



Florida Constitution Revision Commission **PROPOSAL 90** Florida Chamber of Commerce **STAFF ANALYSIS**

PROPOSAL 90: Raising Florida Teacher Pay Toward the National Average

Proposal 90 (Teacher Pay Increase) was introduced by Commissioner Patricia Levesque for consideration by the full Constitution Revision Commission. This proposal increases teacher pay by modernizing and improving the way that Florida calculates compliance with the class size mandate. Currently, Florida's teachers are often paid well below the national average. At the same time, although evidence suggests great teachers matter more than any other criteria, the Florida Constitution creates a burden on school districts by dictating a maximum number of students for each class size per teacher regardless of subject area or expertise. This constitutional limit produces strain on the financial resources of each school district, many times without positively impacting outcomes for the students, and indirectly contributes to lower pay for good teachers.

This proposal seeks to update our Constitution to protect students and reward teachers. The relevant portion of the proposal is as follows: "Any funds not spent by districts to maintain the school-level average class size maximums must be spent towards raising teacher pay to the national average."

The Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Florida Council of 100, and Florida TaxWatch are unified in support of the proposal. Leadership from these organizations expressed the following support:

"Talent is quickly replacing the tax incentive as the economic development tool of choice and raising teacher pay to the national average helps prepare Florida's future workforce."

- MARK WILSON, President and CEO
Florida Chamber of Commerce

"Florida needs to recruit and keep outstanding educators because, after effective parenting, the number one determinant of a student's success is having an excellent teacher."

- BOB WARD, President and CEO
Florida Council of 100

"Extensive research has shown that reinvesting the money saved from class size reduction in teachers, who we know are one of the most important factors in student learning, will be good for the students and good for the taxpayers."

- DOMINIC CALABRO, President and CEO
Florida TaxWatch

From the perspective of the Florida Chamber, the Florida Council of 100, and Florida TaxWatch, this proposal merits the full support of voters and the business community because:

1. The proposal recognizes that education is a fundamental component of economic development and teacher pay matters. Given that by 2030, Florida is estimated to have 26 million residents and will need to create 2 million net new jobs, Florida's future workforce is essential. Though many of the jobs Floridians will hold in 2030 have not yet emerged, Florida has an opportunity to prepare for these shifts by leveraging its many assets and changing demographics to create economic opportunity for millions of Floridians.

2. The proposal demands quality in the classroom. In order for Florida to have a qualified and prepared workforce that is ready to meet these future labor market demands, we need to support our educators. We must have quality instruction if we want quality results. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, after adjusting for cost of living and taxes, the median elementary teacher pay in Florida is ranked 41st in the nation (approximately \$46,000). The data does not improve as we look at middle and high school teachers with Florida's rank at 40th and 34th in the nation, respectively. That's a median salary of less than \$46,000 for middle school teachers, and approximately \$51,000 for high school teachers. This proposal would require districts to put the expected savings directly towards raising teacher salaries to meet or exceed the national average.

3. The proposal invests in teachers, not bureaucracy. According to the findings of a study conducted by the Harvard Kennedy School, Florida's 2002 constitutional amendment mandating a reduction in the size of classes in school districts throughout the state had no discernable impact upon student achievement, either positive or negative. These findings were echoed in a 2014 Florida TaxWatch report, which took a deeper look at what Florida had to show for its' investments in smaller class sizes. In fact, the Harvard researcher stated that his study results "do strongly suggest that large-scale, untargeted class size reduction mandates are not a particularly productive use of limited educational resources."

Fiscal impacts of the 2002 amendment continue to be extraordinary. The 2002 class size amendment is estimated to have cost about \$40 billion since the program began implementation and continues to subsequently cost the state about \$3 billion per year. By adjusting the way our state's schools calculate their class sizes, this proposal would allow school districts to save a tremendous amount of taxpayer money that would go directly towards our children's educators.