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November 2016 Ballot Measures

Ballot Measures: also called amendments, are possible laws that citizens can choose to make into real laws or not. They are usually found at the end of a ballot – after voting for people like the president or senator. These are the laws that can be the most important to you or your community. There will be four ballot measures on the November 8, 2016 ballot in Georgia.

Amendment 1-Opportunity School District:

Title on ballot: Provides greater flexibility and state accountability to fix failing schools through increasing community involvement

What the bill does: This amendment would make an “Opportunity School District” (OSD) which could take control of schools all over the state which have been failing for three years or more. The OSD could take all management of a school, manage with a local school board, turn a school into a charter school, or close a school. When managing a school, OSD would be able to choose, approve or remove the schools' principals; move teachers to other classes or areas; control the schools' budgets; and make changes to education content.

What a “yes” vote would mean: Gives the state permission to make the Opportunity School District.

What a “no” vote would mean: Would not allow the state to form an Opportunity School District; all schools would stay under current authorities.

Amendment 2-Safe Harbor:

Title on ballot: Authorizes penalties for sexual exploitation and assessments on adult entertainment to fund child victims' services.

What the bill does: Amendment 2 would allow the state to create new punishments of \$2,500 on anyone found guilty of certain sex crimes. It would also make adult businesses pay a \$5,000 every year. This money would be used for the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund to be used for housing, counseling and medical treatment of child victims.

What a “yes” vote would mean: Supports more punishments for specific sex crimes and fees charged to adult business for the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund.

What a “no” vote would mean: Opposes more punishments for certain sex crimes and annual fees on adult business for the Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Children Fund.



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Amendment 3 – Judicial Qualifications:

Title on ballot: Reforms and re-establishes the Judicial Qualifications Commission and provides for its composition, governance, and powers.

What the bill does: Amendment 3 would let the General Assembly (the State Senate and House) create a new Judicial Qualifications Commission (JQC). The JQC helps the state watch out for corruption in judges and looks into what people say about moral wrongs and problems with judges. The new commission would be governed by the General Assembly instead of being an independent agency, like it is now. The bill’s writers say that a new JQC would “be open to the public in some manner.”

What a “yes” vote would mean: Lets the General Assembly design a new Judicial Qualification Commission, which they will govern. The bill does not actually create the new commission but lets the General Assembly to do so.

What a “no” vote would mean: Will keep the current commission going.

Amendment 4 – Fireworks Sales:

Title on ballot: Dedicates revenue from existing taxes on fireworks to trauma care, fire services, and public safety

What the bill does: Taxes collected from the sale of fireworks will be promised to be given to trauma (emergency) care, firefighters, and emergency services in the state. This is how money would be spent: 55% of the money would go to the Georgia Trauma Care Network; 40% to a grant program for making better tools and training for Georgia firefighters; and 5% towards local governments for public safety purposes.

What a “yes” vote would mean: Would give money from fireworks sales to trauma care, fire protection services and public safety

What a “no” vote would mean: Would not give money from fireworks sales taxes to trauma care, fire protection services and public safety. The money would continue to go to the state’s general operating fund.

For more arguments for and against each ballot measure, see: https://ballotpedia.org/Georgia_2016_ballot_measures

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