

Thank you so much for taking the time to seek my opinions regarding the proposed Constitutional Amendments on the November 3, 2009 ballot. Below, I have outlined a summary of each proposition along with my recommendation with an explanation. I encourage you to carefully scrutinize but be sure to vote.

**Proposition 1:** "The constitutional amendment authorizing the financing, including through tax increment financing, of the acquisition by municipalities and counties of buffer areas or open spaces adjacent to a military installation for the prevention of encroachment or for the construction of roadways, utilities, or other infrastructure to protect or promote the mission of the military installation."

*Voting recommendation: For.* Military bases in Texas provide immense economic benefits for the state. The encroachment by development around military installations is putting this money in danger and is also restricting training and operational missions. If passed, this will protect military installations from the encroachment, which is a worthy investment.

**Proposition 2:** "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to provide for the ad valorem taxation of a residence homestead solely on the basis of the property's value as a residence homestead."

*Voting recommendation: For.* I was the co-sponsor of this bill in the Senate. If passed, this will provide protection for homeowners whose neighborhoods are in transition from residential to commercial developments. It will provide for taxation of property to be determined solely on the basis of the property's value as a residence, regardless of whether that use is considered to be the "highest and best use" of the property. Residence homesteads throughout the state have experienced increasing appraisal values, in some instances more than 200 percent in one year, due to the appraisal practice known as "highest and best use."

**Proposition 3:** "The constitutional amendment providing for uniform standards and procedures for the appraisal of property for ad valorem tax purposes."

*Voting recommendation: For.* I was a co-sponsor of this bill as well. Property tax practices vary across the state. This provides for the administration and enforcement of uniform standards.

**Proposition 4:** "The constitutional amendment establishing the national research university fund to enable emerging research universities in this state to achieve national prominence as major research universities and transferring the balance of the higher education fund to the national research university fund."

*Voting recommendation: For.* In order for Texas to compete with other states for nationally recognized research universities, this will provide a dedicated, independent, and equitable source of funding for the emerging research universities.

**Proposition 5:** "The constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to authorize a single board of equalization for two or more adjoining appraisal entities that elect to provide for consolidated equalizations."

*Voting recommendation: For.* I was a co-sponsor of this bill in the Senate. The prerequisites to serve on an appraisal review board are minimal, and the number of people familiar with the appraisal of property is limited in any one county. The appraisal review process would benefit from the consolidation of appraisal review boards in rural counties that currently have a small amount of qualified board members.

**Proposition 6:** "The constitutional amendment authorizing the Veterans' Land Board to issue general obligation bonds in amounts equal to or less than amounts previously authorized."

*Voting recommendation: For.* This will give the Veteran's Land Board the authority to continue the Veterans' Housing Assistance Program and the Veterans' Land Program.

**Proposition 7:** "The constitutional amendment to allow an officer or enlisted member of the Texas State Guard or other state militia or military force to hold other civil offices."

*Voting recommendation: For.* This would add officers and enlisted members of any active militia or military force organized under Texas law to the list of civil offices exempt from the prohibition against holding or exercising more than one civil office at the same time. These groups were overlooked or not in existence when the original exceptions were made.

**Proposition 8:** "The constitutional amendment authorizing the state to contribute money, property, and other resources for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of veterans hospitals in this state."

*Voting recommendation: For.* This will require the Texas Veterans Commission and the Department of State Health Services to work with the VA and any other appropriate federal agency to propose that the federal government establish a veterans hospital in the Rio Grande Valley region of the state. Currently veterans in this area must make about a 300 mile trip to get to the nearest VA hospital.

**Proposition 9 :** "The constitutional amendment to protect the right of the public, individually and collectively, to access and use the public beaches bordering the seaward shore of the Gulf of Mexico."

*Voting recommendation: For.* This will allow for the public's right to free and unrestricted access to state-owned beaches along the gulf coast.

**Proposition 10:** "The constitutional amendment to provide that elected members of the governing boards of emergency services districts may serve terms not to exceed four years."

*Voting recommendation: For.* I was the sponsor of this bill in the Senate. This will allow members enough time to gain the experience needed to properly do the job.

**Proposition 11:** "The constitutional amendment to prohibit the taking, damaging, or destroying of private property for public use unless the action is for the ownership, use, and enjoyment of the property by the State, a political subdivision of the State, the public at large, or entities granted the power of eminent domain under law or for the elimination of urban blight on a particular parcel of property, but not for certain economic development or enhancement of tax revenue purposes, and to limit the legislature's authority to grant the power of eminent domain to an entity."

*Voting recommendation: For.* This will define more clearly the circumstances under which a person's private property may be taken for a public use, and what compensation is required in such cases.

If you have any other questions about this or any other issues of concern to you, please contact my office, and my staff will be happy to assist you. It is an honor to

serve you in the Texas Senate.