

RECAP/RESULTS OF THE SEPTEMBER 18 SPECIAL ELECTION

By Elois Zeanah, President
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Elected officials are interpreting their win in the September 18th special election as “trust” for them. The truth is that voters who cast a “yes” vote did so because they were threatened and scared! This wasn’t “trust”. Elected officials also dealt in obfuscation. In addition, they unashamedly voted to reschedule the vote from the general election to a special election to preempt opposition they saw forming – at a cost to taxpayers of \$3 million -- to prevent transparency! These tactics may be good politics but they’re not good government!

AFRW opposed the amendment on fiscal and moral grounds.

- **There was no need to rewrite the constitution to balance the budget.** Other options were available.
- **The real purpose of the amendment was to redefine “income” so politicians could take more money out of the Trust Fund than the constitution allowed.** The amendment allows politicians to now take half of all gas/oil revenues that currently flow into the Trust Fund annually, which earn interest and dividends to supplement the general fund, and to reduce the principal by \$450 million, which sets a precedent for future raids without the legal obligation to pay it back and without a vote of the people in future years.
- **Elected Officials say they will repay the \$450 million as an attempt to quiet opposition.** Where are they going to get the money? The state already owes \$600-\$700 million from past borrowing from the ATF. And the state is burrowing deeper into debt. A \$100 million bond was issued this year for education and the legislature is talking about borrowing more this session. Medicaid expenses are growing faster than revenues. All the while, the legislature passed many spending bills last session and more spending bills are being filed this year which raise costs for citizens. Further, it’s disingenuous for legislators to say they will repay the money. The bill they filed kicks the can down the road to future legislators; and the bill doesn’t solve the other problems of this amendment, which will likely deplete the fund in a decade or so according to some financial analysts.

Now that legislative leaders coerced voters to rewrite the constitution so they could take more money out of the Trust Fund, they say they are serious about making budget reforms. Although, as we pointed out during the campaign, they could have made these reforms without having to raid the trust fund and rob future earnings, we are pleased to hear this.

In conclusion, I want to applaud voters in several counties that stood up for fiscal responsibility and accountability and didn’t drink the Kool-Aid. These were: DeKalb, Pickens, Madison, Coffee, Elmore, Autauga, Limestone, Bibb, Morgan, Chilton, Cullman,

Marshall, Cleburne, Winston, Shelby, Blount, Baldwin, and St. Clair. The counties that had the highest turnout and voted "yes" were Greene, Sumter, Wilcox and Perry. People can disagree on the merits of an issue. But we should have a frank discussion of the pros and cons instead of resorting to what happened in this special election to scare voters and silence opposition. I hope that Alabama won't ever again see such a lack of transparency, widespread and orchestrated misinformation and scare tactics that elected officials used to coerce voters to give them a "yes" vote. This is not the type of government voters expect from Republicans, and it's not why we elected a supermajority legislature and constitutional officers. We love and support all our Republican elected officials. We "trust" them to do what's right based on conservative values, but when they stray we stay true to our Party's core values and ask they do, too.