

Brought to you by Pi Sigma Alpha,  
University of Florida's sole political science honor society

# ALACHUA COUNTY VOTERS GUIDE

## NOVEMBER 2008



## Editors' note,

This election guide was produced by the Beta Gamma (UF) chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha. Pi Sigma Alpha is a nationally accredited honor society and the University of Florida's sole political science honor society. Through our meetings and activities, we strive to stimulate scholarship and intelligent interest in political science on campus and in our greater community.

Our goal in providing this guide is simple: to help educate and inform potential voters on the upcoming federal, state, and local elections and ballot measures. In order to do so, we have provided brief summaries of every candidate and ballot measure that Alachua County residents will encounter when voting.

Our organization is non-partisan and entirely unconcerned with how you vote. We do however wholly encourage you to educate yourself on the people and the issues and support you in making your individual and independent decisions. As the late political journalist Norman Cousins said, "In a democracy, the individual enjoys not only the ultimate power but carries the ultimate responsibility."

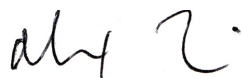
This publication is the culmination of efforts from a group of volunteers from the Beta Gamma chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha. I would like to sincerely thank all of them for their hard work in making this a reality.

If you would like to learn more about the UF chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha please refer to our website: <http://grove.ufl.edu/~pisigma/>

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### Disclaimer:

This publication is in no way affiliated with the University of Florida. The views and material within this pamphlet are solely those of the Beta Gamma chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha

November 4th, 2008

## Introduction

This guide will be broken up into sections and organized similar to the appearance of the Alachua County ballots. At the beginning of every section we will explain all the pertinent information about the category such as what determines a candidates win, a proposed state constitutional amendment or Judges approval, or an initiatives passage. If the section covers an election to a certain post we will briefly outline the responsibilities of that post in order to assist you in making your decision.

You will also notice that the summaries often contain superscript numbers. These numbers correspond to references that have been collected into an externally held list on our website. You can access this information as well as a host of other useful election related information by going to <http://grove.ufl.edu/~pisigma/voters/>

Due to this publications stance on remaining unbiased as well as printing constraints Pi Sigma Alpha highly encourages every citizen to independently research the issues and the candidates more thoroughly. This is in no way intended to discredit the accuracy of information that is provided, but only to say that there exists a plethora of information and opinions that are easily accessible in our society. If you would like to take the plunge into political consciousness I suggest that you check out a book or academic journal on specific issues, call candidates and representatives, read a respected newspaper, attend town hall forums, engage in polite political discussions with friends, family members, and co-workers among other things.

These sources are valuable in case you have questions about voting, experience problems in doing so, or want to learn more about government, politics, and politicians.

Alachua County Supervisor of Elections

<http://elections.alachua.fl.us/>  
(352) 374-5252

State of Florida Division of Elections

<http://election.dos.state.fl.us/>  
(850) 245-6200  
1-866-308-6739 - Florida's Voter Assistance Hotline  
1-877-868-3737 - Voter Fraud Hotline

NAACP - (877) NAACP-98

Gainesville Sun - local newspaper - <http://www.gainesville.com/>

Alachua Voter Guide - blog about local politics, issues, and political candidates  
<http://alachuavoterguide.com/>

The League of Women Voters of Alachua County / Gainesville, FL  
<http://www.lwv-alachua.org/>

## President/Vice-President

Article II of the U.S. Constitution declares that the President and Vice-President be chosen by a majority vote of electors. These electors form what is known as the Electoral College and are divided among the fifty states and the District of Columbia. The number of electors each state is given equals that states number of representative in the U.S. Congress; that is the House of Representatives and the Senate. The 435 member House is divided among the states based on population while every state has exactly two representatives in the 100 member Senate regardless of population; the twenty-third amendment of the U.S. Constitution declares that the District of Columbia be given up to as many electors as the state with fewest electors (currently 3).

The method in which these electors are chosen is referred to the state legislatures. However, for an extreme majority of the cases, including Florida, the electors are chosen by a winner-take-all popular vote. Therefore, the candidate that receives the largest amount of votes wins the lot of our state's twenty-seven Electoral College votes.

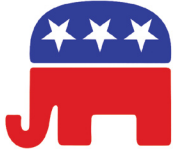
This is an example of an indirect election.

The President is at the head of the executive branch of the federal government; his or her role is to ensure that national law as given in the Constitution and written by Congress is faithfully executed. Article II of the Constitution establishes the President as commander-in-chief of the armed forces and enumerates powers specifically granted to the President, including the power to sign into law or veto bills passed by both houses of Congress. With the "advice and consent" of the Senate, the President is empowered to make treaties and appoint federal officers, ambassadors, and federal judges, including Justices of the Supreme Court. The President also has the power to grant pardons or reprieves, convene special sessions of Congress, and appoint officials to lesser offices.

The Vice-President of the United States is the first person in the presidential line of succession, becoming the new President of the United States upon the death, resignation, or removal of the president, should he or she accept the position. As designated by the Constitution, the Vice-President also serves as the President of the Senate, and may break tie votes. He or she may be assigned additional duties by the President but, as the Constitution assigns no executive powers to the Vice-President, in performing such duties he or she acts only as an agent of the president.

*"Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country" – Franklin D. Roosevelt*

## Republican Party Candidates



### JOHN MCCAIN - PRESIDENT

Arizona Senator John McCain graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and began his twenty-two year career as a naval aviator. During the Vietnam War McCain was captured as a Prisoner of War for over five years until his release in 1973. Four years later he became the Navy's liaison to the U.S. Senate before being elected to the House of Representatives in 1982 shortly after his Navy retirement.

McCain began his Senate career in 1986 and he later worked with Senator Russell Feingold to create the McCain-Feingold Act which regulates the financing of political campaigns. Senator McCain also initiated the Detainee Treatment Act of 2005 prohibiting inhumane treatment of prisoners.<sup>1</sup>

McCain is a proponent for lifting the federal halt on offshore drilling to help reduce the dependence on foreign oil in the short term. John McCain supports alternate energy sources as a long term solution, pledging to commit \$2billion annually to advance clean coal tech-

nologies and offering tax credits to improve the market feasibility of alternative fuels such as wind, hydraulic, and solar power. McCain proposes to cut the corporate tax rate by ten percent, keep the top tax rate at thirty-five percent, and maintain the fifteen percent rates on dividends and capital gains. Senator McCain believes that federal financial support of education must be reliant upon giving parents the ability to move their children and the dollars associated with them from failing schools. McCain also plans to cut pork-barrel spending, reduce Medicare spending growth, and freeze non-defense discretionary spending for at least one year.

