

# AN URGENT CRISIS, AN EFFECTIVE AND AFFORDABLE REMEDY

## *Amendment 9: The Campaign to Reduce Class Size and Put Florida's Children First*

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## **THE CRISIS**

**Florida ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in high school graduation rates.**

**Florida ranks 50<sup>th</sup> in per-capita spending on education.**

**Florida ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in student-teacher ratios.**

**Florida ranks 46<sup>th</sup> in SAT scores.**

**Over the last three years,  
Florida's ranking has fallen  
in per-capita education spending,  
graduation rates, and SAT scores,  
while class sizes have increased.**

## INTRODUCTION

### **Bold and Affordable Action for Florida's Future**

Florida's overcrowded classrooms are hurting our students and our state.

Amendment 9, the class-size reduction ballot initiative, gives Florida voters a chance to address an urgent need and correct a persistent failure of leadership. It gives us the opportunity to make education a top priority in reality and not just in rhetoric. Passing Amendment 9 will be a dramatic act by the people of Florida, a profoundly pro-education and pro-opportunity step forward for Florida's children. It will also be a major pro-business, anti-crime investment in Florida's future that will strengthen our workforce and our economy.

**The evidence is overwhelming that reducing class size is among the most effective and most cost-effective ways to strengthen schools.** *(See Appendix A for selected resources on the documented benefits of smaller class sizes.)*

Making needed investments in smaller classes is well within Florida's financial means. We need to approach this very achievable priority with the commitment and imagination it deserves.

Public education is a fundamental democratic institution. Generations of immigrants have been ushered into American society through the schoolhouse doors. In an increasingly diverse country, public schools are where the next generations of Americans learn to live and work together. And in an increasingly competitive global marketplace, strong public schools that provide students with essential knowledge and skills are vital to our economic future and our democratic values.

Unfortunately, an understanding of the critical role played by public schools has not led to consistent policies that create and sustain strong schools for our children. Florida's elected leaders have too often made education a bigger priority while campaigning than while governing. With insufficient resources devoted to our schools, expectations and achievement have been allowed to fall into a spiral of diminished performance and opportunity. As a result, many public schools have been allowed to decay, and too many children are denied a meaningful chance at becoming full participants in our society.

**This problem is especially acute in Florida, where nearly half of all students who enter ninth grade do not graduate from high school.**<sup>1</sup> Florida's students struggle in some of the nation's most crowded classrooms and rank among the nation's worst in academic performance. News reports indicate that some students reporting for school this August have found themselves in classes of more than 50 students.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this dire situation, the state's per capita spending on education ranks last—50<sup>th</sup> among the states.<sup>3</sup>

This is an extraordinary crisis calling for an extraordinary and comprehensive response. It requires creativity and dedication in how we recruit, train and support quality teachers. And it requires that we take long overdue steps to deal with overcrowded classrooms and the devastating toll they take on Florida's schoolchildren.

Repeated efforts to have the Legislature deal with classroom overcrowding have unfortunately failed. Florida's elected leaders have not kept faith with our children. That is why parents, teachers, and other community leaders have launched a campaign to put caps on class size into the Florida Constitution.

Amendment 9 addresses the issue of overcrowded classrooms in Florida by requiring the state to provide adequate funding to limit the number of students in public school classrooms to 18 for pre-kindergarten through third grade, 22 for fourth through eighth grade, and 25 for high school.<sup>4</sup> These reductions would be phased in over an eight-year period. Amendment 9 puts the responsibility for funding reduced class sizes on the Legislature, not on local school districts. Legislators would have a range of funding options to consider. The issue is not whether the state can afford smaller classes but whether the state can afford the grim costs of overcrowding: low achievement, high dropout rates, increased crime, and a shortage of skilled workers.

Earlier this year, a *St. Petersburg Times-Miami Herald* poll asked the public to name the "most important" issues to address in public education. Two of the top three responses were reducing class size and strengthening "classroom discipline"—the latter of which, research shows, is improved by class-size reduction.<sup>5</sup> In this poll, a large majority of Floridians supported the class-size initiative that is now certified for the November 5 ballot as Amendment 9.<sup>6</sup> This overwhelming support reflects the public's willingness to invest in our state's future.<sup>7</sup>

Floridians' common sense instinct—that overcrowded classrooms make it harder to teach and learn—is backed by a mountain of academic research. Research not only documents that reduced class sizes improve student achievement, but also that smaller classes reduce discipline problems, help retain teachers, and reduce dropout rates.

State leaders have unfortunately set different priorities, passing corporate tax breaks requested by the governor and this year eliminating an annual tax holiday on back-to-school purchases.<sup>8</sup> "There's just a refusal to listen," said Scott Rose, Florida's 1988 Superintendent of the Year and a longtime Republican.<sup>9</sup> One columnist wrote, "If we keep leaving it to the Legislature, we will have 50 kids in a classroom 10 years from now."<sup>10</sup> In fact, in some schools, that day is here now.<sup>11</sup>

This November, Floridians will also have an opportunity to vote on two other initiatives to strengthen education in the state. **Amendment 8** ([www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/4prek](http://www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/4prek)), sponsored by Miami Mayor Alex Penelas, would offer voluntary, universal and high-quality pre-kindergarten learning programs for all four-year-old children. **Amendment 11**, ([www.edexflorida.org](http://www.edexflorida.org)) sponsored by former governor and current U.S. Senator Bob Graham, would strengthen management and accountability of the state university system.

Together with Amendment 9, these amendments recognize the importance of lifelong learning, and they address crucial concerns from pre-K through higher education. They make sure all children have access to an early start (Amendment 8), have a learning environment that strengthens their ability to achieve (Amendment 9), and ensures that they can continue their education in a university system that receives proper oversight (Amendment 11).

## ***The Coalition to Reduce Class Size***

The Coalition to Reduce Class Size ([www.smallerclasses.org](http://www.smallerclasses.org)) was created and the campaign to amend the state constitution was launched to give Florida voters a chance to make education the priority that elected officials have not. A few years ago, disheartened to find that his daughter was in a kindergarten class with 34 students, State Senator Kendrick Meek began looking for answers. Unfortunately, the Legislature repeatedly defeated efforts to enact class-size reductions. Reflecting on the many times in which class-size reduction efforts have been blocked by the political establishment in Tallahassee, Meek recognized that real reform would require action by the people of Florida.

The Coalition has received an outpouring of support from students, parents, teachers, civic and business leaders, and other concerned Floridians. Defying all expectations, the Coalition's amendment was certified for the ballot with more than 580,000 verified signatures, almost 100,000 more than required.<sup>12</sup> The measure draws strong support from across political party lines. One supportive Republican is Kathy Bell, a media specialist at Tarpon Springs High School. "Our class sizes are ranging from 37 to 38," said Bell. "You can't teach 38 students. You can barely even put 38 in the classroom."<sup>13</sup>

Parent-Teacher Associations from dozens of Florida schools helped gather signatures. Among the supporters of the Coalition to Reduce Class Size are People For the American Way, the Florida Education Association, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the NAACP, the AFL-CIO, Service Employees International Union, the Florida Conference of Black State Legislators and many other local, state, and national organizations.

