

Make Sure to Vote in **NO**-vember

by Jon Spoon

Here are my brief explanations of the purpose for and reason to vote against all 6 constitutional amendments:

AMENDMENT 1 RIGHT TO HUNT AND FISH

The purpose: The sole purpose of this amendment is to trick people into thinking these amendments are a good idea. Lots of people like to hunt and fish. This was intentionally chosen to appear first and be simple and widely supportable. People can understand this one and will think that the later, more popularly incomprehensible amendments were created with the same intent to codify rights that people want and enjoy. This is the lure people see right before the hooks start digging in.

WHY TO VOTE AGAINST IT: It is unnecessary and could create problems in the future. No one is threatening the rights to hunt and fish in NC. Even most Democrats recognize that these activities can be beneficial for the state. Incomes they generate often go to conservation and programs often build a greater understanding of our local ecosystems. If it is enacted, it will be used in the future to curtail conservation and local planning efforts. Lawsuits will be filed to stop local efforts that in any way limit existing rights to hunt and fish. They may end up unsuccessful, but the mere prospect of being sued will have a chilling effect on beneficial efforts to plan land use and preserve valuable natural areas.

AMENDMENT 2 PROTECTIONS FOR CRIME VICTIMS

The purpose: This one is another red herring. It spells out a few rights that already exist in our state. They are established in law and no one is trying to challenge them. The purpose is to make people think, "wow, the first two seemed like common sense, the rest of them must be just as good."

WHY TO VOTE AGAINST IT: It is unnecessary, will be a burden to the already over-stretched court systems and has the

potential to hurt people's privacy rights. This will create a lot of work for the court systems. The language of the amendment adds acts of delinquency to crimes. It is unclear how this might affect the usually sealed nature of juvenile prosecutions. Even if you think all these measures are good and that it needs to be part of the State constitution rather than just a law, it does not provide any recourse if the new system fails in its objectives. It specifically says that any failure to follow the notice requirements does not create a cause of action against the State or the Courts for failing to follow through with the process. Finally, it will only apply to certain types of crime. They made sure to include assault and larceny, but conveniently left out any new rights for victims of white-collar crimes.

AMENDMENT 3: VOTER ID

The purpose: Voter suppression. Statistically, voter fraud is not a real problem in the US. Apathy is a much bigger issue. That said, the GOP knows their ideas are unpopular with most people. Therefore, to stay in power, they have to keep as many people from voting as possible. These measures have been proven to disproportionately affect communities of color. They know that; it's the whole point.

WHY TO VOTE AGAINST IT: Um... you actually believe in democracy. We need all of our voices to be heard to make good policy. The GOP does not want good policy because it doesn't make their sponsors any richer or more powerful. This is a 'solution' without a problem and a very calculated effort to subvert democracy in North Carolina.

AMENDMENT 4 BI-PARTISAN ELECTIONS BOARD

The purpose: This was designed to strip power away from the Governor and give it to the legislature. The GOP knows its ideas do not win in state-wide elections. The reasons they control the legislature are gerrymandering and serious spending by rich people that want to be richer. They know this doesn't work in

statewide elections and thus, their bad ideas will never carry into those offices again. For this reason, they have to take powers from whole-electorate positions and stuff them into gerrymandered, pre-purchased legislative positions.

WHY TO VOTE AGAINST IT: The Governor has always had this power and should keep it. There is a good reason these powers fall to a position elected by the whole state electorate. The election board is entrusted to implement systems that serve what the most North Carolinians want. Since the GOP will never provide that as a platform, it needs to game the system to undermine the popular will. When every living former Governor of the state, from either party, stands up and says this is a very bad idea, It is a very bad idea.

AMENDMENT 5: 'MERIT' SYSTEM FOR FILLING JUDICIAL VACANCIES

The Purpose: Mostly the same as the elections board. Take a long-standing gubernatorial power and shift it to the legislature. Filling judicial vacancies is one of the most important powers of the Governor. The hope is that judges are selected based on their unbiased application of the law. This happens most of the time. Times, they are a changin' and the GOP hates it. They want the 1950s back and they see the courts as their ticket to it. Since they can't win a statewide election, they need to vest this all important power in the more purchasable legislature.

WHY TO VOTE AGAINST IT: This is probably the most important issue on the slate. Despite the title, this has nothing to do with merit. It has to do with purely regressive ideology. Since it is clear the GOP won't get a governor in the foreseeable future, they need to change how our checks and balances work to pull us back in time. Just last week, a top economic consultant said that NC seriously hurt its prospects for a transformative tech project through 'self-inflicted wounds'. This was referring to the bathroom bill and other

efforts drag us back in time. If the GOP legislature gets control of appointing judges, we can expect a lot more of these wounds.

AMENDMENT 6 INCOME TAX CAP AT 7 PERCENT

The purpose: Make the GOP's rich sponsors richer and assure that there isn't enough public funding to allow upward social mobility for the rest of us. We're pretty much and wealth-driven oligarchy and the people running the show really like it that way.

WHY TO VOTE AGAINST IT: Despite seeming nice, this is not for regular people. No one particularly likes paying taxes, but we need them to create the world in which we want to live. This is intentionally framed to be egalitarian. No matter who you are, no one pays more than 7 percent. The issue is the enormous wealth disparity in our state. It doesn't matter what the max cap is for poor and most middle-class people. If the state lowers its income tax rate for the lowest 10 percent of earners by 1 percent it really doesn't lose very much income. 8 percent of next to nothing is about the same as 7 percent of next to nothing. If the state lowers its income tax rate on the highest 10 percent of earners, it loses an enormous amount of income. This might seem like something average voters want, but it wasn't designed for them and it certainly will not benefit them.

These are all my personal opinions and are based on my own research and reading. There may be some misinterpretations, but I think this is pretty close to the actual story. Please talk about these issues with your friends, family and neighbors. A recent poll said that almost no NC voters even know this effort is happening. If we go in blind, read about a right to fish and a 7 percent income tax cap, we may well be stuck with these terrible policies for years to come.

The choice is simple, but we will have to work to protect our State's constitution this NO-vember.

Jon Spoon resides in Chatham's Oakland Precinct.

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