McCain believes that it is essential to continue support of the Iraqi Government until it is capable of governing and safeguarding its citizens. Senator McCain holds the view that withdrawing from Iraq before Al Qaeda has been defeated would leave the country vulnerable to becoming a failed state.<sup>2</sup>

### SARAH PALIN - VICE-PRESIDENT

Sarah Heath Palin graduated from the University of Idaho with a Bachelor of Science in journalism and communications. Palin was elected twice to the Wasilla City Council and subsequently was elected to two terms as mayor of Wasilla, Alaska beginning in 1996.<sup>3</sup> Running on a campaign of clean government and ethics reform, Palin was elected as the 11th governor of Alaska in 2006. She was both the youngest and the first female executive of Alaska.

As governor, Palin's top priorities included education reform, public health and safety, and energy development.<sup>4</sup> Some of her notable accomplishments as governor include overhauling the funding system for education in the state, investing 5 billion dollars in state savings, and implementing the Senior Benefits Program which provided assistance to low income seniors within Alaska.<sup>5</sup>

She is the first female vice presidential

## PALIN, FROM PAGE 5

candidate from a major party. As for her stances on major social and economic issues, Palin is firmly anti-abortion and opposes gay marriage. She also favors increased oversight on the economy, drilling for oil in untapped do-

mestic areas, and generally supports tax cuts.<sup>6</sup> In terms of her foreign policy, Palin favors admitting Ukraine into NATO, increasing diplomacy, and enhancing national security initiatives.<sup>7</sup> Palin is a lifetime member of the NRA and enjoys hunting, fishing, Alaskan history, and all that the great outdoors have to offer.<sup>8</sup>



## Democratic Party Candidates

### BARACK OBAMA – PRESIDENT

Barack Obama was born in Hawaii but raised by his mother in Kansas. He attended Columbia University and moved to Chicago upon graduating where he organized a church group to assist poor urban neighborhoods. Obama then proceeded to earn a law degree from Harvard University and became the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review.

He returned to Chicago where he practiced as a civil rights lawyer and then ran for the Illinois State Senate, where he served for eight years. He has been the U.S. Senator of Illinois since 2005 and is the fifth African-American Senator in U.S. history.

Barack Obama's presidential campaign focuses on breaking down partisan barriers to achieve "Change." His plan for foreign policy reform includes ending U.S. involvement in the Iraq War by gradually withdrawing troops over a 16-month period. He then plans on refocusing military attention on Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda. He also supports presidential diplomacy for dealing with potentially threatening countries such as Iran and Russia. Obama supports Israel, who he believes is America's strongest ally in the Middle East, and their right to self-defense.

Another integral part of the Obama campaign is the issue of healthcare. He supports a plan to provide affordable healthcare to all Americans and also save currently insured

Americans approximately \$2,500 a year regardless of health history. Obama plans to jumpstart the economy by introducing higher taxes on oil companies to enable middle-class families to receive an annual \$1,000 in tax relief. He also budgets \$25 billion for economy relief through a State Growth Fund to assist in areas such as health, education, and housing, and a Jobs and Growth Fund to help ensure job security.

He also plans on tackling the issue of fraudulent brokers and lenders in order to assist prospective homebuyers and alleviate the current mortgage crisis. Obama is also dedicated to finding alternative energy sources and plans to invest \$150 billion over the next decade to a cleaner future. He plans on creating 5 million "green collar" jobs and wants to guarantee that 10% of America's electricity is generated by renewable sources by the year 2012 and 25% by 2025.

In regards to education, Obama plans on instituting the "Zero to Five" plan emphasizing early childhood education and restructuring No Child Left Behind by increasing funds and improving accountability. At the university level, Obama supports a national "Make College a Reality" proposal to increase Advanced Placement classes, increase higher education funding and provide better access to grants.<sup>9</sup>

## JOE BIDEN – VICE-PRESIDENT

Joseph Biden graduated from the University of Delaware and from the law school at Syracuse University. He set up his own law firm in Wilmington, practicing until 1972 when he was elected as U.S. Senator from Delaware at just twenty-nine years old. Soon after his election Biden's wife and infant daughter were killed in a car accident which also left his two sons in critical condition.

Biden has not left the Senate since he was initially elected nearly thirty-six years

ago and he is thought to represent history alongside Obama's platform of hope and change. Biden has a special interest in realizing Obama's plan for removing American troops from Iraq and has been instrumental in developing a bipartisan path toward ending the war. Biden has been a consistent champion for equal pay, a pioneer in introducing legislation to address global warming, and an advocate for using tax codes to reduce college costs.<sup>10 11</sup>

## Independent Candidates

### RALPH NADER – PRESIDENT

Ralph Nader was born in Winsted, Connecticut in 1934. He graduated from Harvard Law and upon graduating, had a brief stint in the US Army, traveled the world as a freelance journalist, taught history and government at the University of Hartford, and was a consultant to the U.S. Department of Labor.<sup>12 13</sup>

Nader is known not only for his role in presidential politics, but also as an avid consumer advocate, author, activist, environmentalist, and as major critic of the two party system currently seen in the United States.<sup>14</sup> According to Nader, one the most significant items on his platform is his stance against corporate presence in Washington, which he refers to as "corporate occupied territory."<sup>15</sup>

Nader also feels that it is time to break America's dependence on fossil fuels and nuclear power. He believes America should develop a new diversified energy plan including

the utilization of wind, solar, and other clean renewable energy sources.

Nader also favors a single payer health-care plan, reinforcement of civil liberties and eliminating the patriot act, and wants to establish a fair tax.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, he is against the death penalty, supports more efficient homeland security tactics, and opposes standardized tests in schools where he feels civics and consumerism should be emphasized.<sup>17</sup>

Nader's foreign policy includes supporting a two state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a responsible and rapid withdrawal from Iraq, and the rise of the United States as "the world's humanitarian superpower."<sup>18 19</sup> Nader is staunchly against the economic bailout bill that was recently passed by Congress, citing taxation without representation and an enhancement of corporate greed and irresponsible government.

*"War is a continuation of policy by other means" – Carl von Clausewitz*

*"There never was a good war or a bad peace" – Benjamin Franklin*



## MATT GONZALEZ - VICE-PRESIDENT

Matt Gonzalez was born in McAllen, Texas. He received degrees from Columbia College, Columbia University, and Stanford Law School. From 1991 to 2000, he worked as a deputy public defender in San Francisco. In 2000 he was elected to the 11-member San Francisco Board of Supervisors, and was named the president in 2003.