## ***People For the American Way***

People For the American Way (PFAW), a civil rights and civil liberties organization with 600,000 members and supporters nationwide, is actively involved in supporting the passage of Amendment 9, and also endorses Amendments 8 and 11.

Florida's citizens are clamoring for action to strengthen public education. PFAW's 35,000 Florida members and supporters are eager to help seize this opportunity. For many years, both in the Sunshine State and across the nation, PFAW has been a forceful advocate for reforming and improving public schools. Indeed, we have made quality education a top substantive priority.

PFAW and its affiliated Foundation have worked on many fronts to advance the goal of a quality education for every child. For example, we have urged reforms that support qualified teachers and honor those who have made education their profession. We have advocated on behalf of federal and state policies that will support school districts in recruiting, hiring, and training high-quality teachers and in giving teachers class sizes that allow them not only to manage but teach and inspire their students.

There is no question that class size reduction must be accompanied by improved teacher quality.

We recognize that strengthening the ties between schools, teachers and parents is crucial to the success of students and schools. That's why PFAW Foundation is working with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Kodak, the Ad Council, and a wide range of allied organizations on a national campaign that educates, encourages and energizes parents in communities of color to be effectively involved in their children's education. Television, radio, print, and outdoor advertisements in English and Spanish have received over \$14 million in placements in the first quarter of this year. Thousands of parents have received valuable tips and information from the SchoolSuccessInfo.org Web site. And this fall, thousands of parents will receive parental involvement "tool kits" at back-to-school rallies organized by NAACP chapters and other partnering organizations.

These are the kinds of programs that can help build crucial community support for schools. But teachers and parents cannot build stronger schools if public policy is simultaneously undermining that goal.

People For the American Way is proud to be a partner with Florida's Coalition to Reduce Class Size in the campaign to win passage of Amendment 9.

## I. THE STRONG CASE FOR AMENDMENT 9

### ***Florida's Elected Leaders Are Failing Our Children***

The most recent installment of the *New Cornerstone* report by the Florida Chamber of Commerce issued an alarming verdict:

“Florida ranks near the bottom tier of states in most measures of educational performance ....”<sup>14</sup>

In fact, there is overwhelming evidence of the significant ground that our state has lost. Florida’s high school graduation rate ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in the country.<sup>15</sup> SAT scores have fallen to rank only 46<sup>th</sup> out of 50, and our state’s ACT scores are the lowest in eight years.<sup>16</sup>

Florida’s elected leaders are allowing its schoolchildren to fall further behind other American students. **Our state ranks a dismal 50<sup>th</sup> in per-capita spending on education and its rankings on educational achievement reflect that deficit.**<sup>17</sup>

Florida spends an average of \$5,982 per K-12 student, a figure well below the national average of \$7,079.<sup>18</sup> If Florida invested in its public schools at the national average, students would reap the benefits of an additional \$2.6 billion in education funding every year.<sup>19</sup>

A major reason why our state ranks so poorly on so many of these key measures of educational quality is because of yet another ranking—Florida ranks 44<sup>th</sup> out of 50 states in student-teacher ratios.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, overcrowded classrooms are taking a devastating toll on the quality of teaching and learning.

Tragically, there is ample evidence that many students heading back to school this fall are entering classrooms that are even *more* crowded. A *Miami Herald* article examined classroom conditions in several southwest Florida counties and reported that for the 2002-03 school year “students are bracing for larger class sizes and crowded classrooms.”<sup>21</sup> The *Herald* also reported that teachers in one city high school complained that some classes had 50 or 60 students.<sup>22</sup> In Lake County, public school officials predict their student population will double within a decade.<sup>23</sup>

Former U.S. Education Secretary Richard Riley has expressed a view that has been overwhelmingly supported by years and years of research: “Teachers do not teach most effectively when they are hampered by the burden of too many students in the classroom.”<sup>24</sup> Considering the overcrowded classrooms that plague so many of our public schools, the deplorable state of education in Florida is no surprise.

Overcrowded classes sabotage the best efforts of teachers to help their students learn. “Add 10 extra children to your family and see what happens,” a Leon County educator wrote in a letter to her local newspaper. “We all pay for overcrowding.”<sup>25</sup> Last school year, Eugene Tisdale, a Brevard County 11<sup>th</sup>-grader described his predicament: “I’m in a class with 35 other kids and I’m telling you, it’s difficult.”<sup>26</sup>



A written survey of more than 11,000 middle and high school students in Palm Beach County found that students placed a high priority on smaller classes. About 63 percent said it is easiest for them to learn in classes with fewer than 26 students.<sup>27</sup>

More and more parents, civic leaders, business owners and others are recognizing that shortchanging children today puts Florida's tomorrow in jeopardy. Without taking action now, conditions in our schools will deteriorate even further. High school dropout rates—already alarming—will soar. Businesses will find it increasingly difficult to create jobs or fill existing jobs with young workers who have the necessary skills. Cities and communities will become less cohesive and stable, and their young people will be more tempted to turn to drugs or engage in other criminal activities.

If the state remains on educational “auto-pilot,” classrooms will only become more overcrowded. Our public schools need urgent attention, and Amendment 9—the class-size reduction initiative—can be both the starting point and the catalyst for broader, systemic reforms that put Florida's children and future first.

### ***Smaller Classes Mean Better Schools, Smarter Students***

It is common sense that overcrowded classes make it harder to teach and harder to learn. The research community overwhelmingly agrees. Of course strengthening schools requires a multi-pronged approach. We must invest in recruiting, training, supporting, and rewarding good teachers. But those teachers must have classes that are manageable. Smaller classes are not the only answer, but they are an indispensable part of the solution to the crisis facing Florida's public schools.

According to the May 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Orlando Sentinel, Hamilton Elementary in Sanford, Florida “boosted its fourth-grade reading scores for the third year in a row, beating the state average this year by a point. In 1998, the first year FCAT was given, its reading scores lagged behind the state average by nearly 40 points. Like some of Seminole's other struggling schools, Hamilton used a new, very structured program and small classes to help its mostly low-income students become better readers.”<sup>28</sup>

### ***Smaller Classes Lead to Improved Academic Achievement***

In 1999, the U.S. Department of Education reported, “Studies have consistently identified a positive relationship between reduced class size and improved student performance.”<sup>29</sup>

In fact, a host of research and policy organizations have examined academic data and concluded that class-size reduction improves student learning. These include the Economic Policy Institute, RAND, Educational Testing Service, National Black Caucus of State Legislators, North Carolina Education Research Council, and many others.<sup>30</sup> Leading researchers have examined test scores from the National Assessment on Educational Progress and found a direct link between smaller class sizes and higher student achievement.<sup>31</sup> The American Institute of Research analyzed the performance of a national sample of schools and

concluded that “reducing class size is significantly related to higher academic performance, particularly in reading.”<sup>32</sup>

Tennessee’s Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR) program offers compelling evidence that smaller classes improve learning. Few studies have been as comprehensive in scope as the STAR study, which renowned Harvard statistician Frederick Mosteller called “one of the most important educational investigations ever carried out.”<sup>33</sup> STAR researchers evaluated the progress of more than 11,000 students who were in small K-3 classes in 1985-89.<sup>34</sup> The academic progress of these students was compared with the progress of students who had attended larger classes during all of these years.

