

THE SHREVEPORT TIMES

PAR releases analysis of four proposed constitutional amendments on Oct. 20 ballot

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BATON ROUGE — The Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana on Tuesday released its analysis of four constitutional amendments voters will decide Oct. 20.

The council's guide to the proposals explains the potential impact of the four amendments.

"The guide is designed to help voters understand the propositions and determine for themselves whether to vote for or against each amendment," PAR President Jim Brandt said.

Two of the proposed amendments address the state's supplemental pay program for law enforcement officers and firefighters.

One would require full funding of supplemental pay and never allow it to be reduced, making it a top priority for state funding. The other would extend the benefit to police and firefighters employed by levee boards and ports.

Another amendment deals with future retirement benefits for members of state retirement systems — prohibiting the granting of additional benefits unless there is money to pay for them within 10 years.

A vote against would continue the policy that benefits can be increased if the cost could be paid within 50 years.

The fourth amendment on the ballot would provide a property tax exemption for dealers who hold jewelry on consignment. Artworks already are exempt.

Brandt said all of the amendments could potentially affect state or local governments' budget flexibility.

The guide provides a background on each amendment and a commentary that includes arguments of proponents and opponents of the issues.

Brandt urged voters to consider not only the merits of each amendment but also whether the proposed language belongs in the state constitution.

Including the four new proposals, Louisiana voters will have considered 214 amendments since the 1974 Constitution was adopted.

So far, voters have approved 148 amendments. No proposed constitutional amendment has been defeated since 2003.