

Your Turn

Vilia Johnson and Rhonda Peters

Guest columnists

Why the Sarasota County League Opposes Amendment 3

Sarasota Herald Tribune

September 27, 2026

On the Nov. 3 ballot, Florida voters will decide whether to approve Amendment 3, which will significantly reduce property tax revenues available to counties, cities and special districts by raising the homestead exemption to \$150,000 in 2027 and \$250,000 in 2028.

The League of Women Voters of Florida, along with such diverse groups as Florida Tax Watch, the Florida Fraternal Order of Police, the Florida Education Association, the Florida Association of Counties and the Florida League of Cities, opposes Amendment 3's passage.

If something appears too good to be true, it is likely neither good nor true – and Amendment 3's promised savings are a case in point.

Don't be fooled: property tax relief that reappears as new fees and higher rent isn't relief.

Should Amendment 3 be approved, it will result in a \$12 billion revenue loss across the state by 2031-32.

Locally, Sarasota County estimates it will result in a \$142 million revenue loss in fiscal years 2028 and 2029 alone.

Sarasota Memorial Hospital will lose more than \$43 million by the end of fiscal year 2028-29.

The city of Sarasota will lose \$5.5 million annually.

Such huge revenue losses inevitably mean cuts to essential services.

For example, property taxes fund the local portion of disaster relief – the crews that restore power and clear debris in the aftermath of storms. These taxes also fund local services such as building and maintaining roads, stormwater, emergency services (including 9-1-1), libraries and parks.

Who among us believes we should do less to maintain our roads and stormwater drains?

Are we ready to put our public safety and EMS services in jeopardy?

Yet if Amendment 3 passes, a significant reduction in services is almost guaranteed.

Hollow promise on tax relief

Meanwhile, Amendment 3's promise of tax relief is hollow.

Local governments will attempt to make up for some of the lost revenue by increasing taxes and fees elsewhere.

Raising non-homestead taxes means we all pay more: property and business owners would pass this increase on to tenants and consumers by raising rents and the cost of goods and services.

This would worsen our affordable housing problems and drive up consumer costs. We've seen the public's outrage over increased parking fees in the city of Sarasota.

Are we prepared to pay fees to borrow a library book? Or to take our children to the park?

The bottom line is that our local governments would not be able to add enough fees to compensate for the hundreds of millions of dollars lost if Amendment 3 is approved.

Even if they did, any property tax 'relief' would simply be paid by making all of us pay more in fees.

The League of Women Voters has long opposed using the Florida Constitution to limit, steer or override local revenue decisions. Home rule matters because local officials – those who are closest to the people – should decide how to balance local budgets.

These decisions shouldn't be made by Tallahassee.

If property taxes and services are to be cut, it's our local elected officials who should do so.

A statewide hatchet is not the solution for issues that demand a local scalpel.

Before you vote on Nov. 3, weigh what Amendment 3 will truly cost Sarasota.

Vilia Johnson and Rhonda Peters are co-presidents of the League of Women Voters of Sarasota County.