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Steve Jernigan: Hometown Democracy is unfair, unneeded

Steve Jernigan
My View

The Hometown Democracy amendment, which will appear on the 2010 ballot, concerns me as both an architect and a Florida citizen.

This amendment suggests that Floridians currently have no say in the growth and development of the places they live, work and play.

This is simply not so. Florida Statutes clearly state that the governing body in a given municipality is required to hold public hearings giving citizens time to learn about the new or amended comprehensive plans *and* to provide comments and suggestions.

Yes, the Hometown Democracy amendment would give citizens the right or responsibility to vote on local growth issues, but let's look at what it will really do if passed.

People would be asked to review literally hundreds of plan amendments, most likely without the necessary educated background and experience to read and truly understand the plans.

Further, they would then have to go to the polls and vote on these intricate amendments, which can run in the hundreds of pages.

While the idea of citizen control through the ballot on all growth and development efforts sounds good in theory, the reality is citizens would be expected to knowledgeably vote on hundreds of land use issues.

This is unfair and unnecessary. We elect local officials to represent us — essentially delegating responsibility to these officials to understand and thoughtfully act upon these detailed proposals. If these officials fail in that duty — vote them out.

The Hometown Democracy amendment will delay growth and development that is necessary to keep pace with our state's growing population and to get our economy back on the right track.

It will hinder the efforts of local government officials, planners and even we architects who have access to sound growth plans based on scientific analysis and community need.

They will now have to battle an expertly executed public relations campaign designed to sway voter approval for a bad project while pushing good development to the back burner.

It is now up to Floridians to get informed about this bad amendment and how it will affect our economies, communities and lives if passed in 2010.

Additional Facts

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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