

# 13 constitutional propositions on Saturday's ballot

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BATON ROUGE -- Secretary of State Al Ater predicts that turnout in Saturday's statewide elections will be about 25 percent.

Fewer than that are likely to vote for the 13 constitutional propositions, which are listed only by their formal ballot language, not even with short titles, to help voters at the polls.

"This is not a very voter-friendly ballot," said Jim Brandt, head of the Louisiana Public Affairs Research Council, the private, nonprofit think tank. Brandt said two propositions -- Nos. 6 and 9 -- have drafting errors that will require subsequent amendments to repair.

Here's a quick look at the 13 proposed constitutional amendments:

## **No. 1: Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund**

Dedicates solely to hurricane and coastal protection any offshore oil revenue the federal government decides to share with Louisiana.

## **No. 2: Consolidation of Coastal Funds**

Merges all funds for coastal efforts into the Coastal Protection and Restoration Fund. Additionally requires 20 percent of the any sale of the state's tobacco lawsuit settlement revenue stream to go into the fund.

## **No. 3: Regional Flood Protection Authorities**

Consolidates the multiple New Orleans levee district boards into two: one for the area that drains into Lake Pontchartrain and Lake Borgne and the other side of the river that drains into Barataria Bay.

## **No. 4: Hurricane Protection Liability**

Limits to fair market value the price the state must pay when expropriating private property for hurricane protection projects.

## **No. 5: Limits on expropriation of private property**

Prohibits local governments from using expropriation power to seize property for economic development projects.

## **No. 6: Procedures to Transfer Expropriated Private Property**

Replaces many, but not all, of the rules governing when a public or private entity, such as utilities, telephone, toll road authority, pipeline company, must offer unused expropriated property to its original owner.

### **No. 7: Medicaid Trust Fund Investment**

Allows the state treasurer to invest 35 percent of the \$830 million fund in stocks. Earnings can be spent for health care of the elderly.

### **No. 8: Homestead exemption and special assessments for damaged homes**

Guarantees the homestead exemption on the first \$75,000 value of a home will continue to apply for five years after a disaster, providing an exception to current requirement that the home be owner-occupied.

### **No. 9: State Mandates on School Spending**

Intended prohibition against the Legislature's passing mandates, except by a 2/3s vote, that adds cost to local school board until the Legislature provides a local funding source. The word "until" was left out, leaving it unclear about mandates when the state puts up the money.

### **No. 10: Higher Education Investments**

Authorizes universities to invest up to 35 percent of state-funded endowments in stocks.

u No. 11: Homestead Exemption for Homes in Revocable Trusts

Stipulates that those who put title of their homes in revocable trusts, an estate management tool to designate who gets the property, would retain the \$75,000 homestead exemption, providing an exception from the requirement that they be owner-occupied.

### **No. 12: Vacancy in Statewide Elected Offices**

Requires a special election to fill the unexpired term of a lieutenant governor, just like other statewide elected officials, whenever a vacancy occurs with more than a year left in the term.

### **No. 13: Judge's Qualifications**

Requires a candidate to have been admitted to the practice of law for ten years preceding election to the Supreme Court or a court of appeals and for eight years preceding election to a district court, family court, parish court, or juvenile court. Reduces from 24 to 12 months the residency requirement.