

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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By Commissioner Joe McClash, At Large, District 7

Amending our State Constitution is a very important issue for your consideration. When an amendment can help protect our quality of life, it deserves the support of all the people of Florida. Amendment 4 is that type of amendment, finally giving you a say in how your community will develop. This is why I endorse this very important amendment to our constitution.

As a County Commissioner for over 19 years, I have seen many threats to our community that would not have taken place if the voters were allowed to give their stamp of approval. Many of these threats come from well financed developers who make sure their campaign donations are made for the benefit of themselves and not our community. Amendment 4 will finally give you something Campaign Finance Reform just can't do: "Level the Playing Field."

Every county and city has a Comprehensive Plan, also known as a "Comp Plan." It is the blueprint outlining what kind of development can take place and where; what and where road networks are to be built; what environment is to be protected and even other important goals and policies like our water supply plans. It is not zoning. It is future planning and protection of your quality of life for your community.

How many times have people said they do not like the over-development of their community or that over-development is ruining the reason I moved to (or live in) Florida? Amendment 4 is a chance to give Floridians a voice equal to that of the developers, or other special interests, who fuel many of the elected officials' campaign contributions.

Our state has made it very easy for developers to hide behind names like "[Citizens for a Sustainable Economy](#), and [Committee for a Positive Change](#) " serving as fronts for unlimited contributions and mailing vicious attack pieces against any candidate they oppose. Manatee County's largest developer, Shroeder Manatee Ranch (SMR), laid down \$20,000 with \$10,000 from Developer/State Senator [Mike Bennett's so called not-for-profit](#) , that went to these political fronts helping defeat incumbent commissioners they did not support or in their eyes were not developer friendly.

Could it be, the monetary reward from SMR, influenced a most recent Comp Plan change that increased their residential density almost six times what it was before their political contributions? Was it made possible by a more "developer friendly" Board of County Commissioners after the last election?

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If Amendment 4 was in place, you, the voter, would have had a chance to say, "NO." Say NO, to more road congestion. Say NO to existing residents having to subsidize infrastructure the developer should be paying for. Maybe NO, because there is already enough density and you just want to protect what is left of your quality of life.

The critics of Amendment 4 want to scare you, as Floridians, that it will hurt jobs and the economy. They also say the voters just can't handle so many things on the ballot. However, just like you, as voters, give your stamp of approval for judges and other ballot questions, I am confident you can handle a stamp of approval or a denial for a Comp Plan Amendment change. After all, it may be the only way you or I can protect our community's quality of life from developers and special interests who now, in many cases, have the political power and usually fund the majority of political contributions to elected officials in our state.

If "**Amendment 4**" passes, annexations like Perico Island to the City of Bradenton may never have taken place; a power plant or landfill may not wind up in your neighborhood or county. In Manatee County, changes are being discussed that would dramatically change neighborhoods under a redevelopment plan by increasing density and heights of buildings. Why shouldn't you have a say in this?

What about protecting our water supply? The City of Bradenton recently voted to recommend to the County to change their Comp Plan to allow recycled sewer wastewater to be used on land used to supply the City's drinking water. For years, Shroeder Manatee Ranch has asked for this change, but it was never acted upon. Why reduce the standards of our supply of drinking water? Now, it may happen. With Amendment 4, the threat to your drinking water supply would be decided by you, the voter, not with the possible influence of developer's money.

As you can see, it is not hard to find reasons to support Amendment 4. There is enough growth in our Comprehensive Plan as it exists to last 20 years, so there is no urgency that requires immediate approval. Why rush to change your future plan or the valuable protections you have in place for your quality of life, agriculture, schools, environment or drinking water? Yes, there are certain administrative Comp Plan issues, such as road plans that need modification, but these are usually 5 or 10 year plans. Even if these require you, the voter, to give your stamp of approval every two years, it will not harm your community as much as allowing developers, or other special interests, the upper hand.

Florida set the example years ago with "Government in the Sunshine." Maybe it's time we put development in the sunshine. Vote for Amendment 4. Put the decision in the hands of the people to protect Florida's quality of life which, to most of us, is the reason we call Florida our home!