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## Reflections on the Florida Hometown Democracy debate

Contributed by [Tom Palmer](#) - Posted: August 28, 2009 10:11:19 AM

Now that the Florida Hometown Democracy Amendment is finally going to be on the ballot next year, perhaps the discussion will be more serious.

I was struck by some of the peripheral issues that intruded into Wednesday's Tiger Bay Club debate.

One was whether anyone (but they meant Florida Hometown Democracy) was using ACORN workers to

secure edition signatures. This perhaps ties back to the controversy over voter registration problems around the country involving ACORN folks, who faked some names to reach a quota so they could be paid. It was a staple of Republican rhetoric during the 2008 election.

An important difference in this case is that to sign the petition for the amendment, you already had to be a registered voter and the local elections officials had to verify that the signature was accurate.

Then there was the question of who's funding which side. Both sides have been pretty up front about that. The development and business lobby is funding the effort to defeat the amendment and Lesley Blackner is funding the effort to pass the amendment out of her personal fortune. I suspect what the question was trying to pry out is that one of the people who has contributed to the pro-amendment campaign is Joe Redner, an iconoclastic businessman in Tampa who owns a bunch of strip clubs.

There was some discussion about the amendment's potential to delay school construction projects. Blackner said schools aren't covered by the local growth plans, but that's incorrect if constructing the school involves a land-use map amendment, which it sometimes does in more rural areas of the county.

Then there was the discussion of if not Florida Hometown Democracy, then what?

The best Ryan Houck, the executive director of Floridians For Smarter Growth could muster, was the example of the regional visioning efforts such as myregion.org, which are funded and led by his clients or people associated with them, which critics have pointed out is no answer at all.

Nevertheless, I have to give Houck points for using a quote by H.L. Mencken, my favorite curmudgeon.



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**Posted By:** Al (8/29/2009 1:52:29 PM)

**Comment:** "Then there was the discussion of if not Florida Hometown Democracy, then what?" And that's the key question of the day. Although public officials seem to take great offense at Ms. Blackners' frank assessment of their failure to protect the Peoples' interests in the growth business, that's sort of like the criminal "caught in the act" being offended that he was caught. There's no question that we've dorked this whole thing up miserably for generations -- or that it's now time to pay the piper. So, if we don't like Ms. Blackner's solution, just what are we going to do to fix Florida's future -- and when are we going to start? One thing should be clear from the current economic crisis (across the nation -- we're never successfully going back to the old way of doing business. All the evidence so far shows that we're backwards in the State Legislature -- so the longer we put off a solution, the more painful it seems likely to be.

**Response:** Thanks for a thoughtful response

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