Gonzalez led the effort to implement Instant Run-off Voting, also known as Rank Choice Voting, in San Francisco in order to

obtain a majority outcome and eliminate the need for costly run-off elections. He also worked to create a minimum wage in San Francisco which includes a mechanism for yearly cost of living adjustments. Through Formula Retail Legislation and supported local ethics reforms, Gonzalez championed the effort to allow neighborhoods to ban chain stores. Currently, Gonzalez has been practicing law in San Francisco, focusing mostly on civil rights.<sup>20</sup>



## Libertarian Party Candidates

### BOB BARR - PRESIDENT

Bob Barr was on November 5th 1948 in Iowa City, Iowa. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from the University of Southern California and a master's degree from George Washington University in International Affairs. He received his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center in 1977.<sup>21</sup>

From 1986-1990 he was a United States attorney of the Northern District of Georgia. He later went on to become a member of the U.S. House of Representative for Georgia's 7th district, serving from 1995-2003.<sup>22</sup> He is best known for being one of the first Republicans to call for Bill Clinton's impeachment in 1998.<sup>23</sup> He served on various committees such as the Judiciary Committee, Government Reform Committee, and the Financial Services committee.

Barr favors capitalism and decreased governmental interaction with the economy by drastically reducing the Federal Government spending to only the government's lawful

functions provided by the constitution.<sup>24</sup> He favors domestic exploration of oil resources including the Outer-Continental Shelf and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

On the issue of Iraq, Barr believes that both the invasion and occupation of Iraq were mistakes. He calls for an American withdrawal from Iraq, but does not promote a public timetable.<sup>25</sup> Barr believes that federal healthcare programs have become financially unstable and thusly promotes programs that focus on patient choice and market principles.

On the issue of taxes, Bob Barr proposes that the current tax code be reformed. Moreover, he feels that corporate income taxes and capital gains taxes are far too high. He proposes that these taxes be scaled down and eventually eliminated.<sup>26</sup> In regards to education, Bob Barr is a supporter of private education and of giving more control to parents in their child's education. He believes education through legislation such as No Child Left Behind has not worked.<sup>27</sup>

## WAYNE A. ROOT - VICE-PRESIDENT

Wayne Alan Root graduated from Columbia University with a degree in Political Science.<sup>28</sup> He has since become a successful TV-host and entrepreneur. He has developed and produced shows and has appeared on the FOX News channel, CNBC, and MSNBC.<sup>29</sup>

Vice-Presidential candidate Wayne Allyn Root stands for limited government, fiscal conservatism, and state's rights. He will

promote the elimination of the Department of Education at the Federal level.<sup>30</sup> Root also supports free-market principles in the health care system, pledges to never raise taxes on anybody and will work to simplify and reduce the current tax code. In his own words, Root believes that government should be of the people, by the people, and for the people.

## Constitution Party Candidates

### CHUCK BALDWIN - PRESIDENT

Chuck Baldwin received a Masters in theology from Liberty Bible Institute at Liberty University in Virginia. He has since received 2 honorary doctorate degrees. He is now the founder and minister of Crossroad Baptist Church in Pensacola, FL. He additionally hosts a daily radio talk show where he discusses current events and politics from a conservative point of view.

Baldwin believes in limited government and adheres to an isolationist tradition. In regards to foreign policy, he promotes self-reliance, declaring that no foreign entity, foreign government, or world government body should be allowed to own any portion of US assets including bonds, buildings and roads. He also supports tariffs on foreign imports to protect jobs and raise government revenue.

He opposes the U.S. invasion of Iraq and would like to bring troops home responsibly but with a sense of immediacy. He also opposes U.S.'s participation and funding of international organizations including the United Nations.<sup>31</sup> Domestically, Baldwin advocates strong personal freedoms and believes that

measures like the Patriot Act violate these rights and are unconstitutional.

He would like to expunge the Federal Reserve and institute a debt free, interest free money system independent of international banks.<sup>32</sup> He believes education should not be federally funded or ran because it is not included in the Constitution. Rather, he wishes to see education in the full jurisdiction of the states and local communities. This would include disbanding the Department of Education as well as repealing any federal subsidizing or regulation of education. He does support an equitable tax relief for families whose children do not attend public schools in order to help leave the school choice with the parents.

Concerning health care, Baldwin supports employee-controlled family coverage without any government regulation. In order to keep health care prices low, he opposes any subsidies to special interests in the medical field. This deregulation would also include the elimination of the Food and Drug Administration.

## DARRELL CASTLE - VICE-PRESIDENT

Darrell Castle has served as a lawyer in Tennessee and Kansas for the past twenty years, specializing in areas of bankruptcy and personal injury.<sup>33</sup> He served in Vietnam as a 2nd Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps where he developed strong opinions such as his firm belief that Congress's sole power of declaring war be held and enforced. Castle previously served as the Chairman of the Constitution Party of Tennessee and as the

Vice Chariman of the National Committee.<sup>34</sup>

His previous experience helped him win the vice-presidential nomination on the first ballot after Chuck Baldwin, the presidential candidate, asked the convention to choose Castle.<sup>35</sup> Castle's platform includes ending illegal immigration, controlling federal spending, tapping into American oil reserves in Alaska and removing troops from Iraq.<sup>36</sup> He also takes a strong stance on pro-life issues.<sup>37</sup>



## Green Party Candidates

### CYNTHIA MCKINNEY - PRESIDENT

Cynthia Ann McKinney is a Congresswoman from Georgia who passionately advocates government accountability, voting rights and human rights. She served in Congress from 1992 to 2002 and returned promptly in 2006 to continue her work. As a previous member of the International Relations Committee, McKinney emphasizes the necessity of stronger diplomatic ties with developing countries, especially African nations.<sup>38</sup> She believes that such ties are important in the development of human rights as well as for the improvement of trade and global economic empowerment which she believes should be a vital economic policy.

McKinney also emphasizes the importance in the development of small businesses in America. As the first African American Congresswoman of Georgia, McKinney passionately promotes civil rights to minorities. She voted consistently to end racial profiling in 2001 and fought to keep affirmative action in college admissions in 2008.<sup>39</sup> She also introduced the Martin Luther King Records Act requiring the release of all information relating

to the life and death of Dr. King's which is currently sealed in the national archives and will remain sealed until 2038.

With regards to the environment, McKinney voted against drilling in Alaska in 2001 and voted to implement the Kyoto Protocol in 2008 in order to lessen the United States' greenhouse gas emissions. As a strong advocate of government accountability, McKinney has spoken against government injustices. In the aftermath of Katrina, she introduced a cleanup bill and proceeded to serve on the Katrina Task Force.

