



Don't forget the amendments on the ballot

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This election season is a fairly busy one that includes two major voting dates. On Saturday, October 2, Bossier Parish voters will cast ballots for Lieutenant Governor, the Bossier Parish School Board, Plain Dealing elected officials and two Constitutional Amendments. The Saturday, November 2 election includes Congressional elections and another 10 Constitutional Amendments.

Between now and those election dates, most of us will have an opportunity to visit with candidates for various offices, better understand issues advanced by candidates, and eventually make a voting choice.

Constitutional Amendments are a little tougher to decide, often because they are written in legalese and sometimes difficult to understand. And waiting until election day to study the ballot posted at the door of voting places is often too late to become acquainted with the proposed amendments. Any voter who has stood in front of a posted ballot, for the first time attempting to read/understand proposed constitutional amendments can attest to the confusing language often contained in these proposals.

So again, as every year about this time, I recommend that voters interested in clearly understanding proposed amendments visit the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana (PAR) website at www.la-par.org for in-depth information on which to make a ballot choice.

Currently, PAR features the "Guide to the Constitutional Amendments" for the October 2, 2010 Ballot.

For the really studious voter, it's a helpful exercise to first visit the Louisiana Legislature's website for a view of the "official" proposed amendments – and attempt to comprehend the language. PAR's Guide converts that language to English, evident in the opening paragraphs of the current PAR Guide:

"Louisiana voters will be asked to make decisions on two proposed constitutional amendments on the Oct. 2 ballot. Those amendments would:

Make regular legislative sessions begin earlier each year and change the date legislation would go into effect.

2. Exempt from classified civil service all employees in the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness."

The Guide then, for each proposed amendment, provides an in-depth review of the current situation,

the proposed change, and comments regarding the history of the issue, other states' approaches to similar issues, and often, a summary of the arguments advanced by both proponents and opponents of the amendment.

Moreover, the Guide features a history of our state's frequent changes to the state constitution and a thoughtful discussion on the implications, problems, and possible solutions to curbing this frequency of change.

For interested voters, the PAR Guide is must reading. And for me, it means a little piece of paper, numbered for each amendment – with each marked “yes” or “no,” which allows for a much shorter, and certainly better informed visit to the ballot box.

PAR will later publish a guide to the 10 proposed Constitutional Amendments on the November 2 ballot; it's guaranteed to be well worth the read.