



AMENDMENT 4 WOULD BE A JOB KILLER

By *Mike Jones*

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Political spin doctors cleverly label ballot initiatives so that they sound "too good to be true." So it is with "Hometown Democracy" – a proposed change to Florida's constitution that will appear on the ballot in November 2010 as Amendment 4.

At a time of serious economic hardship, the last thing Florida needs is a California-style system of ballot-box legislation, which hurts the economy and has contributed to unprecedented financial chaos in that state.

Under Amendment 4, the people of Florida would be forced to decide thousands of technical land-use items at the ballot box. As we have seen too often in the past, these planning decisions would quickly turn into highly politicized campaign battles. The "spin" provided by special interests, not facts, would become the basis for public decision-making.

With Amendment 4, changes to the comprehensive plan would be delayed for years – until the next regularly scheduled election – while jobs went elsewhere. Once they finally made their way to the ballot, job-creating projects would be forced to wage an expensive and uncertain political campaign.

Voting on everything, regardless of how trivial, as Amendment 4 requires, would invite gridlock, litigation and higher taxes. The lack of predictability created by such a process will cast a pall on our economy for the foreseeable future, should this ill-advised amendment pass.

Worse still, this amendment would stop job-creation at a time when it is most needed. This is no time for costly experimentation when foreclosures and unemployment are at historic levels. In an emerging knowledge-based economy, we need to encourage economic diversification and make it easier for projects that offer more high-skill, better-paying jobs to come to our state.

Amendment 4 is an example of a bad idea with even worse unintended consequences. Crippling job creation by requiring regular political "campaigning" on local growth-management issues is not what our forefathers envisioned. Turning every growth decision into a high-priced media campaign will surely turn public policy into a popularity contest. The public deserves better. Our community deserves better. Voters should vote no on Amendment 4.

MIKE JONES is president and CEO of the Economic Council of Palm Beach County and an active member of Floridians for Smarter Growth, which is opposing Amendment 4.