McKinney plans to bring all troops stationed abroad back home and supports a planned and orderly withdrawal of troops from Iraq. Her extreme discontent with the use of the Patriot Act and the secrecy involved with the 9/11 investigations led her to file articles of impeachment against George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and Condoleezza Rice.<sup>40</sup> Her campaign plans include the creation of a Department for Peace and implementation of a not-for-profit single-payer health care system.<sup>41</sup>

## ROSA CLEMENTE - VICE-PRESIDENT

Mrs. Clemente, a native of New York, graduated from the University of Albany and Cornell University.<sup>42</sup> Much of her academic research has focused on analyzing national liberation struggles within the U.S.<sup>43</sup> She is a journalist, community organizer, and Hip-Hop activist.<sup>44</sup> She has said that she hopes her campaign will "inspire all people, but especially young people of color, to recognize that we

have more than two choices."<sup>45</sup>

Furthermore, she says that the Green Party ticket addresses important community issues that neither the Republicans nor Democrats address such as rising unemployment, the high cost of food and housing, a lack of quality public education and access to higher education, the prison-industrial complex, and unaccountable corporate media.<sup>46</sup>

## U.S. House of Representatives

Representatives to the U.S. House are elected every even-numbered year based on a first-past-the-post voting system; a simple majority of the votes.

The United States House of Representatives is one of the two chambers of the United States Congress; the other being the Senate. The U.S. House has the power to initiate revenue bills (all bills imposing taxes or authorizing the expenditure of federal funds), impeach federal officials, and elect the President in Electoral College deadlocks.

Alachua County contains parts of two U.S. House districts; districts 3 and 6. On the upcoming ballot only District 6 is up for re-election. You can find a map and list of which voting precincts vote in either district by going to <http://elections.alachua.fl.us/voter-registration/Districts/congressional.html>

## District 6

### CLIFFORD B. (CLIFF) STEARNS

Born in Washington, D.C., Clifford Stearns attended George Washington University where he graduated with a degree in electrical engineering. He served in the United States Air Force as an electrical engineer during the Vietnam War. Stearns has been the incumbent representative of Florida's 6<sup>th</sup> district in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1989. He is the Ranking Republican on the Telecommunications and the Internet Subcommittee where he has worked to reform laws that hinder the devel-

opment and expansion of new products and services. Stearns served as Chairman of the Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection Subcommittee from 2001 to 2007. He helped to extend consumer protection by improving privacy, cyber-security, spyware control, and international trade agreements dealing with telecommunication service agreements. Stearns has been an advocate for increasing the funding for the VA. He pushed for the establishment of a VA hospital in the Jack-

## STEARNS, FROM PAGE 11

sonville area, which is set to open in 2009 and supports the VA's CARES plan, which calls for the expansion of the VA Hospital in Gainesville and a new Regional Health Care Facility in Marion County. Stearns believes that any new Iraq strategy must be accompanied by a set of strategic benchmarks de-

signed to hold the Bush Administration and the Iraqi government accountable for their role in achieving success.

Without using excess Social Security receipts or increasing taxes, Stearns believes that his substitute budget will make Medicare and Medicaid more sustainable, provide \$8 billion more for veterans programs, and balance the budget by 2012.<sup>47</sup>

## TIM CUNHA

Tim Cunha has a diverse range of professional experience, including a business career that has offered what he describes as an understanding of both the "perils and potential" of small business, work in the field of biological research in the areas of obesity, diabetes and nutrition, and a career in law for which he is still licensed to practice in the state of New Jersey. Cunha was the youngest elected member as of a county political committee in New Jersey at the age of 16 and has since been active in local government. A committed Democrat, Cunha's stance on issues such as the economy, educa-

tion, and the environment embody his party's ideals. Cunha claims "tax give-aways for the super-rich are unfair and un-American," vowing to eliminate tax loopholes for millionaires and reduce taxes for working families. In regards to education, Cunha intends on funding developmental programs such as HeadStart and reforming the No Child Left Behind Act. Cunha's environmental concerns include moving towards the utilization of "renewable and sustainable" resources by no later than 2020. Finally, Cunha's approach to Iraq includes a plan to end U.S. military involvement in the region.

## Florida House of Representatives

The Florida House of Representatives, one of the two Chambers of the Florida Legislature, is composed of 120 members, each representing a district. Representatives are elected to two-year terms during even-numbered years, and limited to four terms.

The Florida House, as well as the Florida Senate, is responsible for the passage of laws regarding the State of Florida.

Alachua County contains four Florida House districts; districts 10, 11, 22 and 23. On the upcoming ballot districts 10, 11 and 23 are up for re-election. You can find a map and list of which voting precincts vote in which districts by going to [http://elections.alachua.fl.us/voter-registration/districts/florida\\_house.html](http://elections.alachua.fl.us/voter-registration/districts/florida_house.html)

*"The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are few and defined. Those which are to remain in the State governments are numerous and indefinite" — James Madison*

## District 10

### DON CURTIS

Don Curtis received his Degree in Forestry from the University of Georgia.<sup>48</sup> He is a lifetime member of the NRA, enjoys the outdoors, and for the last twelve years he has been the Owner and President of a forestry consulting business.<sup>49</sup> Prior to this he served as Assistant Director of the Division of Forestry and Director of Land Acquisition and Management for the Suwannee River Water Management District.<sup>50</sup> Mr. Curtis believes that pushing for economic incentives for business will bring needed higher wage jobs to the district due to increased competitively in the job market.<sup>51</sup> He also says

that we must continue to improve our school system in order to provide a "solid education [for our children] to compete in tomorrow's market place."<sup>52</sup> He is also a proponent of offering more vocational options to high school students.<sup>53</sup> Mr. Curtis is Pro-Life and believes that marriage should be defined as between a man and a woman.<sup>54</sup> He suggests that law enforcement officers within the State of Florida be empowered to arrest illegal immigrants when encountered.<sup>55</sup> He also thinks that local governments should focus on the basic services mandated by law, and forego the rest in order to implement tax relief.<sup>56</sup>

### LEONARD L. BEMBRY

Democrat Leonard L. Bembry describes himself as standing on a strong platform of values and middle class experience to ensure that education and job opportunities are readily available to the public in order to foster for a more prosperous future. Bembry possesses a concern for the objective of a more successful community with common interests and goals and plans on addressing this by listening to the opinions and the worries of the public. He strongly believes that with his diverse background as a farmer, a businessman, and a family man, he can contribute effective economic and social development. As a farmer, he will em-

brace his position with the important values of hard work and the crucial understandings of the need to persist on preserving the environment. His experience as a businessman has taught him how to properly manage a budget and understand the prospects of home ownership. As a family man, he will strongly strive to earn the people's trust as a dependable leader capable of overcoming any challenge that comes his way. One of Bembry's main priorities as a Florida representative consists of fighting the Tallahassee budget cuts to prevent them from further hindering the schools and the public services that are essential to each and every person.

