

New-Fangled Vote Counting

March 19, 2018

Call me old-fashioned, but when you go to the polls to cast your vote on a ballot measure, your Yes vote should count for yes and your No vote for no.

And if you choose not to vote, your non-vote should count for neither yes nor no.

That's just common sense. Right?

Well, meet its antithesis: Proposal 97, now being considered by Florida's powerful Constitution Revision Commission (CRC).^{*} Proposal 97 would

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count all those who do not cast a vote for or against a ballot measure as a No vote against it.

To pass a constitutional amendment in the Sunshine State already requires a supermajority vote of at least 60 percent of those who do cast a vote on the measure. Under Proposal 97, counting all those not voting on it as No votes,



that percentage would necessarily go even higher. If 10 percent don't vote, Yes would have to come in at 67 percent to win.

This is minority rule . . . with an extra perverse twist.

The supermajority requirement encourages big money interests to spend heavily against ballot initiatives — even when the issues have clear majority support — because if they can manage to lose by less than 20 points (60–40 percent), they win. Now all opponents need do is poison the water with the nastiest campaigning imaginable, causing more voters to throw up their hands or pinch their noses and avoid the issue . . .

. . . thus, being counted as voting No.

Don't abstain. Stop Proposal 97. Tell them NO [here](#).

This is Common Sense. I'm Paul Jacob.

** How powerful is the CRC? Every 20 years it meets with the awesome authority to refer constitutional amendments directly to the ballot — as many as it wishes and the amendments can be packaged to include several different subjects. No other state has a similar body. Of the 37 commission members, the governor appoints 15, the Senate president and the House speaker each appoint nine, the chief justice of the state supreme court appoints three and the attorney general is an automatic member.*