



When you go vote, remember to look for the Constitutional Amendments

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By Caroline Moses

BATON ROUGE, LA (WAFB) - There are several proposed amendments to the Louisiana Constitution on the November ballot.

"Because so much detail in Constitution, it means every time figure out something not working right, we have to go into the Constitution to make changes," says Barry Erwin, the president of the Council for a Better Louisiana (CABL). This election, legislators agreed on seven proposed changes to the state Constitution.

Here is a brief look at each one so you can decide which, if any, you want:

Amendment 1 would set term limits for some boards and commissions, so members could serve no more than three terms in a row.

Amendment 2 would require the governor to give seven days notice before calling a special session, instead of just five days.

Amendment 3 would allow legislators called into active duty to appoint a temporary replacement while they serve.

Amendment 4 increases severance tax distributions to parishes and local transportations funds by taking away some state revenues.

Amendment 5 extends the special property tax assessment to certain blighted properties.

Amendment 6 eliminates the right of first refusal on property taken because of public health or safety concerns.

Amendment 7 allows state and local trusts for non-pension post-employment benefits to be invested in stocks.

"Clearly, you could look at the Constitution and say streamline and take out a lot of the garbage that's added up over the years," Erwin says. He and Jennifer Pike with the Public Affairs Research council (PAR) agree that the Louisiana Constitution is bogged down in confusing details that apply to a very few. "Some of these, I can guarantee you people are not really going to understand at all," says Erwin.

They say the problem stems from general political mistrust. "We don't trust the governor, we don't trust the legislature, we don't really trust anybody in government that those money go to place think ought to go," Erwin says. "The answer to that lack of confidence is to have a constitution with a lot more detail," says Pike. Erwin thinks it's time to scrap the 1974 Constitution and write a new one. But until that happens, his organization supports all seven proposed changes. "If they help correct a problem, you can still vote for them, even though we got way too many of them," he says.