## District 11

### ELIZABETH PORTER

Born and raised in Columbia County, Elizabeth Porter received her Bachelor's degree from Florida State University after getting her

Associate's degree from Lake City Community College.<sup>57</sup> She has served on the Safe and Drug-

## PORTER, FROM PAGE 13

Free Schools Advisory Council, Summers Elementary Advisory Council and as Chair for both the United Way Campaign in Columbia County and the American Cancer Society's Cattle Baron's Ball.<sup>58</sup> Mrs. Porter was also appointed by Governor Jeb Bush to both the Third Judicial Circuit Nominating Committee and the Florida Medical Examiners Commission.<sup>59</sup> She was elected to the Columbia County Commission in 2004 and elected as the Commission's

Chair in 2006.<sup>60</sup> As representative to the Florida House she plans to help craft energy policies that will lower consumer gas prices and lower the tax burden for business in order to growth and employment.<sup>61</sup> Mrs. Porter also says that the vitality of agri-business is important to "our economy, our communities, and our families," and that she "will work to ensure that farmers and farms have the water and resources they need to properly care for their crops and livestock."<sup>62</sup> She also wants to make lowering property taxes on our homes a priority.<sup>63</sup>

## DEBBIE BOYD

Current District 11 Democratic House Representative Debbie Boyd received both her A.A. and A.A.S. degrees from Santa Fe Community College and lives on her family farm in Newberry with her husband of 32 years. She is a realtor, served thirty years with the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) at UF, and was a Commissioner of the City of Newberry. She is affiliated with the Alachua County Farm Bureau, the National Association of Home Builders, and the National Rifle Association. Additionally, Boyd has served on the House Committees, Agribusiness and Health

Quality, and received The Outstanding Legislator Award in 2007.<sup>64</sup> Debbie has fought to protect our fresh water springs and to stop the piping of our water to other parts of the state. In addition, Boyd sponsored a bill that requires the state of Florida to fly the POW/MIA flag at all state parks.<sup>65</sup> If re-elected, Boyd promises to continue to be an advocate for smaller class sizes, higher salaries for teachers, solid infrastructure systems to attract businesses to our communities, investments in alternative energy, and will condone any attempt to weaken any second amendment rights.<sup>66</sup>

## District 23

## BERNIE DeCASTRO

Originally from Connecticut, Bernie DeCastro attended Miami High School and has lived in North Florida for several years. He served time in prison for 17 years for drug related crimes and was paroled in 1984. Lawton Chiles officially pardoned him in 1994. In an effort to reduce crime, he now supports treatment rather than imprisonment of drug offenders and started a nonprofit organization called Time for Freedom Ministries that helps transition prisoners

back into the workforce. In 2001 he participated in an effort that resulted in legislation allowing the Department of Corrections to fund religious and private organizations that provide drug rehabilitation and transitional housing services for inmates. Additionally, DeCastro served on the Florida Faith-Based and Community-Based Advisory Council under Jeb Bush and still serves on the Drug Policy Advisory Council. On education, he does not support the FCAT or

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## DeCASTRO, FROM PAGE 14

similar standardized testing because he claims that it causes teachers to teach for the test rather than teaching a well-rounded curriculum. DeCastro also favors of spending more money on public education and encourages competitive

salaries for teachers to attract the best educators in the country to Florida schools. In terms of the economy, DeCastro wants to reduce government regulations and taxes on Florida businesses to promote economic growth and create new jobs in the state.<sup>67</sup>

## CHARLES S. "CHUCK" CHESTNUT, IV

Charles S. "Chuck" Chestnut, a Gainesville, Florida native, is the incumbent representative since 2006 of District 23 in the Florida House of Representatives. He held the position of Gainesville City Commissioner from 2000-2006 and was Mayor Pro Tempore of Gainesville in 2003 and 2005. He is the Democratic ranking member on the Committee on Financial Institutions and serves on the Committee on Conservation and State Lands, Committee on Postsecondary Education, and on the Jobs and Entrepreneurship Council. During the last legislative session, he helped

secure \$500,000 for Paynes Prairie Restoration, \$1.3 million for Public Schools Workforce Education in Alachua County, \$97,000 for an Hawthorne Recreational Complex and \$800,000 for the UF College of Medicine Autism program. He also co-sponsored House Bill 643 dealing with foreclosure fraud. Designed to save homes from foreclosure, this bill prohibited foreclosure consultants from engaging in specified unlawful acts and from failing to perform contracted services, and required all foreclosure-rescue services to be in writing.<sup>69 70</sup>

## Alachua County Commission

The Alachua County Commission is comprised of five districts. However, all County Commission elections are based on at-large voting and thus every Alachua County voter can cast a vote for all County Commission races. These districts are only used for determining which seat a candidate is eligible to run for, and has nothing to do with voting.

The Alachua County Commission is responsible for setting the legislative agenda in regards to the management of the County's resources and the direction of local laws.

## District 1

## KEVIN RIORDAN

Kevin Riordan, a self-described moderate conservative, has lived with his family in Alachua County for 34 years.<sup>71</sup> He believes there are several things that local governments could do to decrease the impact of taxes on residents. For one he thinks that we need to broaden the tax base by bringing quality jobs to the coun-

ty.<sup>72</sup> He also thinks that we need more diversity among local businesses in order to support all levels of job skills.<sup>73</sup> Mr. Riordan has stated that, "there is always room for improvement in the way our money is spent [and that] wasteful spending must be addressed through careful scrutiny of all programs."<sup>74</sup>



## MIKE BYERLY

Mike Byerly is a small business owner and currently Alachua County's commissioner who is running for re-election. As County Commissioner, Byerly has put forth ordinances and directed funding into sustainable and responsible investments. His work as County Commissioner has included the strengthening of ordinances that "protect trees and native vegetation during land

development," and the creation of a new Energy Conservation advisory committee. As County Commissioner, Byerly also established and later expand the "substance abuse and mental health counseling services, and the Work Release Community Service programs," which has effectively aided in reducing the county's jail population by about twenty percent in the past year.