STAR researchers found a dramatic difference in the two groups’ performance. Not only did those who were in smaller K-3 classes outperform their peers in larger classes during those years, but they continued in subsequent years to outpace them in math, reading and science through eighth grade. In addition, the gap between the small-class and larger-class test scores increased over time.<sup>35</sup> In high school, those who had been in small K-3 classes were *less* likely to be retained at the same grade level and were *more* likely to graduate and earn higher grade-point averages.<sup>36</sup> STAR project small-class students were also more likely to take college entrance exams than their regular-class peers.<sup>37</sup> After reviewing Tennessee’s STAR study, Jeremy Finn, a professor at the State University of New York, declared that the study “leaves no doubt that small classes have an advantage over larger classes” in raising student achievement.<sup>38</sup>

In 1996, Wisconsin began Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE), a class-size reduction program that targets low-income students in grades K-3. The program reduces pupil-teacher ratios to 15-1 in the early elementary grades.<sup>39</sup> Studies have confirmed that SAGE is helping to improve learning and narrow the achievement gap between white and minority students. In an evaluation of SAGE and comparison schools with larger class sizes, 29 of the top 30 classrooms in terms of student achievement in language arts, reading and math were SAGE classrooms. The achievement gap in language arts and math between African American and white first grade students was *reduced* in SAGE classrooms while it *increased* in comparison schools.<sup>40</sup>

In 1996, California enacted class-size reductions in its public schools. California’s approach has raised some legitimate concerns because it was implemented too quickly and was only partially funded by the state, shortcomings that have been addressed by the authors of Florida’s Amendment 9. However, in spite of these concerns about California’s approach to class size reduction, the evidence reveals that student learning improved. In five of the six largest California districts, researchers found that schools with large numbers of disadvantaged students saw their test scores jump by 10 percent in reading and 15 percent in math.<sup>41</sup> In a study of Los Angeles students, Vital Search reported that test scores rose, particularly in math and language arts. “The policy implications of our data are clear,” said Vital Search analyst Harold N. Urman. “Class-size reduction helps, and it helps low-income students the most.”<sup>42</sup>

In the 1980s, Indiana initiated the Prime Time class-size reduction program, which was confirmed to improve student achievement.<sup>43</sup> The direct link between smaller classes and academic improvement has also been found in North Carolina and Texas.<sup>44</sup> In Texas, one researcher reviewed data from more than 800 school districts and found that as pupil-teacher

ratios increased, student achievement fell.<sup>45</sup> Experts also have identified the importance of smaller classes in helping teachers work more effectively with special education students.<sup>46</sup>

While most studies on class size have focused on the early elementary grades, research has also documented the positive impact of smaller classes in the higher grades. For example, Harold Wenglinsky of the Educational Testing Service found that smaller classes at the eighth-grade level improved the learning environment, which led, in turn, to higher student achievement.<sup>47</sup>

The *Washington Post* recently reported on local school officials' efforts to battle dropout rates by focusing on reducing class sizes in ninth grade through special academies. The newspaper reported, "In Seattle, officials found that ninth-grade academies led to improved attendance, fewer discipline problems and higher academic performance."<sup>48</sup>

Furthermore, for their 1997 "Quality Counts" report, an *Education Week* panel recommended that "states should make every effort to reduce the number of students that a [secondary] teacher teaches each day to fewer than 80."<sup>49</sup> At the time of this report, only 44 percent of Florida's secondary English teachers were facing fewer than 80 students per day.<sup>50</sup>

Some positive effects of reduced class sizes are difficult to measure precisely. For example, Tennessee State University education professor Barbara Nye has found that smaller classes maximize teachers' efforts to communicate with parents.<sup>51</sup> And parental involvement has long been identified as a critical factor in how well students perform in school.<sup>52</sup>

Incredibly, Education Secretary Jim Horne released an analysis—one columnist called it "laughable"—that purports to show a correlation between *larger* class sizes and academic success.<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, some members of the Board of Education have continued to ignore the evidence on class size, disparaging the class size amendment and its supporters at a recent public hearing.<sup>54</sup>

The impact of smaller class sizes has been widely recognized by operators of private and charter schools, who frequently make class size a major selling point. One example is Nobel Learning Communities, the nation's largest operator of private, non-sectarian schools.<sup>55</sup> When an interviewer recently asked Nobel's chief executive officer, Jack Clegg, about the company's approach, smaller class size was one of a few specific educational strategies that Clegg identified regarding its schools, which cover kindergarten through eighth grade. "We believe in small classes and small schools, so the children are safe, every teacher knows every child, and every principal knows every child in school and all the parents," he explained, adding that Nobel tries to keep class sizes within a range of 15 to 17 students.<sup>56</sup>

In fact, in a 1997 article about a charter school he was involved in founding, Jeb Bush told a reporter, "I believe smaller schools, smaller classrooms, are better, and I think the school shows that."<sup>57</sup> In Miami, the Governor's children attended the Gulliver Schools, a prestigious private academy with several campuses covering primary through secondary grades. Among the strengths that Gulliver identifies on its Web site is the school's "low student-to-teacher ratio ..."<sup>58</sup>

### ***Smaller Classes Improve Teacher Recruitment and Retention***

One of the most impressive and encouraging effects of reducing class sizes is the way it facilitates quality teaching. This is a crucial consideration for the state of Florida, which will need thousands of new teachers in the coming decade regardless of Amendment 9,<sup>59</sup> and which could lose the invaluable experience of thousands of veteran teachers if the frustrations of dealing with overcrowded classes continue to drive them out of the system.

Some officials tend to approach the school reform debate from a “which-one-is-the-best reform” approach, suggesting for example that education policy should focus on either teacher training or class size. This is a false either-or approach; strengthening public schools requires a comprehensive approach. Providing classes that are small enough to allow for effective teaching can have a powerful effect on strengthening recruitment and retention of teachers. Princeton University’s Alan Krueger recently explained: “Developing strategies to recruit and reward outstanding teachers is a complement to smaller classes, *not a substitute for them.*” (emphasis added)<sup>60</sup>

Indeed, Amendment 9 will enhance the ability of school districts to attract men and women to the teaching profession—and keep them there. This is confirmed by the U.S. Department of Education’s finding that smaller classes create working conditions that raise teachers’ job satisfaction.<sup>61</sup> The Educational Priorities Panel studied a class-size reduction program in New York City and found that the program, among other benefits, improved teacher morale.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, there is direct Florida-specific evidence that reducing class sizes would induce former teachers to return to the classroom. A state survey asked respondents to choose five out of 18 factors that would encourage them to return to teaching. Of the 18 factors, “smaller class size” came in second only to higher pay. Smaller classes actually beat higher pay among former math teachers. Smaller classes and higher pay were the only factors cited by at least 60 percent of those surveyed.<sup>63</sup>

A teacher who called in on August 14, 2002, to “Florida On the Line” on Florida Public Radio said, “I am a teacher, have been a teacher for ten years of junior high, and I ... would love to have an increase in salary... but I would gladly give it up for smaller class size. My job fulfillment on the classes that I have had in the past years that have been in the size range of 25-26 students is just phenomenally different from a class size of 30-35 students. The amount of learning that can take place in a smaller class is just exponential with just the difference in ten students, and I just, I really, since I’ve started teaching, really felt that class size, just lowering class size, is the number one thing that we can do to improve education.”<sup>64</sup>

Without question, by reducing class sizes, Florida would send a powerful message about the kind of teacher-friendly, learning-centered environment that it wants to ensure in every public school classroom.

