

Submitted on behalf of the members of the Broward League of Cities—

October 27, 2010

Broward League of Cities Opposes County Questions 2 and 4 on Nov. 2 Ballot

By Daniel J. Stermer, Weston Commissioner and 1st Vice President of the
Broward League of Cities

Home Rule is one of the most important powers a city has to make decisions in the best interest of its residents. Added to the Florida Constitution in 1968, Home Rule empowers local governments to solve problems and provide immediate solutions for everyday issues, independent of the state and county. The idea is that local residents know what's best for their community and can be trusted to make competent decisions. Residents have the most contact with their local officials, and if their local officials fail to live up to the community's standards, then voters will cast them out of office.

Home Rule is being threatened by two County referenda questions concerning ethics, appearing toward the end of the November 2nd ballot:

Question 2

Question No. 2 says, "County Code of Ethics Prevails Over Municipal Ordinances Regulating Conduct of Public Officials and Employees." It would add a County Code of Ethics to the Broward County Charter which would prevail over any "conflicting municipal ordinances that regulate the conduct of elected officials, appointed officials, and public employees."

Should county ethics standards always prevail when they are in any way "conflicting" with a city's standards? The Broward League of Cities says NO. Most cities adopted ethics standards that are required by state law and have ethics rules that are more stringent than the county. It is dangerous to allow the county to have the authority to preempt in all cases cities' standards for their officials and employees. It is not a good idea for county bureaucracy to take the place of your contact with your city officials. Our position against a countywide standard does not undermine our belief in governing honorably. We encourage voters to vote NO on Question 2.

Question 4

Who will pay for this new government office created to investigate other government offices? Taxpayers will! Question 4 hits Broward residents with the double whammy of raising taxes and challenging Home Rule. The Broward League of Cities also opposes Question No. 4, which would, "Establish Charter Office of Inspector General to Investigate County and Municipal Misconduct and Gross Mismanagement." At a time when cities and counties are struggling to find the revenue to deliver needed services, Question No. 4 adds a new government office, complete with personnel and all the related expenses. The actual wording of Question No. 4 on the ballot says, "Broward County costs would increase by an amount that cannot be determined."

Not only would the new position siphon funds from much needed services, it is also redundant. Establishing an Inspector General would only serve to double the work of established departments such as the State Attorney's office, the Sheriff's public corruption unit and the statewide grand jury, three offices currently responsible for

investigating official misconduct, illegalities, and ethical conflicts at all levels of government. We encourage voters to vote NO on Question 4.

The Broward League of Cities believes that Questions 2 and 4 are a wasteful increase in county bureaucracy and costs, terrible for the future of our cities, and urges Broward voters to vote a decisive NO on both.

(540words)

Daniel J. Stermer is 1st Vice President of the Broward League of Cities and a Weston City Commissioner. The Broward League of Cities is a non-partisan, non-profit organization comprised of elected officials from Broward County's 31 municipal governments including a Broward County representative. The Broward League of Cities is dedicated to increasing awareness and providing resolutions to issues that affect day-to-day operations at the county, state, and federal levels.

Media Contact:
Daniel J. Stermer
Telephone: 954.385.2000 / 954.349.4892
dsterner@westonfl.org