## District 3

### LLOYD W. BAILEY, JR.

Mr. Bailey wants to stimulate economic growth by reducing government interference in the market.<sup>75</sup> He believes that the ideal way to stimulate economic growth would be to lower taxes, so that this money can be invested by individuals in the free market.<sup>76</sup> He has stated that he does not believe that

growth should be subsidized, by allowing developments to be tax-exempt, and calls for "natural growth".<sup>77</sup> Mr. Bailey says that if elected to office he will never vote for a tax increase, plans to end CHOICES, and have all tax referendums during general elections.<sup>78</sup>

### PAULA M. DELANEY

Mrs. DeLaney is a former Gainesville City Commissioner who is finishing her first term on the County Commission.<sup>79</sup> She also served as Mayor of the City of Gainesville from 1998 to 2001 and was on the Gainesville Regional Utili-

ties Board of Directors from 1992 to 2001.<sup>80</sup> She stated that she has worked hard to reduce the burden on property taxpayers by "diversify our [the county's] revenue sources to spread the cost of providing needed services to a broader base."<sup>81</sup>

## District 5

### WARD SCOTT

Mr. Scott is a professor emeritus at Santa Fe Community College where he has taught English since he graduated from the University of Florida.<sup>82</sup> Before this he taught and coached football and basketball at Gainesville High School.<sup>83</sup> He believes that the Alachua County government is out of touch with the people it represents, and, noting the

current economic conditions, believes that local government spending and taxation is growing at an unsustainable rate.<sup>84</sup> Mr. Ward believes we should disband the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization while addressing the "rampant traffic congestion" and inadequate maintenance of our area's roads.<sup>85</sup>

## RODNEY LONG

Mr. Long, a native of Gainesville, was elected to the Gainesville City Commission in 1988 and in 1991 he was chosen by his colleagues to serve as Gainesville's first district Mayor-Commissioner.<sup>86</sup> In November 2000 he successfully ran for the Alachua County Commission. Mr. Long initiated and serves as co-chairman of the 10 Year Plan to End

Homelessness, supported and implemented the Alachua County Forever Land Conservation Program, and supported the increase in the nickel gas tax which has resulted in nearly five million in user fees to address maintenance of roads in our cities, additional buses for RTS and a Pavement Management Program to address dirt roads.<sup>87</sup>

## Justice of the Florida Supreme Court

The Florida Supreme Court is the highest court in Florida. Justices, for which there are seven in total, are appointed to their position based on a "merit retention" system. This systems means that in the case of a vacancy the Governor chooses a Justice from a list of persons recommended by the Judicial Nominating Commission. In the case of newly appointed Justices, they must be approved by Florida voters in the following general elections. After this it is required that if a Justice wishes to remain in office they are approved every six years.

The Supreme Court of Florida is responsible for reviewing all proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution, reviews findings of cases in which the death penalty is imposed, and reviews circuit court decisions when they are in conflict with state statute or the constitution, other circuit courts, the Supreme Court as well as many other instances.

### JUSTICE CHARLES T. WELLS

Charles T. Wells is a Florida native who received both his bachelor's and juris doctor degree from the University of Florida. During twenty-eight years of private law practice Justice Wells was a certified mediator of the Florida Circuit Court and the United States District Court. Wells was appointed as a Justice of the Florida Supreme Court by Governor Lawton Chiles in 1994 and he has served since his original appointment.<sup>88</sup> Justice Wells presided during the recounting of ballots in

Miami-Dade County following the 2000 presidential election, voting against a manual recount.<sup>89</sup> Additionally, Wells was a Supreme Court member when the ruling was made to remove Terri Schiavo's feeding tube.<sup>90</sup> Over the course of his career, Wells has worked to eliminate racial and ethnic bias in the circuit courts as well as to reduce the caseload of the court.<sup>91</sup> In 2009, Justice Wells will retire due to the mandatory age restriction of the Florida Constitution.

*"Whenever a separation is made between liberty and justice, neither, in my opinion, is safe" — Edmund Burke*

## District Court of Appeal

The Florida District Courts of Appeal (DCAs) are organized into five districts that hear cases from their respective counties. The appointment of Judges to the DCAs is the same as previously described for the Florida Supreme Court Justices. Since Alachua County lies within the First District the voters of Alachua County are able to vote on the approval of the Judges that make up the First District Court of Appeal.

Because the Florida Supreme Court has predominantly discretionary jurisdiction (i.e., can choose which cases it wants to hear), the DCAs provide the final word on the vast majority of cases appealed in the State of Florida. The decisions and case law precedent of each district court of appeal are binding upon all circuit and county courts within that district.

### JUDGE ROBERT T. BENTON

Born in Indiana, Judge Benton received his J.D. with Honors in 1970 from University of Florida and his LL.M. in 1971 from Harvard Law School. He was appointed to the First District Court of Appeals by Governor Lawton Chiles in 1994. Prior to this Judge Benton served on the Supreme Court of Florida and taught in the Levin College of

Law at the University of Florida. Benton was a long-time hearing officer (administrative law judge) at the Division of Administrative Hearings. In 2002, Florida Lawyers gave Benton a merit retention approval rating of 88%. Judge Benton is associated with Habitat for Humanity and the St. John's Episcopal Church.<sup>92 93 94</sup>

### JUDGE MARGUERITE H. DAVIS

Marguerite H. Davis, born in Washington D.C., received a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in 1968 from the University of South Florida and then received her J.D. with Honors in 1971 from Florida State University. She has been a Judge on the First District Court of Appeal since 1993 when she was appointed by Gov.

Chiles. Prior to that, Judge Davis practiced law privately and from 1982 - 1984 worked as the Executive Assistant to the Chief Justice. When Judge Davis was last up for merit retention, lawyers with knowledge of her work gave Judge Davis a merit retention approval of 84%.<sup>95 96</sup>

### JUDGE JOSEPH LEWIS JR.

Judge Lewis is a native of Tallahassee and received his degree in law from Florida State University's College of Law upon completion of his Bachelor's from the University of Montana. He was appointed to the First District Court of Appeal in 2001. Before this he worked in the Office of the Attorney General as a Senior Attorney from 81'-95' and then

as Bureau Chief. Currently he is involved in a mentor program for Leon County Public Schools. He has also volunteered with the Boys and Girls Club of the Big Bend and provided pro bono legal services and counseling through the Legal Aid Foundation of the Tallahassee Bar Association and Legal Services of North Florida, Inc.<sup>97</sup>

### JUDGE RICKY L. POLSTON

Justice Polston was recently named to the Florida Supreme Court. It is so recent in fact that the Alachua County ballots were printed before the appointment and

therefore his re-approval as a First DCA Judge remains on the ballot. You do not need to take a position on his approval at this time.