Even without Amendment 9, Florida will have to hire an estimated 160,000 teachers in the next ten years just to handle projected growth and keep class sizes where they are. It is estimated that Amendment 9 would require an additional 32,000 teachers, or about 20 percent more.<sup>65</sup> In other words, unless officials are going to let classes continue to grow, the state must now make it

a priority to invest more money in classrooms and teachers. Inaction is not an option. The added investment called for by Amendment 9 would pay enormous dividends for students and the state.

### ***Smaller Classes Are Better Behaved Classes***

It is common sense to expect that smaller classes are easier for teachers to manage. As Kevin Lavelle, a student at Sarasota High School, told a reporter, “Bigger classes can be hectic and noisy. Some teachers have complete control, but others don’t do as good a job. It’s not their fault. They shouldn’t have to deal with 40 kids at a time.”<sup>66</sup>

In fact, studies from several states have found that teachers in smaller classes experienced fewer disciplinary problems than those in larger classes.<sup>67</sup> The reason is no surprise. Research in California revealed that smaller classes enabled teachers to provide more individual attention to students and resolve disciplinary issues early—before they escalated.<sup>68</sup> An Indiana analysis showed that smaller classes cut down on disruptions and enhanced teacher productivity.<sup>69</sup>

Several years ago, Murray State University officials worked with a number of public schools in Kentucky to implement strategies designed to combat student bullying. After participating in the program, teacher Lynn Hambrick identified the strategy that worked the best. “You can do nothing better for a teacher than to lower her class size.”<sup>70</sup>

This July, a nationwide study found that nearly one-third of all young people had been bullied at least once in the previous month. To combat the problem, the study’s authors made a number of recommendations, including urging teachers “to find ways to get to know each of the young people in your classroom as individuals.”<sup>71</sup> Needless to say, overcrowded classrooms make this recommendation nearly impossible.

### ***Smaller Classes Reduce the Drop-out Rate***

Smaller classes also can strengthen future opportunities for secondary school students by helping to lower the dropout rate. Students in the STAR study not only achieved at higher levels, but they were less likely to drop out of high school than their peers.<sup>72</sup> Another study by Yale University researcher Michael Boozer found a strong link between lower pupil-teacher ratios and lower student dropout rates.<sup>73</sup> Just last year, the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory advised school district officials to “[r]ecognize the potential of class size reduction for reducing the dropout rate and include consideration of lowering class size when formulating dropout prevention plans.”<sup>74</sup>

### ***Florida Can Afford to Reduce Class Sizes***

Reducing class sizes in Florida public schools will require a substantial but affordable investment in new classroom space and new teachers. Importantly, according to the terms of Amendment 9, the state Legislature, not local school districts, would be required to fund the needed investments. (*See Appendix B for full text of Florida’s Amendment to Reduce Class Size*). Scare tactics about burdens on local school districts or property taxes have no basis in fact. Amendment 9 would make smaller classes a statewide priority and responsibility.

### ***Smaller Classes Are Cost-Effective Investments***

When considering any proposal, elected officials and the public must weigh both the cost *and* the return. Alan Krueger of Princeton University has examined the positive, long-term effect that smaller classes have on earnings. Krueger wrote recently that each dollar invested in class-size reduction produced \$2 in benefits.<sup>75</sup> Additionally, the RAND Institute studied the various strategies that states had used to help improve student performance and identified reducing student-teacher ratios in the lower grades as one of the three “most cost-effective” reforms.<sup>76</sup>

One of the reasons smaller classes provide such a sound return on the dollars invested is because they help cut other, unnecessary costs. As the U.S. Department of Education has pointed out, the cost of class-size reduction “can be offset by the resulting decrease in within-grade retentions, reduced high school dropout rates, a diminished need for remedial instruction and long-term special education services, and increased teacher satisfaction and retention.”<sup>77</sup>

When the Florida Senate voted in April to support a class-size reduction amendment, the Senate put itself on record behind the view that “investments in smaller class sizes lead to high student achievement and higher lifetime income and earning power.”<sup>78</sup>

Making needed investments in infrastructure would also provide jobs and a boost to the state’s economy.

### ***Legislature Has Many Options for Funding Smaller Classes***

Amendment 9 does not dictate a particular funding mechanism. Amendment 9 will instruct the Legislature to make education a priority and require legislators to determine responsible ways for funding smaller classes. While neither the Coalition to Reduce Class Size nor People For the American Way has endorsed a particular funding mechanism, there are a number of approaches that legislators could consider, in addition to seeking ways to eliminate waste and inefficiencies.

- **Reviewing Special Interest Sales Tax Exemptions**

One option that the Legislature could explore: identifying special interest sales tax exemptions that do not provide a demonstrated benefit to the state and redirecting some funds from special interests to the public interest and class size reduction . Next year, Florida will raise about \$17 billion in sales tax revenue. Yet, the state will lose about \$23 billion in sales tax revenue due to existing exemptions.<sup>79</sup> Redirecting even a small portion of that \$23 billion could pay for smaller classes. Legislators could close special interest loopholes (such as exemptions for adult entertainment and escort services, skyboxes at sporting events, and ostrich feed) while maintaining exemptions that have a broad impact on individual Floridians, such as grocery purchases, veterans’ programs, prescription drugs, and other basic needs.

Senate President John McKay is spearheading an effort to try to close many sales tax exemptions. “It’s wrong for special interests to get tax breaks when your constituents and my

constituents pay 6 percent on a household item like a washing machine,” McKay said.<sup>80</sup> McKay’s efforts have drawn bipartisan support, including that of Rhea Chiles, the state’s Republican comptroller Bob Milligan and former Majority Leader Jack Latvala, a Republican.<sup>81</sup>

- Reconsideration of Corporate Tax Breaks

Another possible option for the Legislature to consider as a funding source would be repealing some or all of the corporate tax breaks that were enacted earlier this year. Over the next three fiscal years, these corporate tax breaks will cost the state nearly \$430 million in revenue.<sup>82</sup>

In addition to freeing up hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to reduce class sizes, repealing these corporate tax breaks might actually boost the economy. In a written opinion earlier this year, the chief economist for the state’s Office of Economic and Demographic Research wrote that Florida would lose both jobs and revenue as a result of the corporate tax breaks.<sup>83</sup>

- Prioritizing Lottery Proceeds

As it explores funding options for Amendment 9, the Legislature should more closely examine how state lottery funds are being allocated and determine the lottery’s impact on other state funding for education. The lottery, created in 1986, was promoted to voters with the understanding that lottery revenues would be *additional* funding for public schools. In fact, the official title of the law creating the Florida lottery is the “Florida Public Education Lottery Act.”<sup>84</sup> Several prominent groups and elected officials have raised legitimate concerns that lottery receipts have not gone to *enhance* spending but have simply replaced money that would normally have been allocated from general revenues. Legislators have a responsibility to use the lottery monies in the way they were originally intended.

