commissioners will not be given the opportunity to vote separately on each of the 24 proposals that were sent to the Style and Drafting Committee along with their individual ballot titles and summaries. Rather, they will be forced to vote on combined titles and summaries for 12 ‘bundled’ revisions.

As I am sure you are aware, this dramatic departure from the 1998 CRC’s procedure of allowing commissioners the opportunity to take a final vote on each individual proposal before grouping them, has not gone unnoticed.

Some of the groupings appear to be designed to force commissioners and voters to accept constitutional changes they do not like in order to get those that they do.

Perhaps the worst example, is the grouping of three disparate education proposals included by the Style and Drafting Committee in Revision 3.

This appears to be an attempt to expand charter schools while hiding the proposal behind civics education and school board term limits. And the fact that the words “charter schools” were amended out of the proposal at the last minute is further evidence of an attempt to hide its real impact. In fact this proposal is and has always been intended to strip communities of local control over their schools and allow an unbridled expansion of charter schools. The new words in the proposal accomplish the exact same policy goal in a way that would be meaningless to the average voter. This is just further evidence of the political nature of these proceedings.

Just this week, we conducted a statewide poll of Florida voters. Some of the results may interest you:

- The ballot summary of Revision 3 was read verbatim to voters. Only 36% said they would vote for it.
- When voters are asked it they prefer that an appointed state board or local school districts authorize and control charter schools in their communities, 57% rejected the notion of state authorization and favored local control of charter schools.
- When asked if allowing additional schools to be authorized by the Legislature would create more school choice and competition or if it would be confusing and cost more, 51% of voters indicated that having state authorized and controlled schools within their local school
district would be “confusing to parents and property owners and increase cost to local taxpayers.” Only 29% thought it would bring more competition and school choice.

Some recently published polls are claimed to show that school board term limits are likely to be popular with voters. We asked if voters would support an amendment that would create school board term limits if it also meant that the local school board would not have control over some schools in the district. **Only 33% said they would support such an amendment.**

Our earlier polling showed that even as a standalone proposal, term limits for school board members only gets 56% approval ---not enough to pass the 60% threshold.

Regardless of whether you call it bundling, grouping or combining, it appears that not only is this process unfair to voters, it is likely to backfire.

On behalf of all Floridians, we urge you to stop playing political games with our Constitution. Each proposal, on its own, should get an up or down vote in the commission and the voters should have the same opportunity. We can all smell an attempted political manipulation a mile away. And right now this process is not passing the smell test.

Sincerely,

Howard Simon, Executive Director
Kirk Bailey, Political Director
**American Civil Liberties Union of Florida**

Liza McClenaghan, State Chair
**Common Cause Florida**

Ashley Walker, Director
**For Our Future Florida**

Barbara A. Petersen, President
**Florida First Amendment Foundation**

Rich Templin, Ph.D, Legislative & Political Director
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Laura Goodhue, Executive Director
**Florida Alliance of Planned Parenthood Affiliates**

Susan McGrath, Executive Director
**Florida Consumer Action Network**

Joanne McCall, President
**Florida Education Association**

Terry Sanders, President
**Florida NOW**

Joseph Pennisi, Executive Director
**Florida Policy Institute**

Pamela Goodman, President
**League of Women Voters Florida**

Linda Geller-Schwartz, Florida State Policy Advocacy Chair
**National Council of Jewish Women**

Mark Ferrulo, Executive Director
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Scott McCoy, Senior Policy Counsel
**Southern Poverty Law Center**

CC: All CRC Commission Members

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