### JUDGE CLAY ROBERTS

Mr. Roberts received his Bachelor's degree in Military History from the United States Military Academy and his degree in law from Florida State University (FSU) College of Law in 1991.<sup>98</sup> He is most notable for his service as the Director of the Florida's Division of Elections from 1999 to 2002 during which he presided over the 2000

Presidential Election recount. During this time he was seen as instrumental in the controversial decision to purge the voter rolls of convicted felons by using "loose standards".<sup>99</sup> He served at Governor Crist's Deputy Attorney General from 2006 to 2007 and has been an adjunct Professor of Law at FSU since 2004.<sup>100</sup>

### JUDGE WILLIAM A. VAN NORTWICK JR.

Mr. Van Nortwick received his Bachelor's from Duke University and his degree in law (with honors) from the University of Florida College of Law. He was a private practice lawyer in Jacksonville from 1970 to 1994.<sup>101</sup> During this time, he used his business law expertise to serve as pro bono counsel to various organizations that addressed the needs of the poor.<sup>102</sup> He was first appointed to Florida's First District Court of

Appeal in 1994. Mr. Van Nortwick chaired the Joint Commission of The Florida Bar and The Florida Bar Foundation, which assessed Florida's delivery system for providing legal services for the poor and in 2001 he planned and chaired the Bar's statewide symposium on equal access to justice.<sup>103</sup> He is the recipient of the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court's award for Distinguished Judicial Service for 2005.

## County Judge

### DENISE FERRERO

Denise Ferrero graduated from Vanderbilt University and the University Of Florida College Of Law where she became active as a community leader and volunteer. She spent nine years in the State Attorney's office working originally as a legal intern and eventually as Division Chief for crimes involving women and children. In 2005, Ferrero was appointed to preside as a Traffic Court hearing officer where she heard thousands of civil infraction cases. Denise Ferrero also has experi-

ence as a prosecutor, private lawyer, and instructor in Alachua County. In the 2007 Judicial Poll of local attorneys Ferrero received perfect and near perfect scores on several issues including showing courtesy/civility, having integrity/ethics, having knowledge of the law, and analytically reaching decisions in unsettled areas of the law. Ferrero served as president of the Eighth Judicial Circuit Bar Association from 2006-2007 where she focused her attention on young children.<sup>104 105 106</sup>

**LORRAINE H. SHERMAN**

Lorraine H. Sherman attended Santa Fe Community College and transferred to the University of Florida where she graduated with honors. She then attended the University of Florida's Levin College of Law. She has been a private attorney for 10 years in Alachua County and has been running her own practice since 1999. Sherman practices family law, criminal law, and is a Certified Mediator. She

has handled over 1000 cases and hundreds of trials and hearings. Sherman has courtroom experience in 37 counties throughout the state of Florida. She volunteers in the community at the Teen Court Program to "prevent children from becoming criminals." In Texas, Sherman founded and directed the Food for Life Meals on Wheels Program, dedicated to serving the elderly and those in need.<sup>107 108</sup>

**Alachua Soil and Water Conservation District**

Alachua County elects five representatives to serve on the Soil and Water Conservation District. These representatives serve four-year terms.

The District's historical role has been to protect the environment while ensuring balanced development and is predominately active through its adversarial position.

**Group 2****DAVID T. GILDART**

David Gildart received a Bachelor's Degree in History from the University of Memphis with a Minor in International Relations.<sup>109</sup> He is a self-described moderate, environmentalist, and business person with fifteen years experience in business management.<sup>110</sup> Mr. Gildart plans to use the post to ensure that a balanced approach to development and environmental

protection is proposed.<sup>111</sup> He argues that oftentimes development is brought to a standstill due to overzealous environmentalists that have the tendency to frustrate businesses and developers.<sup>112</sup> He suggests that an approach characterized by political moderation could entice businesses to expand and mend many of our community's problems, such as homelessness.

**TODD P. MARTIN**

Todd Martin is a fifth generation Alachua County resident, and received his bachelors from UF's College of Agriculture. He is currently the Assistant Director of Field Services for District 3 for Florida Farm Bureau Federation as well as a supervisor for the Alachua Soil and Water Conservation District. Mr. Martin has also served on the Alachua County Farm Bureau Board of Di-

rectors and the Alachua County Cattlemans Association. He says the main focus of these organizations is to help ensure a safe, affordable, and abundant food supply at the local level stating that, "we must always preserve our nutritional resources." He plans on continuing his work with his fellow supervisors in maintaining resources for both rural and urban communities.<sup>113</sup>

**Group 4****ROB BRINKMAN**

Mr. Brinkman attended the University of South Florida and Sarasota's New College. He is the current Chair of the Suwannee - St. John's group of the Sierra Club Florida as well as the Vice-Chair of the Citizen's Advisory Committee to the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization. He has served as the Chair of both the Alachua County Environmental Protection Advisory Committee and the Gainesville Energy Ad-

visory Committee. Mr. Brinkman was active in stopping the GRU proposal to build a new coal power plant, as well as a proposal to convert a Gainesville park to a Wal-Mart supercenter. He would like to strengthen the conservationist perspective of the District while seeing the scope of their activities expand. He wants to increase efforts to educate the public with the goal of reducing our ecological impact on the Springshed.<sup>114</sup>

**MARY ANN GOSA**

Mary Ann Gosa is the Director of Government and Community Affairs for the Florida Farm Bureau; the Florida Farm Bureau is the state's largest agricultural organization.<sup>115</sup> Her position represents the Farm Bureau on public policy issues relating to or-

finances, legislation and regulations impacting agriculture with emphasis on the areas of water, land use, growth management and environmental regulations.<sup>116</sup> She is also a registered legislative lobbyist in the State of Florida.<sup>117</sup>

**Proposed Constitutional Amendments**

The following proposed amendments will become part of the Constitution of the State of Florida if approved by at least sixty percent of the electors voting on the measure.

You can find the entirety of the amendments language by visiting <http://election.dos.state.fl.us/initiatives/initiativelist.asp?year=2008>

**NUMBER 1**

Under this amendment, sponsored by the Florida Legislature, the current discriminatory stipulation in the Declaration of Rights which denies aliens the right to possess property will be eliminated. The legislature originated early in the twentieth century and was directed toward Asian-American immigrants. Currently there is no Florida statute that prohibits the ownership of property by aliens that are not eligible for citizenship, thus the constitutional action is not immediately necessary. The section of the constitution under scrutiny states that all people in Florida are entitled to equal rights yet currently it denies aliens the right to possess property, therefore it conflicts with the promise of equality of rights to all Florida residents including aliens ineligible for citizenship.<sup>118 119</sup>

## NUMBER 2

An existing Florida statute recognizes a single form of marriage as that between a man and a woman only. This singular form of marriage, however, is not stated in the Florida Constitution. This amendment would limit the right to marry and would not allow any legal union to be treated as the equivalent of marriage between a man and woman. Unmarried couples living together would no longer be seen as legally valid in Florida and therefore, current health care and pension plans will no longer be extended to these couples. The amendment would guarantee that the only structure of marriage observed in Florida is between a man and a woman.<sup>120 121</sup>

## NUMBER 3

Florida Amendment 3 is a measure that was placed on the ballot in April by the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission concerning taxation towards real estate property. It is a measure that authorizes the Florida Legislature to prohibit considering certain improvements and changes to property when assessing its value to ad valorem taxation. This refers to not including factors such as wind damage and installation of renewable energy source devices when a property's values are assessed for annual taxation, which is what ad valorem refers to. In terms of arguments in favor, those that support the measure believe it may help improve hurricane safety for residential property as well as increasing value of residential property. Arguments in opposition include the idea that local revenues could suffer, minimal savings may ensue for individuals, and that new construction will not be protected by this amendment.