- The Impact of Long-term Financing

Building new classrooms will be required to meet Amendment 9’s class size targets, but not all of the funds needed for construction will have to come out of the state’s budget over the next eight years. Infrastructure projects, such as primary and secondary schools, highways, public transportation, and convention facilities, are regularly financed using pay-as-you-use plans of finance with bonds amortizing over 20-30 years. It is misleading to treat construction costs as if they would be paid in the short term, essentially on a pay-as-you-go basis, in the form of cash as a part of the annual budget. In fact, doing so could be considered financial malfeasance.

An investment bank that regularly participates in the state’s bond issues estimates that the borrowing rate for AAA insured bonds would currently be around 5.15 percent. A rough estimate is that \$1 billion financed over 20 years would require about \$64 million in annual debt service; if financed over 30 years, the annual service on \$1 billion would be about \$76 million.

Long-term financing of capital expenditures in fixed assets is routine because it has many advantages. It leverages available money to meet immediate needs; minimizes the effect on the

annual budget by distributing construction costs over a period that matches the life of the facilities; and can avoid future increases in construction costs by allowing projects to be funded and built now.

In fact, with interest rates at historic lows, *now* is the ideal time to finance the kind of construction projects that would make smaller classes a reality. Given the capital needs our schools face, it is baffling that the state has not taken advantage of the lowest interest rates in years to begin to address the classroom needs of our children.

### ***The High Cost of Failing to Act***

In addition to the devastating consequences of overcrowded classrooms on the learning environment, student achievement and teacher retention and morale, there are real economic and other consequences if we fail to bring class sizes down to manageable levels.

“The people of Florida are aware that there is a price tag associated with reducing class size,” said U.S. Senator Bob Graham, who supports the class-size initiative. “You talk about cost? What’s the cost to the state of a system that says less than half of ninth-graders are going to graduate in four years?”<sup>85</sup> As Princeton’s Krueger recently explained, “Class size probably influences other outcomes with economic consequences, such as crime and welfare dependence ...so the economic benefits (of smaller classes) could be understated.”<sup>86</sup>

Consider the context. The state of Florida spends hundreds of millions of dollars on its juvenile justice system.<sup>87</sup> In 1999-2000, judges committed 11,247 juvenile offenders in Florida to residential confinement.<sup>88</sup> The state’s Department of Juvenile Justice reports, “Juvenile offenders in Florida whose crimes are serious enough to merit placement in residential programs typically come from single-parent households and are truants, dropouts, or are doing poorly in school.”<sup>89</sup>

Issues such as crime are obviously complex problems involving many factors, but education is clearly a powerful influence and small class size is one critical component.

## **II. THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST AMENDMENT 9: PLAYING POLITICS WITH OUR CHILDREN’S FUTURE**

Smaller classes have a well-documented impact on children’s education. Parents and community leaders concerned about increasingly overcrowded classrooms are eager for a solution. It is disappointing that Gov. Jeb Bush and his administration have decided to oppose this common-sense initiative and are mounting a dishonest campaign based on distortion and fear tactics.

As a candidate in 1997, Jeb Bush called “school overcrowding” one of the “critical issues that will shape the kind of future we provide our kids.”<sup>90</sup> However, five years later, the governor and his allies have declared war on Amendment 9.



Earlier this year, the Bush administration fought unsuccessfully to have recommendations that the state seek to reduce class sizes stripped from a major Chamber of Commerce report on the importance of investing in Florida's educational future.<sup>91</sup>

A *Miami Herald* writer recently predicted that Amendment 9 will face a “final flurry of scare tactics: convince seniors that the amendment will cost so much they will lose prescription drug benefits; suggest to suburban moms that their kids will be bused across the county to meet class-size quotas; and tell Tampa Bay and South Florida commuters that road money will dry up.”<sup>92</sup> In fact, these scare tactics are already being used by Jeb Bush and some of his political allies. The governor told parents that Amendment 9 would require their children to be bused for great distances,<sup>93</sup> a threat repeated recently by Education Secretary Horne.

### ***Political Process, Tainted Numbers***

Almost immediately after the state Supreme Court unanimously approved the ballot language for the class-size initiative, Gov. Bush hastily amended his call for a special legislative session to include a new proposal—requiring all citizen-initiated constitutional amendments to be accompanied on the ballot by a cost estimate explained in up to 50 words.<sup>94</sup> (Amendments offered by the Legislature were exempted from this requirement.) The Revenue Estimating Conference (REC), a panel that provides economic forecasting and analysis to state government, was assigned the job of calculating the cost estimate and coming up with the explanatory language that would appear on the election ballot alongside each amendment. The REC is composed of representatives from the governor's office, the Senate, and the House, along with an economist from the Legislature's independent Office of Economic and Demographic Research (EDR).<sup>95</sup>

At the REC hearing in June, the representatives from the governor's office, Senate and House came up with a \$20-\$27.5 billion price tag<sup>96</sup> for the initiative using a cumulative cost formula that they do not normally use to calculate the cost of other programs—including tax cuts, school vouchers or other legislation that has a major long-term impact on the availability of funding for public schools. This method was not applied to any other initiative. It seems to have been devised to put the largest possible price tag on the class size initiative. (The legal status of the requirement to have the price tag on the initiative has not been resolved in the courts; a judge ruled against the requirement and the state has appealed.)<sup>97</sup>

A *St. Petersburg Times* article noted that the price tag “relies on budget assumptions rarely if ever used in state government.” The article noted “If standard budget practices had been followed, the estimate calculated by state budget analysts would be cut by more than half.”<sup>98</sup>

The class size price tag does not express future costs in 2002 numbers, which would help voters put the figure in the context of the current budget. This is how the REC analyzes the cost of legislation and its impact on the state's budget. Yet in the case of the class size initiative, instead of expressing figures in current numbers, they adjusted every year for inflation and then added all the years together. At the REC hearing, Edward Montanaro, the widely respected economist who then headed the independent EDR, said the approach being used created a “meaningless stew” and that it “fundamentally misrepresents the situation” to voters.<sup>99</sup>

“When opponents want to kill a project, they maximize the cost,” Iowa State University Professor Kurt Thurmaier told the *St. Petersburg Times*. “This sounds like a way to maximize the cost.”<sup>100</sup>

Consider this analogy. People who are trying to buy houses in the same neighborhood compare the advertised selling prices. But imagine that one homeowner would be singled out and required to advertise his house at a cost that included all the future payments a buyer would make on a 30-year mortgage. That one house would appear vastly more expensive than the others. It would be unfair both to the seller and to people trying to accurately compare house prices.

