

FINANCIAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

REFERENDA REQUIRED FOR ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLANS, #05-18

Florida law requires each local government to adopt a comprehensive plan. Comprehensive plans may be amended at least twice per year, as provided by law. The proposed constitutional amendment requires local governments to conduct a vote, by referendum, before adopting any new comprehensive plan or amendments to the comprehensive plan. The vote would be conducted after preparation of the plan or amendment by the local planning agency and consideration by the governing body.

Based on information provided through public workshops and collected through staff research, the Financial Impact Estimating Conference determined that local governments which adopt plans or propose comprehensive plan amendments will incur additional costs related to the referendum requirement. Nevertheless, the amendment's impact on local government expenditures cannot be estimated precisely. The financial impact statement is developed from the following considerations:

- Presenting additional issues to the voters entails increased costs. Those costs exist regardless of the method by which local governments choose to conduct the vote - special or general election, whether by mail ballot or at the polls. Given the large volume of amendments adopted between 2001 and 2005 (an average of 7,878 amendments and 1,062 packages per year) and the number of new incorporations (nine new incorporations since April, 2000), it is highly improbable that special elections can be avoided.
- To this point, the survey responses from local government planners and county supervisors indicate the majority of local governments anticipate the volume of *proposed* plan amendments would remain the same. Therefore, any fiscal impact related to increased or decreased volume of amendments would be insignificant. Further, while fewer proposed amendments may be adopted, the costs of the referenda to get to this outcome still exist.
- The proposed constitutional amendment does not specify how local governments would present amendments on the ballot, or how often referenda will occur. At a minimum, general election costs will be increased by additional expenditures for printing ballots, and noticing and advertising the ballot information. Costs to conduct a special election are even greater.
- Based on past experience, the minimum cost per special election for an average-sized county ranges from \$143,300 to \$287,700; for an average-sized city from \$10,500 to \$22,000. Assuming every Florida voter is impacted by a single special election, costs would range between \$10 million and \$20 million. If the least-cost method (mail ballot) is selected, and assuming special elections affect just 25% of the voters, the cost would likely be in excess of \$2.4 million.
- The impact on state government expenditures will be insignificant.
- State and local revenue sources will not be increased or decreased directly.

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The amendment's impact on local government expenditures cannot be estimated precisely. Local governments will incur additional costs due to the requirement to conduct referenda in order to adopt comprehensive plans or amendments thereto. The amount of such costs depends upon the frequency, timing and method of the referenda, and includes the costs of ballot preparation, election administration, and associated expenses. The impact on state government expenditures will be insignificant.