

VOTER GUIDE FOR NOVEMBER 2016 ELECTIONS

League of Women Voters of the Richmond Metropolitan Area

P.O. Box 25492

Richmond, VA 23260-5492

www.richmond.va.lwvnet.org

Information on the Constitutional Amendments was obtained from the Virginia Department of Elections. Pros and cons were provided by the League of Women Voters of Virginia.

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose any candidate or political party. The League is nonpartisan. The League hopes this information is helpful to citizens as they prepare to vote on November 8, 2016.

Proposed Virginia Constitutional Amendments

“Right to Work Ballot Amendment” Pros and Cons

Amendment Wording:

"Question: Should Article I of the Constitution of Virginia be amended to prohibit any agreement or combination between an employer and a labor union or labor organization whereby

- (i) nonmembers of the union or organization are denied the right to work for the employer,
- (ii) membership to the union or organization is made a condition of employment or continuation of employment by such employer, or
- (iii) the union or organization acquires an employment monopoly in any such enterprise?"

Right to Work (RTW) VA Constitutional Amendment Pros and Cons

Introduction: Right to work laws mean that an employee has a right to work for an employer without being a member of a union (but gets the benefit of the union’s negotiations for improvements without paying union dues); RTW bans making union membership a condition of employment.

A ‘YES’ vote is a vote FOR adding this amendment to the Constitution. (Agree with Proponents.)

A ‘NO’ vote is a vote AGAINST adding this amendment to the Constitution. (Agree with Opponents.)

Pros and Cons:

Proponents of the amendment say:

1. A constitutional amendment would ensure that future General Assemblies cannot easily change Virginia's status as a right-to-work state.
2. A constitutional amendment, approved at an election, shows the direct will of the people, not just that of legislators.

Opponents of the amendment say:

1. A constitutional amendment is not necessary since Virginia's current policy has been in effect for over 60 years.
2. A constitutional amendment does not allow for timely modifications.

Tax Relief Ballot Amendment” Pros and Cons

Amendment Wording:

"Question: Shall the Constitution of Virginia be amended to allow the General Assembly to provide an option to the localities to exempt from taxation the real property of the surviving spouse of any law-enforcement officer, firefighter, search and rescue personnel, or emergency medical services personnel who was killed in the line of duty, where the surviving spouse occupies the real property as his or her principal place of residence and has not remarried?"

A ‘yes’ vote is a vote FOR adding this amendment to the Constitution. (Agree with proponents.)

A ‘no’ vote is a vote AGAINST adding this amendment to the Constitution. (Agree with Opponents.)

Pros and Cons:

Proponents of the amendment say:

1. Exemption from the real property tax of surviving spouses recognizes the hardships to families as a result of the death of those who serve to protect Virginians.
2. The exemption is established at the option of localities; thus, it is not considered an unfunded mandate.

Opponents of the amendment say:

1. Exemption from the real property tax by localities could result in reduced revenue for that locality.
2. Changes to the Virginia Constitution should be done only for very extraordinary and compelling needs/reasons.