Some opponents of the initiative have confused the situation even further by comparing the inflated 8-year cost of the initiative to the current, *one-year* budget for education in the state.

Indeed, the REC’s method led to an estimate that is much higher than other estimates of class-size reduction. Last October, long after organizers of the class-size initiative announced their plans, state Education Secretary Jim Horne had cited an estimate of \$10 billion.<sup>101</sup> This April, the head of the Florida School Boards Association estimated the cost at \$5-6 billion.<sup>102</sup>

Montanaro had released his range of cost estimates for the class size initiative well before the REC’s June 27 meeting, as the *Tallahassee Democrat* explained, “to get feedback from supporters and opponents.”<sup>103</sup> The initiative, which would be phased in over eight years, was projected by Montanaro to cost between \$4 and \$12 billion over that eight-year period.<sup>104</sup> Other members of the REC did not invite advance scrutiny.

Under the REC’s normal operating procedures, all four REC principals must arrive at a consensus in order to have an “official revenue forecast.” If they cannot reach consensus, there is no official forecast.<sup>105</sup> The law that gave the REC the responsibility for estimating the price tag for initiatives, however, changed the normal consensus rules and allowed the estimate to become official with three out of four votes. Montanaro, who voted against the \$20 to \$27.5 billion estimate, has impeccable credentials. One Florida newspaper recently described Montanaro, who directed EDR for 16 years, as “the Legislature’s recognized financial expert.”<sup>106</sup> After Montanaro announced in late July that he would be leaving EDR, House Speaker Tom Feeney, R-Oviedo, described him as having “a reputation of being a distinguished and principled state employee who is very conscientious and does his job without being bullied.”<sup>107</sup> And Florida Senate President John McKay, R-Bradenton, said that Montanaro “performed a good service for the Legislature and the state.”<sup>108</sup>

### ***A False Argument on Teacher Recruitment and Retention***

Since Amendment 9 will require the hiring of thousands of additional teachers across the state, some have suggested that the amendment might add to the difficulties of recruiting and retaining teachers. The opposite is true. As discussed on pages 9-10, class-size reduction enhances the ability of school districts to attract and retain quality teachers. While teacher pay is certainly an important factor in recruiting and retaining teachers, state Sen. Don Sullivan, R-St. Petersburg, noted earlier this year that the stresses of managing classrooms and keeping order are among the reasons why teachers leave the profession.<sup>109</sup> The U.S. Department of Education has

identified the link between smaller classes and improved teacher morale and satisfaction.<sup>110</sup> This is backed up by Florida’s own data showing that smaller classes would strongly encourage former teachers to return to the classroom.<sup>111</sup> This reminds us why it’s so important to take “crowd control” out of teachers’ job descriptions.

Attracting and retaining a quality teaching force is always important, and Florida must regularly evaluate and strengthen its efforts in this area. But to frame the debate as an ‘either-or’—smaller classes versus teacher retention—is a false and cynical choice. Our state cannot afford to choose one and ignore the other. Indeed, creating smaller classes is a logical and essential first step toward broader reform. Education researcher Alex Molnar has called class-size reductions “the necessary precondition” to education reform. “Then you follow up with staff development,” Molnar added.<sup>112</sup>

### ***The California Experience***

Some Amendment 9 critics have pointed to difficulties in implementing California’s 1996 class-size reduction law. But despite some bumps along the road, the California law has received emphatic praise from parents and educators. “This is the most positive thing that has happened,” said a public school principal in San Diego. “I can’t think of anything else like it.”<sup>113</sup> There are several noteworthy differences between California’s law and our proposed Amendment 9—differences that will help ensure that Florida’s experience is even more positive than California’s.

#### **CLASS SIZE: A TALE OF TWO STATES**

	<b>California’s 1996 law</b>	<b>Florida’s Amendment 9</b>
<i>Does the state fully fund the class-size reductions?</i>	<b>No.</b> Local districts must assume some costs.	<b>Yes.</b> The state would be required to provide adequate funds to reduce class sizes.
<i>Does the provision allow ample time for hiring additional teachers and creating additional classroom space?</i>	<b>No.</b> The state’s law didn’t provide districts with a multi-year period to prepare for the new limits.	<b>Yes.</b> The amendment’s provisions would be phased in over an eight-year period.

First, the California program did not require all districts to participate, meaning children in some school districts may not reap the benefits.<sup>114</sup> Florida’s Amendment 9 sets class-size limits for all school districts without loopholes. Second, the California program has been funded only partially by the state, leaving some low-income districts unable to cover the difference.<sup>115</sup> By contrast, the class-size reductions in Florida’s Amendment 9 must be funded *entirely* by the state. Third, California’s class-size limits were implemented immediately, without a phase-in period.

Florida's Amendment 9 phases in the reductions over eight years, providing ample time for school districts to construct new facilities and recruit additional teachers.

These differences reflect the ways in which the framers of Amendment 9 have learned and benefited from California's experience. Whatever shortcomings California has experienced, the bottom line is this: data show that the state's class-size program has raised student achievement *and* increased parental satisfaction with their children's public schools.<sup>116</sup>

Florida education officials reportedly reviewed the state's experience with class-size reduction as part of preparing a report on Amendment 9. Given the hostility that state education officials have displayed toward Amendment 9, *Orlando Sentinel* columnist Mike Thomas wrote, "If [the report] comes out in support of smaller classes, I will eat this page."<sup>117</sup> When the Board of Education released its report, Thomas wrote, "Keep the ketchup because I'm safe." Thomas called the report a "hackneyed political position paper."<sup>118</sup>

### III. WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION

Some have suggested that class-size limits do not belong in the Florida Constitution but should be addressed through the legislative process. But the Legislature has repeatedly failed to fulfill quality education mandates that already appear in the constitution. The specific language of Amendment 9 is required to ensure that the voters' will becomes state policy.

Amendment 9 serves as a vehicle to help fulfill the mandate of voters who, in 1998, called quality education "a fundamental value" and approved constitutional language asserting that the state has "a paramount duty ... to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders."<sup>119</sup> As long as Florida's classrooms remain overcrowded, that language in the constitution is nothing more than a broken promise.

Jane Kuckel, chair of the Lee County School Board, summed it up this way: "I don't think we would have come to this point if over the last few years it had been a priority in our Legislature," Kuckel said. "[The initiative] is an outcry from parents that you can't do this anymore."<sup>120</sup>

#### ***Failed Leadership***

"Destiny is no matter of chance," said William Jennings Bryan. "It is a matter of choice."<sup>121</sup> Indeed, through their misplaced priorities, our state's leaders have made a choice: to condemn our children to classroom conditions that are hostile to teaching and learning. In doing so, they seriously jeopardize Florida's future.

The crisis faced by our overcrowded schools is not new, and the warning signs have been all too glaring. For example, in the fall of 1996, Broward County schools enrolled 35,000 more students than it had seats to accommodate.<sup>122</sup> Other school districts throughout the state have also seen their student populations swell—without the needed state funds to construct new classroom space and hire additional teachers.