## NUMBER 4

Florida Amendment 4 is a measure placed on the ballot by the Florida Taxation and Budget Reform Commission to provide property tax exemption for consistently conserved land in the state. If passed, this measure would begin to apply to property taxes in 2010. The measure would also provide for further classification and assessment of land used for conservation. It would exempt land permanently classified as conservation from all property taxes as well as allow land that is only used for conservation purposes to be temporarily taxed according to its conservation use. The amendment so far has earned the approval of environment awareness groups including the Nature Conservancy and Citizens for Conservation Land who believe the measure encourages preservation of Florida's natural places including the Everglade and other interesting areas including wildlife such as the Florida panthers.

## NUMBER 6

Currently the State of Florida's policy for assessing tax dues for commercial property is based on a "highest and best," or potential use rather than its current use.<sup>122</sup> This means that "working waterfront businesses," such as marinas, boat yards, and commercial fishing facilities are assessed property values based on those for high-rise development; i.e. condominiums.<sup>123</sup>

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If this amendment passed it would reduce pressures on working waterfront property owners to sell to commercial developers and would potentially cause waterfront areas open to public access to sustain their current levels as opposed to its currently declining nature.<sup>124</sup> In juxtaposition, a staff analysis by the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission, the official state commission that authored and sponsored the bill, stated that the tax break could result in reduced revenue for local governments.<sup>125</sup>

## NUMBER 8

This proposed constitutional amendment would allow counties containing community colleges to propose ballot initiatives increasing local sales or ad valorem (property) taxes in order to supplement funds for their respective public institutions.<sup>126</sup> If these tax increases were proposed as property taxes they would not be subject to the maximum millage limits (tax rate) currently established in the State's Constitution.<sup>127</sup> The amendment also stipulates that such tax increases are limited to a life of five years unless approved further and that all "revenue generated ... must be used to supplement community college funding exclusively."<sup>128</sup>

## Alachua County Referenda

The following proposed referenda will become part of the Alachua County charter if approved by a simple majority of the electors voting on the measure.

## NUMBER 1

### Approval Of An Additional One Mill Ad Valorem Tax For School District Operating Expenses

*Shall the Alachua County School District's ad valorem millage be increased by a total of one mill, beginning July 1, 2009, and ending four years later on June 30, 2013, for necessary operating expenses including funds to provide school nurses; maintain elementary music and art programs, middle school band programs, school library programs, elementary guidance programs, and academic/career/technical magnet programs; and update classroom technology; with oversight by an independent citizens' committee?*

If passed, this referendum would increase property taxes by \$1 for every \$1000 of the taxable value of a property. This means an average increase of approximately \$125 a year based on an appraised value of \$150,000.<sup>129</sup> This increase would "bring in nearly \$13 million a year to pay for critical items that have been significantly reduced due to budget cuts" at the state and federal levels.<sup>130</sup> If passed, this increase would begin July 2009 and last four years unless approved further.

*"All Politics is local" — Tip O'Neill*



## NUMBER 2

### **Wild Spaces & Public Places Environmental Lands, Parks and Recreation One-Half Percent Sales Tax**

*Shall Alachua County be authorized to extend the Alachua County Forever program to acquire and improve environmentally significant lands, to protect drinking water sources, water quality, and wildlife habitat, and to create, improve, and maintain park and recreational facilities in all cities and the county, with citizen oversight and independent audit, by the levy of a one-half percent (1/2%) sales tax for two (2) years, starting January 1, 2009 and ending December 31, 2010?*

If passed, this referendum will raise approximately \$40 million to support land conservation, parks, and recreation facilities in Alachua County. The sales tax does not apply to food, pharmaceuticals, motor fuel, and most services. The “Wild Spaces” half of the funds will be used to acquire environmentally sensitive lands by providing about \$17 million to Alachua County’s land conservation priorities and almost \$3 million more to the City of Gainesville’s land conservation efforts. The “Public Places” half of the funding will be split between the individual cities and the county of Alachua for their park and recreation improvements. Each program has provided a specific list of park projects on which the funds must be spent. The City of Gainesville and Alachua County are also sharing the development cost of a dedicated senior recreation center to be built at Northside Park.<sup>131</sup>

## NUMBER 3

### **Protection of County-Owned Lands Acquired or Used for Conservation, Recreation, or Cultural Purposes**

*Shall the Alachua County Charter be amended to require that the sale or conversion to another use of County-owned lands acquired or used for conservation, recreation, or cultural purposes be effective only if approved by a majority of the electors in the County in a County-wide referendum election?*

Essentially, this referenda states that, if passed, any land owned by the County for the purpose of conservation, recreation, or cultural purposes not be sold or converted to another use without consent by the residents of the county via ballot measure; such as this one.

## Annexation - SW 20th Ave

This annexation referendum can only be voted on by residents whose voter registration shows an address within the disputed area. This area includes approximately 660 acres south of I-75 and almost entirely surrounds SW 20th Avenue.<sup>132</sup> An online map of the area in concern as well as the proposed city ordinance can be found at <http://grove.ufl.edu/~pisigma/guide/>

The proposed annexation would make the area, which is currently part of unincorporated Alachua County, part of the City of Gainesville.<sup>133</sup> This means that the area would have representation in the Gainesville City Commission and applicable residents would be able to vote to determine this representation; residents would also be able to vote in mayoral elections.<sup>134</sup> Incorporation would see an increase in property and other taxes due to differences between country and city rates.<sup>135</sup> However, proponents of this measure, namely the City of Gainesville, suggest that these tax increases would be offset by reductions in utility costs. Currently residents of the area receive utility services from Gainesville Regional Utilities (GRU) with a 10% surcharge added to electric and gas services and a 25% surcharge added to water and wastewater services for being outside of city limits.<sup>136</sup> The City Commission also acts as the Board of Directors for GRU. Incorporation would also make the Gainesville Police Department the primary law enforcement and safety entity for the area.<sup>137</sup>