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Blog

Tuesday, October 30th, 2012

[How to Vote on the Amendments](#)

Friends,

A lot of folks have told me recently that you would need a law degree to determine what some of the constitutional amendments that will appear on next Tuesday's ballot mean. Well, I have a law degree and I still find some of them confusing. After doing our homework, here is how Peggy and I voted on the amendments when we voted absentee last week. I took no position on the amendments that were specific to just one county.

Amendment 1 – YES

Amendment 2 – YES

Amendment 4 – NO

Amendment 6 – NO

Amendment 7 – NO

Amendment 8 – NO

Amendment 9 – NO RECOMMENDATION

Amendment 10 – NO RECOMMENDATION

Don't forget the back of your ballot next Tuesday. Below, I've explained how I made my decisions on which amendments I would support and which ones I would oppose. These amendments are important. And remember, if you're a Democrat and you don't vote on Tuesday...you're a Republican, plain and simple.

One more week to the finish line,

Judge Kennedy

I'll try to tell you what these amendments do in plain English:

Amendment 1

Reauthorizes the state's Forever Wild program for another 20 years. Forever Wild is our extremely successful public lands program and is responsible for the preservation of thousands of acres of land for conservation, hunting and fishing, and recreation.

Amendment 2

Raises the state's debt ceiling. Right now, the state is allowed to issue bonds up to \$350 million. This amendment will increase the bond limit to \$750 million. This is another example of the Republican Supermajority's unwillingness to raise revenue, putting the responsibility on the backs of voters in Alabama to fund state government. Most importantly, if the amendment fails and there are fewer funds to recruit industry, I imagine the Republican Supermajority and Governor Bentley could try again to raid the Education Trust Fund. While we're robbing Peter to pay Paul here, Peggy and I held our noses and voted "YES" in order to protect our classrooms, teachers, state employees, and those who depend on public services from further cuts.

Amendment 4

This one is tricky. At first glance, who wouldn't be for it? Ridding the constitution of racist and Jim Crow language is something we're for. While federal court orders have made most of the language inoperative, ridding ourselves of this stain in our state's constitution should be a no-brainer. But...the Republicans in the legislature are trying to pull the wool over our eyes in a very cynical way. If you vote "YES" on this amendment you will be voting to affirm that children in Alabama have no right to a public education. In 1954, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down segregated schools, Alabama added Amendment 111 to our state constitution. Amendment 111 has three paragraphs: the first eliminated the right to a public education, the second helped start private segregation academies, and the third demanded the segregation of students. The U.S. Supreme Court struck down amendment 111, but it still embarrassingly remains in the state constitution. We tried to eliminate Amendment 111 altogether in 2004, but the attempt failed. The legislature took up the cause again this past year, but the Republican Supermajority decided to only take out the third paragraph and leave the other two in place. If we vote "YES", we will be reaffirming paragraphs one and two. Why didn't the Republicans bring up a clean bill that got rid of all of Amendment 111? After their attempts at charter schools, their attacks on teachers, and attempts to raid the Education Trust Fund, you can only imagine what they're up to.

Amendment 6

This amendment is a slap in the face to the President of the United States. It basically says that the federal government cannot mandate citizens to purchase health insurance. The Supreme

Court has already upheld the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act, so this amendment would be just another superfluous addition to our constitution.

Amendment 7

This one sounds great. Who isn't for a secret ballot? The trick is that the amendment adds "employee representation" to the types of elections covered under the secret ballot provision. This is a frontal assault on organized labor and an attempt to get rid of "card check". Card check is an organizing method where in order for workers to unionize, more than half of workers in a given company must sign a card saying they want to be represented by a union. Since card check is not a secret ballot, this type of union organizing would be prohibited if the amendment passes. The Alabama AFL-CIO rightly says that the measure would give companies more control over an already corporate-dominated system in which workers who want to form unions are harassed, intimidated and threatened by their bosses. We need to stand with our brothers and sisters in organized labor and vote "NO".

Amendment 8

This is a back door pay increase for legislators and another reminder that they haven't voted to repeal the 62% pay raise that the Republican Supermajority campaigned so hard against in 2010. The amendment pegs legislators' pay to the average household income in Alabama while also increasing their travel and overnight expenses. The Republican leadership should keep their promises from the 2010 campaign, not give themselves a back door pay raise when they can't even balance the state's budget.

Paid for by the Alabama Democratic Party.

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