



## Council urges support for amendment

Seven state constitutional amendments will appear on Nov. 4 ballot

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A total of seven state Constitutional amendments will appear on the Nov. 4 ballot and the St. Landry Parish Council this week urged voters to support Amendment Four.

Amendment Four, which is based on House Bill 420, calls for increasing the portion of the state's severance tax on oil and gas resources that are allocated to the parish of origin.

Currently, no parish can get more the \$850,000-a-year from the severance tax. If the amendment is passed, that limit would be raised to \$1.85 million per parish in 2010 and \$2.85 million per parish the following year. After that, the limit would be increased each year based on the state's inflation rate.

"This is not going to cost anybody any money. It is money already being collected," said District 9 Councilman Glenn Stout. "This could generate a million or two a year for our parish. It will make a big, big difference."

While a resolution of support was passed unanimously by the council, Parish President Don Menard is less sure the amendment will actually benefit St. Landry Parish. He said the key words in the amendment are "parish of origin."

"This is based on production and we are not a big producing parish," Menard said, pointing out the parish is currently getting \$825,000-a-year in severance payments. That means that even under the existing distribution formula, St. Landry Parish is not even receiving the current maximum.

Even so, Menard said he is not opposed to the amendment.

"I hope we get something we can put on the roads but we will have to wait and see," Menard said. "There will be a lot of strings attached."

According to the non-partisan Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, the amendment could be a big windfall for oil producing parishes but could also be costly to the state as a whole.

In PAR's report on the amendments, it states that all but one of the state's 64 parishes currently receive some severance tax revenue - though some get as little as \$42 a year.

"If the cap is raised as proposed, 30 parishes are estimated to receive an additional \$26 million in FY 2010 and \$46 million in FY 2011. The remaining parishes do not generate enough severance tax to benefit from the cap increases," PAR said.

Other amendments on the ballot will include:

- Amendment one, which would establish term limits for members of state boards and commissions;
- Amendment two, which would require two additional days of notice before calling a special legislative session;
- Amendment three, which would allow temporary successors to be appointed for legislators called to active military duty;
- Amendment five, which would allow the transfer of the special property tax assessment level for certain homeowners;
- Amendment six, which would change the requirements for public bodies to re-sell expropriated property; and
- Amendment seven, which would authorize certain post-retirement benefit funds to be invested in stocks.

Jim Brandt, president of PAR, urges voters to educate themselves before they vote yes or no on the various amendments.

"The propositions on the ballot this year are a mix of simple and highly complex changes in legal matters most people don't ever think about," Brandt said.

To learn more about the amendments, visit the PAR Web site at [www.la-par.org](http://www.la-par.org). "Our guide puts these changes into plain language so voters can figure out how they would be affected," Brandt said.