

## **Amendment # 7 Title: First Responder and Military Member Survivor Benefits; Public Colleges and Universities**

**Ballot Language:** Grants mandatory payment of death benefits and waiver of certain educational expenses to qualifying survivors of certain first responders and military members who die performing official duties. Requires supermajority votes by university trustees and state university system board of governors to raise or impose all legislatively-authorized fees if law requires approval by those bodies. Establishes existing state college system as constitutional entity; provides governance structure.<sup>2</sup>

**How the Amendment Reached the Ballot:** Constitution Revision Commission (CRC)

**What your Vote Means:** A **Yes** vote would:

- Require employers to provide death benefits, as the state legislature defines, to the surviving spouses of first responders while engaged in official duties.
- Require the state to provide death benefits, as the state legislature defines, to the surviving spouses of active-duty U.S. Armed Forces members who are accidentally killed or unlawfully and intentionally killed.
- Require a nine-member vote of the board of trustees and 12-member vote of a board of governors to increase a college fee.
- Place the current structure of the state's system of high education in the Florida Constitution.<sup>2</sup>

A **No** vote:

- Does not establish mandatory death benefits to first responders and other military personnel.
- Retains the simple majority necessary to raise college fees.
- Does not add language regarding the structure of state colleges to the Constitution.<sup>1</sup>

**Pro from The James Madison Institute:** The measure serves to increase financial transparency in educational institutions across the state. Universities often cloak hikes in tuition prices through nebulous fees. Amendment 7 would require a supermajority vote by the board of trustees to raise the cost of tuition and other fees. This effort ensures that universities cannot spike fees haphazardly or discreetly. Any university board of trustees would require a truly compelling reason to raise tuition. Finally, the amendment assists the families of first responders and military members in a time of need. This gives Floridians the opportunity to provide for those who protect our country. The measure would require the state to provide funds to the families of first responders and military members who die in the line of duty.

Family members of the deceased would also receive education expenses. The death benefits would be provided from the general revenue fund and support the qualifying survivors; these survivors are defined by statute.<sup>1</sup>

**Con from The James Madison Institute:** Opponents of the measure could claim that the language inserted into the Florida Constitution is too vague. Particularly, the language does not define what specific death benefits would be conferred upon the aggrieved groups. Opponents may not dispute the value of providing financial assistance to our fallen veterans but would prefer more clarity before etching language into the state's constitution. Aside from providing for our veterans, the initiative places hurdles on university leaders seeking to ensure that they can address the real

costs of education in their tuition rates. Opponents believe the inability to easily raise tuition or fees could lead to gaps in educational services in the future.<sup>1</sup>

**Analysis:** One of the biggest problems in our republic is public employees and their benefits. Most local governments, city, county or state, are under water with these benefits; and making these benefits part of our state constitution will only make it harder for our state to survive financially.

**Supporters:**

Association of Florida Colleges  
Christian Family Coalition (CFC) Florida

**Opponents:**

Dem Prog Caucus of FL (Leftist)  
*USA Today's* Florida Today (Leans left)  
League of Women Voters (LWV) (Leans left)  
Florida Education Association  
Save My Constitution (They oppose all 2018 amendments placed on the ballot by the CRC) The group argues that the measures are confusing and misleading and were placed on the ballot in a deceptive way by bundling multiple subjects in a single proposal.<sup>2</sup>

**TPMs Vetter's Summary Comments:**

As Amendment 7 is a package of three constitutional amendments, voters cannot approve or reject some of the amendments. It's all or none. I think some parts of the amendment might have had a chance as a stand-alone amendments but when you bundle this much garbage the only thing to do is vote NO.

**TPM's Recommendation:**

Vote **NO** on Amendment 7

**Sources:**

<sup>1</sup>The James Madison Institute 2018 Florida Amendment Guide  
<file:///Users/maureenguffanti/Downloads/Florida%20November%202018%20Constitutional%20Amendment%20Guide%20by%20James%20Madison%20In....pdf>

Ballotpedia:

[https://ballotpedia.org/Florida\\_Amendment\\_11,\\_Repeal\\_Prohibition\\_on\\_Aliens%E2%80%99\\_Property\\_Ownership,\\_Delete\\_Obsolete\\_Provision\\_on\\_High-Speed\\_Rail,\\_and\\_Repeal\\_of\\_Criminal\\_Statutes%27\\_Effect\\_on\\_Prosecution\\_Amendment\\_\(2018\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Florida_Amendment_11,_Repeal_Prohibition_on_Aliens%E2%80%99_Property_Ownership,_Delete_Obsolete_Provision_on_High-Speed_Rail,_and_Repeal_of_Criminal_Statutes%27_Effect_on_Prosecution_Amendment_(2018))