Some who have criticized Amendment 9 have offered a mixed message: smaller classes are a good idea, but this initiative costs too much. In other words, to quote Frederick Douglass, these critics “want the crops without plowing up the ground.”<sup>123</sup> Indeed, the major power brokers in Florida have been unwilling to lead on this issue and have offered no solution for overcrowding. Floridians are tired of excuses. They want answers.

### ***The Legislature***

For too many years, the Legislature has been derelict in its duty to the children in our public schools. During the mid-1990s, a special allocation of state funding was earmarked for class-size reduction, but the Legislature later incorporated these funds into the overall funding that school districts received.<sup>124</sup> This lack of legislative discipline sabotaged the goal of smaller classes.

Years later, there was another false start. In 1998, the Florida Senate’s Majority Office compiled a comprehensive report on class size and ultimately recommended a class size reduction initiative.<sup>125</sup> Despite the efforts of some legislators, the issue of class-size reduction got nowhere in the next legislative session.

Last year, the Legislature had yet another opportunity to address the problem of overcrowded classrooms, but genuine efforts to limit class sizes failed. A bill purporting to address the class size issue was introduced last year, offering a \$3,000 voucher to any student in an overcrowded public school. Instead of fulfilling their obligations as stewards of the public schools, the backers of this bill were content to ship public school students—and, with them, millions of tax dollars—to private schools. Jody Gleason, a Palm Beach County School Board member, asked the obvious question: “Why don’t they just give us money to build more schools?”<sup>126</sup>

Earlier this year, hopes were raised—and later dashed—again by the Legislature. In April, the Senate passed an amendment to the state education code, establishing a commission that would implement smaller class sizes for all public school grades and recommend funding sources for these class-size reductions.<sup>127</sup> The Senate amendment received bipartisan support but was defeated in the House.

### ***The Governor’s Office***

In a fundraising letter before the 1998 election, Jeb Bush decried overcrowded schools and classrooms in Volusia and Broward counties, and he offered “a few ideas” to voters. Bush’s very first idea was “to restore intimacy to our schools. I am convinced that *smaller is always better than bigger* when it comes to teaching kids.” (Emphasis in original.)<sup>128</sup> But he failed to include class size in his education plan. And four years later, his actions are a far cry from that campaign rhetoric. While the class-size problem predated Gov. Bush’s arrival at the governor’s mansion, he has repeatedly shown that this issue is not one of his priorities. Instead, Bush’s approach to education has gone in a very different and disturbing direction.

While class-size reduction has remained on the back-burner, Gov. Bush has actively led the charge for voucher programs that divert critical funding and energy from our public schools.

Gov. Bush's tax policies have seriously drained the state treasury at the same time he suggests the state cannot afford to invest in smaller class sizes for students. The corporate tax breaks championed by Bush are a prime example. When Congress passed a stimulus package earlier this year, the National Governor's Association (NGA) warned of the impact that this lost revenue would have on states. "Education will clearly be the big loser as governors struggle to balance their budgets," said NGA Executive Director Ray Scheppach, who warned that the lost revenue could inflict "larger class sizes" and other consequences on states.<sup>129</sup> Armed with this information, Gov. Bush pushed for a bill that would—in the words of the state's chief economist—"allow Florida corporations to legally avoid \$428.4 million" in corporate taxes.<sup>130</sup> The corporate tax breaks were approved by the Legislature in spite of warnings from the Office of Economic and Demographic Research that the bill would deplete revenues and cost the state jobs.<sup>131</sup>

Over the last three years, Florida's ranking has fallen in per-capita education spending, graduation rates, and SAT scores, while class sizes have increased.<sup>132</sup> That record and the governor's actions may explain the results of a June poll conducted by the *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* and the *Orlando Sentinel* which found that only 28 percent of those polled said public education had improved under Gov. Bush's leadership.<sup>133</sup>

### ***The Solution For the Crisis We Face***

Floridians have rallied behind Amendment 9 because they see it as a common-sense way to improve learning—a way to enable teachers to get to know their students better, structure lessons with this knowledge in mind, and devote extra time to those students who would otherwise fall behind. Jerome Showers, a father of five, supports Amendment 9 because he has seen first-hand how his 12-year-old son's grades improved in a smaller class.<sup>134</sup> A longtime Leon County teacher put it this way: "Will smaller classes solve all our problems? Of course not, but it will be a *giant* step forward." (Emphasis in original.)<sup>135</sup>

On Tuesday, November 5, voters will have the power to make children a real priority. We believe they will. Amendment 9 has excited and empowered ordinary citizens across our state. Amendment 9 has reminded Floridians that 'politics' affect their lives—and their children's lives—in a profound way. Amendment 9 has helped to remind the public that democracy doesn't run on auto-pilot.

Now is the time. Amendment 9 is the way.

## APPENDIX A

### Selected Resources on Class Size

**Florida's Coalition to Reduce Class Size** was established to help mobilize grassroots support in support of Florida's class-size initiative, which will appear on the ballot as Amendment 9. For more information about the Coalition, see their Web site at: [www.smallerclasses.org](http://www.smallerclasses.org).

**People For the American Way** (PFAW) is a national organization that advances the principles of quality education, free expression, civic participation, tolerance, and constitutional liberties. In addition to its Washington, D.C., headquarters, PFAW has offices in Tallahassee and Miami. PFAW Foundation has produced numerous reports on school reform and educational priorities, including several that were cited in a recent U.S. Supreme Court opinion. These reports address the issue of class-size reduction:

- *Two Roads to Reform: Comparing the Research on Vouchers and Class-Size Reduction* (May 2002) <http://www.pfaw.org/issues/education/reports/tworoads/>
- *Punishing Success: The Governor's Proposed Education Budget in Wisconsin and the SAGE and Voucher Programs* (April 2001) <http://www.pfaw.org/issues/education/reports/PunishingSuccess.pdf>

The **Tennessee STAR** study is a landmark study that reveals the powerful and lasting impact that smaller classes have on student achievement. These documents provide more information:

- Comprehensive information about the TN STAR study, including research findings, data, fact sheets and bibliographies of supplemental analyses are available at <http://www.heros-inc.org/star.htm>.
- Elizabeth Word et al, *Project STAR Final Executive Summary Report, Kindergarten Through Third Grade, 1985-1989*, Tennessee State University, Department of Education, June 1990, available at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/classsize/eval/projstar.htm>.
- Helen Pate-Bain, B. DeWayne Fulton, and Jayne Boyd-Zaharias, *Effects of Class-size Reduction in the Early Grades (K-3) on High School Performance: Preliminary Results (1999) from Project STAR, Tennessee's Longitudinal Class-size Study*, Lebanon, TN: Health and Education Research Operative Services (HEROS), Inc., April 1999, available at <http://www.heros-inc.org/star-hs-p.pdf>.

Last school year, more than 81,000 students attended smaller classes, thanks to **Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education** (SAGE) program. These documents include annual evaluations and other reports on SAGE's positive impact on student learning:

- Comprehensive information about the SAGE initiative, including annual evaluations, reports and related publications can be accessed at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/sage.html>.

- Alex Molnar et al, “2000-2001 Evaluation Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program,” Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2001, available at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum01.htm>.
- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, “1999-2000 Evaluation Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program,” Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 2000, available at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum00.htm>.
- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, “1998-99 Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program Evaluation,” Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 1999, available at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsummaryyear3.html>.
- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, “1997-98 Results of the Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) Program Evaluation,” Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 1998, available at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum98.pdf>.
- Alex Molnar, Philip Smith, and John Zahorik, “First Year Results of The Student Achievement Guarantee in Education Program,” Milwaukee, WI: Center for Education Research, Analysis, and Innovation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, December 1997, available at <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CERAI/documents/sage/execsum97.pdf>.
- Wisconsin Policy Research Institute, “The costs and benefits of smaller classes in Wisconsin: A further evaluation of the SAGE program,” *Wisconsin Policy Research Institute Report*, vol. 13, no. 6, September 2000, available at <http://www.wpri.org/Reports/Volume13/Vol13no6.pdf>.

In 1998, Congress passed a law providing federal aid to assist public school districts across the country in reducing class sizes. A review by the **U.S. Department of Education** revealed the benefits that these reductions were having:

- Gillian Cohen, Christine Miller, Robert Stonehill, Claire Geddes, *The Class-Size Reduction Program: Boosting Student Achievement in Schools Across the Nation, A First-Year Report*, U.S. Department of Education, September 2000, available at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/class.pdf>.
- “Class-Size Reduction: Myths and Realities,” U.S. Department of Education, Sept. 3, 1999, available at <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/ClassSize/myths.html>.
- Ivor Pritchard, *Reducing Class Size, What Do We Know*, National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment, U.S. Department of Education, March 1999, available at <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ReducingClass/title.html>.



- Jeremy D. Finn, *Class Size and Students at Risk: What is Known? What is Next*, National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students, U.S. Department of Education, April 1998, available at <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ClassSize/>.

Some **additional evaluations and analysis** examining the benefits of class size reduction on student achievement have been attached below:

- “Closing the Achievement Gap: Improving Educational Outcomes for African American Children,” National Black Caucus of State Legislators, November 2001, available at <http://www.nbcsl.com/news/pdf/cag.pdf>.
- Charles L. Thompson and Elizabeth K. Cunningham, “First in America Special Report: The Lessons of Class Size Reduction,” North Carolina Education Research Council, October 2001, available at [http://www.firstinamerica.northcarolina.edu/reports/class\\_size.pdf](http://www.firstinamerica.northcarolina.edu/reports/class_size.pdf).
- Alan B. Krueger and Diane M. Whitmore, *Would Smaller Classes Help Close the Black-White Achievement Gap?* Working Paper #451, Princeton University, Industrial Relations Section, March 2001, available at <http://www.irs.princeton.edu/pubs/pdfs/451.pdf>.
- David Grissmer, Ann Flanagan, Jennifer Kawata and Stephanie Williamson, *Improving Student Achievement: What State NAEP Test Scores Tell Us*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000, available at <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR924/>.

## APPENDIX B

### Florida's Amendment to Reduce Class Size

Article IX, Section 1, Florida Constitution, is amended to read:

Section 1. Public Education –

The education of children is a fundamental value to the people of the State of Florida. It is, therefore, a paramount duty of the State to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high quality education and for the establishment, maintenance, and operation of institutions of higher learning and other public education programs that the needs of the people may require. **To assure that children attending public schools obtain a high quality education, the legislature shall make adequate provision to ensure that, by the beginning of the 2010 school year, there are a sufficient number of classrooms so that:**

- 1. The maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher, who is teaching in public school classrooms for prekindergarten through grade 3 does not exceed 18 students;**
- 2. The maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher who is teaching in public school classrooms for grades 4 through 8 does not exceed 22 students; and**
- 3. The maximum number of students who are assigned to each teacher who is teaching in public school classrooms for grades 9 through 12 does not exceed 25 students.**

**The class size requirements of this subsection do not apply to extracurricular classes. Payment of the costs associated with reducing class size to meet these requirements is the responsibility of the state and not of local school districts. Beginning with the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the legislature shall provide sufficient funds to reduce the average number of students in each classroom by at least two students per year, until the maximum number of students per classroom do not exceed the requirements of this subsection.**

### Ballot Summary

Proposes an amendment to the State Constitution to require that the Legislature provide funding for sufficient classrooms, so that there be a maximum number of students in public school classes for various grade levels; requires compliance by the beginning of the 2010 school year; requires the Legislature, and not local school districts, to pay for the costs associated with reduced class size; prescribes a schedule for phased-in funding to achieve the required maximum class size.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> "Education Report Card Shows Florida Failing," Florida Education Association, June 25, 2002, accessed via: [www.floridaea.org](http://www.floridaea.org).
- <sup>2</sup> Oscar Corral, "McBride Campaigns at Crowded School," *Miami Herald*, Aug. 22, 2002.
- <sup>3</sup> Ranking is based on U.S. Census Bureau data reported in *A Statistical View of the 50 United States*, 2001, Morgan Quitno Press.
- <sup>4</sup> Language from proposed Constitutional Amendment 9; accessible via: [www.smallerclasses.org](http://www.smallerclasses.org).
- <sup>5</sup> Data from *St. Petersburg Times-Miami Herald* Poll, March 2002; Charles L. Thompson and Elizabeth K. Cunningham, "First in America Special Report: The Lessons of Class Size Reduction," North Carolina Education Research Council, October 2001, p. 1.
- <sup>6</sup> Lesley Clark, "Public Favors Smaller Classes, Prekindergarten," *Miami Herald*, March 31, 2002.
- <sup>7</sup> Steve Bousquet, "Education Issues Get Support," *St. Petersburg Times*, March 31, 2002.
- <sup>8</sup> Joni James and Lesley Clark, "Florida Adds Funds for Pupils But Drops Tax Holiday," *Miami Herald*, May 14, 2002.
- <sup>9</sup> Adam Smith, "Handful of Area Educators Jump From the GOP," *St. Petersburg Times*, Aug. 9, 2002.
- <sup>10</sup> Mike Thomas, "Lawmakers Are Still Gambling With Education," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 28, 2002.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>12</sup> Based on totals from "Florida's Amendment to Reduce Class Size," Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, accessible via: <http://election.dox.state.fl.us/>.
- <sup>13</sup> Adam Smith, "Handful of Area Educators Jump From the GOP," *St. Petersburg Times*, Aug. 9, 2002.
- <sup>14</sup> Joni James, "Florida Sinks in Educational Standings," *Miami Herald*, April 9, 2002.
- <sup>15</sup> Ranking is based on U.S. Census Bureau data reported in *A Statistical View of the 50 United States*, 2001, Morgan Quitno Press. Comparable data from the U.S. Department of Education, reported by the Florida Education Association, ranks Florida 50<sup>th</sup> in graduation rate. Accessed at [www.feaweb.org](http://www.feaweb.org).
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Ranking is based on U.S. Census Bureau data reported in *A Statistical View of the 50 United States*, 2001, Morgan Quitno Press.
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